Training Teachers Through Technology
A case study of a distance-based teacher training programme

J. OLA LINDBERG & ANDERS D. OLOFSSON

Department of Education
UMEÅ UNIVERSITY
Nr 78 • 2005
Training Teachers Through Technology. A case study of a distance-based teacher training programme (doctoral thesis)

Department of Education, Umeå University

Graphic design Print & Media
Printing Print & Media, Umeå University, 2005

ISBN 91-7305-982-X
ISSN 0281-6768
Abstract

This thesis’ main theme is the relationship between teacher training, distance education, ICT and community. These aspects of an educational practice are conceptualised within a hermeneutical approach as aspects of edukation. The thesis consists of eight articles. These are all related to one specific teacher training programme, in the thesis considered as being one demarcated social context, and treated as a single case. In articles I-III, different theoretical conceptions are elaborated upon both in relation to the discipline of Education (in Swedish Pedagogik), and in relation to the hermeneutical approach. Articles IV-VIII reports on the analysis of several data-gatherings, understood as being parts of an embedded case study. Teacher trainees on the programme have responded to a questionnaire, and have been interviewed. Teacher trainers organising the programme have been interviewed, and governmental and local policies concerning both teacher training and distance education were included. The data were gathered with the intention of enabling an understanding of the conditions through which the teacher trainees understand their societal commission, as a strive for upholding and developing legislated constitutive values, such as multiculturalism, equity, democracy and freedom. All in all, the aim of the thesis is to present an overall understanding of the process of edukation, the establishment of an educative relationship between the individual and the society in distance-based teacher training. The analysis points towards an understanding that emphasises the possession by trainees of competencies that include self-sufficiency, self-direction in their learning and self-confidence providing independence from their fellow trainees, their trainers and society at large. Being assessed primarily on an individual basis does not seem to encourage the trainees to take a collective responsibility for their learning. The trainees seem to associate the social dimensions in the programme primarily to feelings of being at ease, rather than to aspects of learning. Seen as an overall aspect of a process of education, the norms and values developed when the trainees negotiate meaning and values appear, in this context, to promote individuality. Additionally, this understanding seems to apply to aspects of democracy as well. Having been able to regard the teacher training programme from different theoretical positions over time, and to consider the teacher trainees and their studies as belonging to a learning community: the Online Learning Community that intersects the issues of learning and technology with the issues of values and society, one might ask; is this then a story of community? If the trainees’ views on education and learning stem from a sense of community, then it might be that of a community as a place of belonging. This could be why the trainees regard the sense of being at ease in the study-group as being more important than the aspects of learning in the study-group. Learning might incorporate conflicting views and contrasting standpoints that potentially challenge the study-group and their sense of belonging. Feeling at ease and taking an inclusive stance might then be one way of ensuring that the group provides what it promises: a safe and warm place. This could be contrasted with the way community implies a strong normative tendency to embrace while disciplining, or as the trainees put it; you may belong here if you adjust to the norms of the group. This in turn begs the question: what is the ethical stance taken in a community, society or study-group? In this thesis, one possible interpretation of this matter is provided.

Key-words: Edukation, hermeneutics, teacher training, distance education, ICT, learning community, case study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of writing a thesis seems scary, and perhaps it was some unknown courage that made this endeavour possible. Perhaps it was just plain lack of wits, perhaps it was due to the opportunity of the two of us writing the thesis together. Whatever the reasons, we both survived the time it took, and as always this has been because a lot more people have been involved in this process as just the two of us. So here it goes…

First of all, thank you Jarl “Offe” Backman, our supervisor. You have taught us more than we know, and from what we know, we know about more than “widows” and references. You have provided freedom and opportunity, trust and support, even though at times you have been our toughest critic.

Additionally, several people have contributed support at various times. Thanks to Ulla Johansson, our second reader, who has provided deep insight and constructive critique, to David Hamilton, for the time and support you gave, and not least, Jörgen From and Carina Holmgren, who have read almost all of our texts and provided more critique than we thought possible, but in the process also taught us all there is to know about life as an academic. Thanks to Anders Olofsson, Mid Sweden University, for trust and support. Thanks also to Christina Segerholm and Björn Astrand for the opportunity to spend time at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, USA.

The teacher trainees and teacher trainers that have contributed to the thesis deserve a line of their own. Thanks for your help in making this thesis possible.

We also owe a lot to people we have met at various places, and who have shown faith in our work. Thank you, Ken Fernstrom, University College of the Fraser Valley in Canada, for academic interest and football enthusiasm. Thanks also to Ove Jobring and the whole OLC-group in Gothenburg.

We have also benefited from having two different seminar groups at the Department of Education, Umeå University, that have read and discussed our work throughout the process. Thanks to Gerhard’s group, and to Offe and David’s group. Thanks also to the
doctoral candidates at the Department of Education, Mid Sweden University, who have taken the time to read and discuss our work in their seminar group.

Furthermore, we have been financed and supported by different departments. Thanks to the National Agency for Higher Education who financed Ola for three years, to the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Mid Sweden University, who financed his last two years. Also, thanks to the Faculty of Social Science, Umeå University, who has financed Anders throughout the entire research period.

A special thanks also to Ann-Marie, Christian, Ulf, Josef, Jimmy, Lasse and Tim who in different ways have helped in making this time more pleasant.

And finally, as always, the last words are directed to our families. Thanks for coping with the seldom present and always absent-minded company of two fathers lost in interpretation. All our love to: Anne, Jocke, Sanna and Martin; Tina and Neo.

Umeå, 2005

J. Ola Lindberg & Anders D. Olofsson
Included articles

This thesis is based on the articles listed below. In the thesis the articles are bound together by an introductory section, in which the articles are referred to as follows:


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Included articles – individual responsibility

In the following it is specified which parts of the thesis that either Lindberg or Olofsson take individual responsibility for. In three of the nine parts the responsibility is considered to be divided.

*Article I* - J. Ola Lindberg

*Article II* - Anders D. Olofsson

*Article III* - J. Ola Lindberg & Anders D. Olofsson

*Article IV* - J. Ola Lindberg

*Article V* - Anders D. Olofsson

*Article VI* - Anders D. Olofsson

*Article VII* - J. Ola Lindberg

*Article VIII* - J. Ola Lindberg & Anders D. Olofsson

*Introductory section* - J. Ola Lindberg & Anders D. Olofsson
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PROLOGUE - ON THE PROCESS OF WRITING A THESIS

Writing a thesis is not altogether uncomplicated. It is, in a sense, a question of time and being in a process of becoming something different. New possibilities are opened that, to some extent, have always been there but have not been recognised before entering the life of doctoral candidates. Many things have to be learnt and mastered at the same time. New understandings have continuously emerged in relation to this possibility, which in turn, paradoxically, does not necessarily make life easier. For us it has been a process in which we have had to balance our own reading and writing with the collegial work at the department. Overall, this process has been complex, demanding, challenging and partly difficult to accomplish in a satisfactory way. Whether this process is about becoming a human, a researcher, or a member of a community or society, it appears to be a process in which time and being are central aspects. For us, these aspects turned out to be of a life, more or less projected on the screen of our computers.

In this process we have tried to grasp several issues, which at times have been so hard to separate from each other that they in retrospect seem to have been happening at once. At times, the research process has been in focus, at other times the possible understandings generated concerning the demarcated social context; a distance-based teacher training programme. Off and on, the writing, the reading, the presenting at both national and international conferences and the data gathering have blended into a chaos. Furthermore, weeks of reading have been separated from weeks of data analysis. This process of time and being will have to be presented in the thesis with coherence, in a valid and reliable way. In other words, it should have implications beyond our own here and now, and in that way be more than an introvert exercise (let it have been conducted collaboratively by two) of word-processing.

In this endeavour, the initial focus and ambition has been on making a contribution to the discipline of Education (in Swedish,
Pedagogik), as will be described in the following text. For that reason, an initial concern was to position our research, and thereby also the entire thesis, in Education. This was more precisely aimed at positioning the thesis beyond the mere empirical context it was situated in, and clarifies what it attempts to describe and explore.

This positioning led to an interest in the possibilities of using edukation, a concept initially used and proposed by the late Swedish professor Wilhelm Sjöstrand. Edukation stems from the Latin verb educare. It could be said to represent, or be translated with, rearing, upbringing, fostering or building (Sjöstrand, 1970), which allows the development of an approach in which human existence could come into play.

In our conception, edukation represents a powerful possibility to map the process of creating a balance in the relation between an individual ‘I’, and a collective ‘We’, as a special kind of relationship establishing individuals within a time and place dependent on social context, society or community.

A focus on edukation as a matter of time, place and existence led to the adoption of a hermeneutical approach, in which these aspects are understood as apparent and important. In a late 20th century, hermeneutics presented itself as a resourceful approach in which most of the concerns of edukation seemed to be dealt with in an open and productive manner. Since hermeneutics was conceived of as having a focus on interpretation, it offered a possibility to put time, place, and existence in focus. Furthermore, it seemed to give the researcher a productive role outside of prejudice. In our early work, several papers were written on the hermeneutical approach, where the ontological question of interpretation was put into question. However, none of these in their original form actually resulted in published articles that could be included in the thesis.

With a focus on the historicity of being, hermeneutics seemed to offer a way of analysing present as well as past experiences and conceptions of humans. In addition, it seemed to accommodate the importance of sharing common notions and views of the world in the process of becoming human. The approach was initially conceived within what is often called philosophical hermeneutics, developed on the theoretical grounds of first Husserl and later Heidegger, and then refined by Gadamer. Having conceived of an approach that promised to be resourceful, our intention was first to make it public. Therefore we wrote two more papers, originating from our early writings on the ideas that did make their way into the thesis.
When the thoughts and theories behind the approach were made public and available for members of the research society, it was brought into practical use. The possibility of using a theoretical approach to investigate contemporary issues was a focus for several months, and as it turned out even for years. A case was considered, in which several aspects of the transition into a knowledge society in Sweden met at a crossroads known as teacher training. New expectations on teacher training and on schooling in the knowledge society, problems concerning sparsely populated areas and recruitment of qualified teachers, as well as the promise of Information-and Communication Technology (ICT) for bringing people together and offering opportunities never before conceived of, made it interesting for several reasons. One might argue that the reasons were perhaps one too many, but nevertheless, the research approach was being brought into practical use.

Research then turned out to involve balancing the thick description of a case study with the lean production focus of scientific journal articles and book chapters. Less is more, it is sometimes said, and off and on what was considered either less or more was at the expense of the whole. In each article, different aspects were focussed upon, and only once did the parts come together in an article, (perhaps) paradoxically considerably harder to understand because it attempted to give more. But as it turned out, it was learned that these concerns were very much beyond our control. Instead, we were left with a feeling of maybe having decided to write a thesis containing several articles, and not a monograph, at to an early date. Furthermore, we were left with a rather hard challenge; the issue of making the articles stick together and make a whole. Our intentions are, though, that this part of the thesis perhaps could amend some of the shortcomings of each article and make it a more comprehensive whole. At last..
ALIGNING RESEARCH WITHIN DISCIPLINES AND TRADITIONS

Education as an academic discipline in Sweden has, during its non-linear development, assumed several different guises (Englund, 2004). With at least a formal point of departure in the installation lecture of Bertil Hammer (Lindberg & Berge, 1988), who held the first chair in Education in 1910 in Uppsala, it has since developed over time with influences from other academic disciplines; philosophy, psychology, sociology, and perhaps back to philosophy. The development of the discipline seems possible to understand in the light of both continuous discussion within the discipline, and to cross-border discussions with other disciplines, among others philosophy, psychology, history, and sociology (Svensson, 2004). The discussions concern not only how the object of study in Education is to be conceived, but also how closely aligned in the discussions the questions are concerning how and on what grounds research in Education is to build knowledge about its object of study. In addition, Education has had a close relationship with governmental issues, such as the steering and development of the educational sector in Sweden, and to policy-making concerning issues of educational reforms (Rosengren & Öhngren, 1997).

The discussions seem seldom, if not never, to have resulted in a consensus among the representatives of the discipline concerning its scope and purpose. On the contrary, the opposite seems to be the case. The differences in conceptions and notions of the discipline seem to have prevailed over time, and seem to be as numerous today as ever. A reading of definitions of the discipline, provided by universities in Sweden, concerning its scope and object of study as well as the purpose of its knowledge building seems to strengthen such an understanding. Lately, the Swedish discussions concerning Education have come to include what seem to be challenges to the autonomy and legitimate position of Education within the field of social science. These challenges were primarily concerned with teachers’ work or didactics, and have continued with the
establishing of departments with special interests (such as Learning, Educational Science, Special Education, etc). In some cases, the establishment of a discipline even provides opportunities for a PhD of its own, for example, Educational Work and Learning.

In sum, this brief sketch of Education and its development and concerns depicted above suggests a discipline in a process of continuous change, most of the time regarding several dimensions at once. Researchers and other representatives of the discipline need to keep track of these perpetual shifts, and consider them in relation to their own practices. The contours of the discipline seem to be blurred in the process, and this is accentuated by the different ways to describe and relate to research and practices in Education. The bottom line seems to be that the newer denominations indicate that there is some other kind of research being done that is not research in Education.

If this is a result of confusion between a conceptual level of the discipline and its terminology, where a denomination as a term is confused for its concept, or if this new denomination is actually conceptually mapping some new phenomena seems difficult to tell (From, Holmgren, Lindberg & Olofsson, 2004). Whether this is a positive or a negative development for the discipline seems also to be a rather risky business to tell, and might, for that reason, be better left unsaid. Something, however, that might need to be investigated is how this research and its final products as is presented here as a thesis, can be legitimated as a scientific work within the discipline of Education. In other words, a requirement to carefully and as clearly as possible describe a research approach which allows for the knowledge built to actually be viewed as knowledge in the academic discipline of Education.

**Constructing an object of study**

A central issue will be the construction of an object of study. An object of study can be defined in different ways and at different levels of abstraction. It seems to be possible, for instance, to construct the object of study theoretically, and then to study it empirically with the purpose of knowledge-building (deduction). It also seems possible to identify an object of study empirically, and then to study it with the help of different theories (induction). Another way could be to sharpen and redefine the object of study as the research progresses, which in turn could generate an additionally more precise knowledge, and at the same time allow the knowledge-building
process to be characterised by nuances. An object of study seems to be understood as either context-dependent or context-independent. Common for all of these ways described for conceptualise an object of study seems to be that the researcher(s), before any construction of any object of study, have to relate the construction to the academic discipline in which it belongs.

On this matter as well, it seems that different possibilities are open. The way we have chosen to relate the construction of an object of study is to relate and legitimate our research, and thereby the whole of the thesis as a project, to the definition of Education provided at the Department of Education, Umeå University, Sweden.

At the Department of Education, Umeå University, Education is defined as:

Education is a scientific discipline where knowledge is created about the processes through which the human being is formed and about the changes in social, cultural and historical circumstances in which these processes are embedded. The Educational field deals with, for example, different aspects of upbringing, education, learning, teaching and other processes which affect humans. Questions, for example, can be raised how and why certain values, knowledge and skill arise, how and why they are maintained, and how they vary within and between generations, groups and individuals. (http://www.pedag.umu.se 050811, our translation).

This definition can be compared with others that are more internationally conceived. In the ERIC thesaurus, for instance, Education is defined in terms of a:

Process of imparting or obtaining knowledge, attitudes, skills, or socially valued qualities of character or behavior -- includes the philosophy, purposes, programs, methods, organizational patterns, etc., of the entire educational process as most broadly conceived. (http://www.eric.ed.gov 050811).

As can be seen, this does not seem to impart dramatically from the Umeå definition. Even so, the differences seem to be to such a level,
as it is with different definitions of Education in other Swedish universities, that they embody a potential for continuous discussions and debates, both national and international, of what the discipline of Education could be said to be.

**Edukation as an overall object of study**

Establishing an overall object of study for the research has been a time-consuming and in some parts rather problematic process. The understanding we have developed concerning how the object of study could or should be formulated, and the knowledge that could be built, have developed alongside the research process. Many theories were consulted, tried at an initial stage, but were for several different reasons dismissed. The decisive turn came when we considered the aforementioned Swedish Professor of Education, Wilhelm Sjöstrand, and the idea of giving an overall object of study for Education in a concept he called *edukation* (Sjöstrand, 1968).

The use of *edukation* appeared to answer to some of our questions in relation to the kind of research we were striving to carry out, and it provided a possibility of formulating answers related to the premises of research in Education. It seems important, though, to point out that it is primarily at a principal level that these ideas about *edukation* converge with Sjöstrand. Since Sjöstrand was working at a time mainly influenced by other ideals for the discipline of Education, he gave the concept of *edukation* connotations that seems to differ from the way we make use of the concept. This is something considered to be a strength of the concept, rather than a weakness. The theoretical meaning invested in the concept of *edukation* in this thesis reflects the difficulty connected with giving an object of study in Education a precise and uniform scope. Depending on assumptions about science and research, the possible understandings of the object of study may differ, which in turn affects the knowledge that is possible to build. The possibilities that seem to be aligned with using an object of study formulated at a principal level are associated with the way research otherwise inherits assumptions that have historical

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1 The Finnish professor emeritus Håkan Andersson stated recently, in a lecture about the core of the discipline of Education, the importance for a specification of our discipline and its object of study in terms of: "All that glitters is not Education". (our translation)
and cultural meanings. Such assumptions have, for instance, been put forward concerning humans, knowledge, and learning, and are embedded in the context in which for instance education is inscribed (Peterson, Olsson, Hultqvist & Popkewitz, 2004).

In his understanding of *edukation*, Sjöstrand distinguishes between two processes of importance; teaching and fostering. Instead of regarding these as two separate processes, he brings them together and treats them as though they are continuous and intertwined. Processes of teaching and fostering then become possible to understand as part of a common whole, something that humans always are affected by (Bernstein, 2000). According to Sjöstrand (1968), these two reciprocal processes are joined in the process of *edukation* (the educational process), which he more accurately describes as follows:

> ...that in every society and in every culture there is an ongoing process of affecting humans with the purpose that they, through a learning process, should in the best possible way come to be formed in accordance with what the society and culture in question wishes them to become (p. 22, our translation).

In this citation, an understanding of those processes can be achieved at a principal level, in which the whole formation of humans can be part. Another reason for using *edukation* as an object of study is that in the principal the particular seems to be embedded as well. Using teacher training as an example, *edukation* can in this way be studied both with the purpose of building knowledge about, and providing a collected view of the meaning of those processes within every teacher training programme in Sweden, as well as within one specific teacher training programme².

In the following list, five propositions about *edukation* are provided, all with a reference to the definition proposed by Sjöstrand (1968), and further developed in From, Holmgren, Lindberg and Olofsson (2004). The aim of this is to provide more precise conditions for framing the processes of teaching and fostering that are embraced by the concept, and thereby to contribute to the argument for the use of *edukation* as an object of study within the academic discipline of Education.

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² This argumentation is more thoroughly dealt with in article I.
- **edukation** admits possibilities of understanding human in all contexts and positions in the world

- **edukation** embraces a process that continues throughout the whole spectrum of human life

- **edukation** admits an understanding of human life as form of a community shared with others

- **edukation** admits the possibility of understanding processes of teaching and fostering as inculcation into a certain form of life

- **edukation** is a continuous process that inculcates certain norms and values as part of the belonging in a community with others

A final question remains, though, before this part of the thesis can be concluded. Could this argumentation for **edukation** as an overall object of study be related to the definition of Education given at the Department of Education, Umeå University? It is argued in the following that the answer to that question is yes. Research concerned with building knowledge about **edukation** could be conducted within the academic discipline of Education. We propose that this thesis can be understood as a thesis in Education for at least the following three reasons.

Firstly, Umeå definition states that Education is the scientific discipline where knowledge is created about the processes through which the human being is formed, and about changes in social, cultural, and historical circumstances in which these processes are embedded. **Edukation** seems here to be aligned with this definition, since it both admits possibilities for building knowledge about human in all contexts and positions in the world and is continuous throughout the whole spectrum of human life.

Secondly, the Umeå definition puts forth that the Educational field deals with, for example, different aspects of upbringing, education, learning, teaching and other processes which affect humans. The concept of **edukation** seems once again to embrace this definition since it provides the possibility of building knowledge about the processes of teaching and fostering in terms of inculcation into a certain form of life.

Third and finally, the Umeå definition of the discipline of Education stresses that questions could, for example, be raised concerning
how and why certain values, knowledge, and skill arise, how and why they are maintained, and how they vary within and between generations, groups and individuals. In this regard as well, the description of *edukation* seems to be productive. *Edukation* seems to allow us to provide an understanding of human as part of a community shared with others, or in other words how humans become human among humans. Additionally, this enables an understanding of the meaning of *edukation* as a process that inculcates certain norms and values in humans as they becomes part of and form a sense of belonging with others.

To conclude, *edukation* seems to be a possible object of study within Education, since it embraces processes of teaching as well as fostering, through which humans are continuously being formed in an open manner. An understanding is enabled, in which humans can be understood as part of time and space, in a way that is not determined by either of those aspects, even though they are altogether dependent upon them. These are aspects of how humans are being formed as human among other humans, which provides one rather important scope of the academic discipline of Education (Uljens, 2001). In addition, it is a scope that seems to be possible to relate to the definition that marks out the work at the Department of Education, Umeå University, Sweden.
What does it mean to conduct research? Some researchers would simply answer that it is a question of solving a problem. Others that it means to challenge the validity and reliability of already conducted research. Another possible answer could be that it is all about investigating already defined objects of study from different theoretical perspectives. A fourth answer could be that the most important task for a researcher is to provide results that could be used outside the university walls. It is probably impossible to put one reason for conducting research ahead of others. On the other hand, it does seem possible to position the research approach of one’s own in relation to other approaches within the same or similar research field, and to argue that it could be said to contribute towards new or different knowledge within that field.

On the issues of teacher training and teaching

There are quite a few Swedish theses that in one way or another can be related to this one. Two important issues dealt with in this thesis are teacher training and teaching. Theses that could be related to teacher training and teaching, and at the same time deal with issues similar to the ones put forth here, are for example those of Colnerud (1995), investigating ethics and practice in teaching, Lindberg (2002) who investigates the discourses of teacher training and analyses contemporary discussions of teacher training as it has taken shape in relation to the present teacher training reform in Sweden. Lindberg concludes that an alternative to the dead end of talks of teacher training within a second modernity could be to talk about teachers’ work as if it was a profession with communicative and deliberative characteristics. He also suggests that a way to get teachers to participate in critical, constructive and challenging dialogues, could be to start talking about teacher’s training as if it was meant to create good conditions for becoming teachers to develop their capacity to make sound judgements in relation to their work.
Furthermore, Erixon Arreman (2004), with the intention of understanding the impact of Swedish education policy-making on teacher training post-1945, and finally Bernmark-Ottosson (2005), in which teacher trainees’ conceptions of democracy are assumed to be influenced by the society in which they live and the education they have received. Bernmark-Ottosson concludes that the trainees’ reasoning about the conditions of democracy concerned three main themes: the values of democracy, the individual conditions and societal conditions and furthermore that several trainees regarded it as their duty to maintain the prevalent forms of democracy in Sweden.

On the issues of distance education and flexible learning

Another central issue in this thesis is distance education and the related concept of flexible learning. Research questions investigated here are, for example, constructivism in distance education (Johansson, 1999) and teacher trainees’ experiences of teacher training at a distance researched within a hermeneutical approach (Falk, 1999). Falk shows that the distance-based form of teacher training could lead to that the critical task of all teachers’ training, to foster critically aware teachers by allowing teaching lecturers and their teacher trainees to challenge their taken-for-granted truths about themselves and the profession of teaching, is diminished. Furthermore, related to this issue are investigations into the process of building knowledge in computer-based further education (Wännman Toresson, 2002), information seeking behaviour of distance students (Thórsteinsdóttir, 2005), and collaborative learning and how it can be applied and supported in distance education (Rydberg Fähræus, 2003). Rydberg Fähræus shows how three groups of intertwined learning processes are developed and how they interact (of content, of communication and of collaboration) in distance education. Some theses that were conducted with a more outspoken purpose of understanding flexible learning include Edström (2002), concerning how teachers, by means of ICT, make possible flexible learning built on a combination of traditional classroom teaching and elements of distance education, Rydh (2003), who focused on possibilities for carrying out deliberative communication in teaching organised as flexible learning, and Olsson (2005), highlighting the importance of context to learning processes in computer-supported flexible education.
On the issues of ICT and the Internet

A third issue conceived of as being of interest in this thesis is one related to a specific focus on ICT and the Internet. This includes for example the design of ICT-supported learning environments (Holmberg, 1996; Mattheos, 2004), analyses of students’ acceptance of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) in a blended learning environment (Keller, 2005), how students use the Internet for information seeking (Enochsson, 2001; Stigmar, 2002), how ICT changes the role of the teacher (Jedeskog, 2000), ICT in terms of artefacts for human knowing (Ivarsson, 2004), and ICT in relation to the concept of appropriation (Jonsson, 2004). Jonsson concludes that appropriation is due to the perceived affordances of the technology and that meaning arise in a process of interpretation and interaction between participants and between participants and technologies. Two other thesis of interest here are Lundmark (2000) and Söderlund (2000) which both investigate the implementation of ICT in the Swedish school system. Söderlund shows that introduction of IT in schools should give room for teachers to learn from their own experience, if this learning is made object for shared reflection which is acted upon, this may then result in a development of educational practice in school.

On the issue of community

A final issue concerns community. Here it seems appropriate to initially mention that the concept of community seems to be used in various scientific disciplines and with sometimes rather divergent purposes. The concept of community can, for example, be used to gain an understanding of how a teacher team functions as a vehicle for the development of competencies in the pedagogical use of ICT (Karlsson, 2004). Karlsson concludes that the team investigated was a community of practice, characterised by accountability and joint enterprise. The concept of community has furthermore been used in order to understand and support IT-mediated communities of distance education (Svensson, 2002). Svensson put forth those activities that draw attention to the existence of the community supports cohesiveness; that those communities changes as a result of collective negotiations and that IT-mediated distance communities creating a social environment where students and teachers can develop new roles for collaborative learning. Other thesis are aimed at investigating intranet in relation to the learning organisation...
(Heide, 2002), analysing social bonding via the Internet (Svenningsson, 2001), and analysing how men and women experience and use a web community within a process of constructing religious identities (Lövheim, 2004).

**Intertwining the issues into one approach**

The picture sketched above shows that rather a lot of research has been carried out in Sweden that can be related to the objectives of this thesis. In striving to contribute with something new, or at least something different, we have intertwined all these central issues (teacher training and teaching, distance education and flexible learning, ICT and the Internet, and community) into one approach, within a hermeneutical tradition, aimed at understanding the process of *edukation* in one demarcated social context; a distance-based teacher training programme.
AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THIS CONTRIBUTION

The thesis is in this section positioned in an international perspective. In sketching a picture of an increased theoretical emphasis on the importance of the social dimension in education and learning, this will relate to the development ICT has undergone during the last 15 years. The intention is to include an understanding of how earlier distance education, with learners physically separated and with limited possibilities of having an ongoing and fruitful communication, today has been replaced by an understanding stressing the importance of building and sustaining a learning community. The learning community, when situated in the virtual context of the Internet, is claimed to serve as the fundament for organising a distance education characterised by active participation, collaboration and dialogue.

Teacher training at a distance - from mail to e-mail

An overall trend in the European educational system of today, in which the distance-based teacher training programme in question can be positioned, seems to be to provide students that previously had difficulties attending higher education, with extended opportunities to participate through distance education (Brown, 2001).

The inherent barrier in distance education provided by time and space constraints seems to have been continuously reduced, even to the point where they can be claimed to have been removed. Distance education has for a long time meant being physically separated, albeit being located in the same region or in the same country. If viewed from a perspective of internationalisation, globalisation, or within the perspective of the European Union and its politics of education, it seems now that it is not even unusual that students who attend the same education programme are located in different countries (see for example Guri-Rosenblit, 2001) or even continents (Schlais & Davis, 2001).
Teacher training does not seem to be an exception in this new trend of participation in higher education (even if, until today, it more or less seems that only Swedes located in Sweden attend teacher training programmes in Sweden). In Sweden today, presumptive teacher trainees are recruited from all walks of life, which is something that seems to make this group of students more heterogeneous than previously.

In Sweden the possibility of becoming a teacher through distance-based teacher training has been available since the middle of the 1980s or the beginning of the 1990s (see for example Falk, 1999), depending on how distance education is defined. In recent years, the Swedish Distance Education Committee (SOU 1998:57; SOU 1998:83; SOU 1998:84) has stated that distance education should be organised in terms of flexibility, with the intention of providing for a number of different student needs depending on their individual situations. The flexibility in distance education is said to be a key component when it comes to giving citizens the opportunity to study and to educate themselves.

One of the important forces behind the increased use and extended scope of distance education seems to be the development of ICT. Within this movement, the rapid improvement of the Internet and its possibilities to provide for communication has made distance education possible to understand as an interactive learning experience supported by the use of ICT (Vrasidas & Glass, 2002). Koschmann (1996) has outlined certain theoretical assumptions that have influenced the ways that technology has been used in education, learning and teaching, and how the meaning of these have changed along with the technology and its possibilities. Koschmann claims that this has emerged through four phases, called paradigms, with the purpose of showing how different understandings of learning have influenced the way technology has been converted into educational technology. Beginning with explaining how a behaviouristic understanding for learning provided an early framework for educational technology, it is thereafter shown how two new paradigms, influenced by cognitive theories, have increasingly come to influence the ways that technology has been used. In the fourth and final phase, Koschmann claimed that the social dimension in learning has come to play a crucial part in relation to how technology is used for educational purposes. The present paradigm, so called Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, implies a shift towards aspects such as active participation, collaboration and dialogue between learners. These also implies that the concept of the learning en-
vironment could be taken into a virtual dimension and pave the way for web-based learning environments, such as web-based conference systems and web-portals (Harasim, 1989; Paulsen, 2003). Thus, learning environments that are created by means of technology have changed from being places only for downloading ready-made educational material to be places which make learning with others in a social context possible (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998; Haythornwaite, 2002; Koschmann, 1996; Stephenson, 2001).

Anderson and Garrison (1998) argue that those involved in a (distance) education that is mainly built up around the use of a web-based learning environment participate through interaction, collaboration and communication (or dialogue) in a social context. Furthermore, they claim that learning in such an (distance) education includes a complex interplay between teacher, student and content. Similar thoughts are found in Paulsen (2003), with a focus on different kinds of online teaching. In (or on-) line with Paulsen, communication or dialogue that enables participation in a distance education could be carried out in the following ways and include the following aspects:

- one-alone (online databases, online publications)
- one-to-one (learning contracts, apprenticeships, correspondence)
- one-to-many (lectures, symposiums)
- many-to-many (debates, role plays, case studies)

In web-based learning environments, different technical solutions may be used in order to allow for participation in all four modes discussed by Paulsen (see also Renninger & Shumar, 2002). For example, functions enabling both asynchronous and synchronous participation could be used (Kowch & Schwier, 1998). Functions that provide the students with immediate and continuous access to an educational program and the web-based learning environment could in a sense replace the learning environment provided on-campus. Examples of functions within these technological systems are blogs, chats, computer conferences, e-mail, threaded discussions and video conferences. These functions could be said to offer, to varying degrees, flexible opportunities to participate independently of place and time. In other words, a student (in this thesis a teacher
trainee) could be part of a learning environment despite geographical separation. In context of distance education, these functions could be understood in terms of enabling participation, collaboration, dialogue, teaching and sharing of resources.

**The idea of the learning community**

The idea of the learning community builds on studies of cultures (as opposed to viewing communities at a society level) with major influences from Lave and Wenger (1991) and partly also Wenger (1998). In their focus of different practices, the successive or gradual inculcation into the habits and ways of a practice was formulated as an apprenticeship. In describing the situated aspect of learning and the practice in which the learning is embedded, they identified the achievement of becoming a full member of a community of practice as a movement along a specific trajectory of participation. Members in a community are being fostered into the ways of the practice, and move from being only peripherally involved towards the centre of the practice. In this movement, they embrace not only the common ways of doing things, but also the ideas, values, beliefs and assumptions underlying the practice.

Students is said to form a learning community (Ó Murchú & Sorensen, 2003; Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Wenger, 1998). The learning community should enable students to support each other as well as to collaboratively learn with and from each other. Participation in a distance education through a web-based learning environment may, however, be understood in different theoretical ways (Jaldemark, Lindberg & Olofsson, 2005; Jaldemark, Lindberg & Olofsson, in press).

Wenger (1998) refined the idea of the situated character of learning, focusing even more on the concept of community. The use of community underlined aspects of learning, meaning and identity that are connected to a specific practice. In the learning community, members are bound by their joint participation in the negotiation of meaning and the development of a shared history. The negotiation of meaning is thought to be due to the processes of participation and reification. These processes become the foundation for a shared practice, which is seen as a source of coherence of a community. Wenger put forth mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise as the three dimensions of practice that form the properties of a community. The concept of community is understood in terms of “a way of talking about the social configurations in which
our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence.” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5).

The learning community in education
Many arguments have been used for applying the metaphor of the learning community in educational settings. It seems that several different interests use the metaphor for somewhat different purposes. For example, it could be the democratic joint venture of schools and universities (Grundy, 1999), or a perspective for school improvement (Holden, 2002), a view where school leadership primarily leads to community forming (Bredeson, 2003), a way of organising education (Barab & Duffy, 2000), a way of viewing schools (or other institutions) as learning organisations (Johnson, 1999), or as a means for incorporating a democratic perspective in education (Sorensen & Ó Murchú, 2004). Regardless of interests or purposes, the diverse use could be seen as an indicator of the concept’s wide range of possible meanings.

Wenger (1998) uses the learning community as a metaphor for creating a common ground in the service of a specific learning. Furthermore, it seem possible to design communities where the purpose is learning, and the learning community is thereby re-conceptualised as an educational issue – it seems no longer to be only the practice and the situated aspects of certain practices that are focussed upon, but also the intended or expected outcomes of certain educational designs. The possibilities of fostering for learning communities appear to be central. This trend can also be traced in the fields of educational research and instructional design, in studies that aim to find ways of transferring and implementing the concept of the learning community (Reigeluth, 1999). Transferring the learning community to the Internet (Carlén & Jobring, 2005) and building so called Online Learning Communities (OLC) seems until now to be one of the most recent developments that are paving the way towards a new age in the tradition of distance education.

The virtual or online learning community and distance-based education
Embraced in the traditions of distance education, the community metaphor is expanded even further. With the increased use of technology, humans are communicating, socialising and bonding across
distances and borders in ways that do not yet seem to have been fully realised. One recent way of describing the use of technology is to apply the learning community metaphor, and to allow the communication, socialisation and bonding that is taking place to be seen as aspects of building a community of learners (Reigeluth, 1999). This time, though, communities are not only aligned with societies, nations or practices but with humans that have mutual interests, common goals, work-related problems or a need to find help with different aspects of their lives.

Here, technology can be regarded as part of building communities in a virtual sense; communities that acknowledge no borders, that are present only in information systems inhabited by their users, and belonging to communities of their own choice (Lewis & Allan, 2005). The virtual, or online, community can be divided into several subgroups (Carlén & Jobring, 2005), depending upon its focus. Carlén and Jobring describe a typology of OLCs building on a rationale in which each OLC is examined in relation to its main focus. In this thesis, where an educational programme is regarded as one demarcated social context, the community is understood as a so-called Educational OLC.

According to Carlén and Jobring (2005), this type of OLC is located in an educational context and "...relates to learning activities in schools, colleges and universities. An institution or faculty promotes and structures education programs for learners in which the students get credit for what they know and what they do." (p. 275). In distance-based educations, the OLC can be a way of understanding the learning of those attending courses and belonging to classes, taking degrees or just educating themselves in the virtual company of others. OLC could be seen as a way of allowing learning, in online classrooms, to involve understanding in ways that move beyond the mere factual content or information-aspects of education. In the context of belonging to an OLC, members can be regarded as being part of a practice, and the sum of all aspects of that education becomes part of the understanding of their learning.

With the possibilities to include aspects of being together with others and the possible value-based outcomes, this understanding of distance-based educations will be aligned with the objectives of the thesis.
OBJECTIVES AND FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

The overall objective of the thesis is to describe and understand the process of *edukation* in one distance-based teacher training programme.

This is also accounted for in an objective to specify and generate theoretical frameworks serving to enable understanding of the data gathered. This will include frameworks for:

- theoretical accounts of education, as well as theoretical accounts of teaching and learning
- governmental and local policies concerning teacher training - organisation and practice
- governmental and local policies of distance education - organisation and practice

Furthermore, the thesis has a specific objective in describing and understanding the conditions through which the teacher trainees are coming to understand their societal commission, as a strive for upholding and developing legislated constitutive values, such as multiculturalism, equity, democracy and freedom. This objective is intended to capture:

- different conceptions of those societal values assumed to be in common in Sweden
- different conceptions of the specific relation between individuals and society
- notions of the importance of ethical and moral issues in teaching

The demarcated social context of a distance-based teacher training constitutes the empirical setting that will be highlighted in the thesis through data gathering concerning:
teacher trainees’ conceptions of learning and education, as part of the inculcated meanings of studying in distance-based teacher training

- teacher trainees’ and teacher trainers’ conceptions of conditions such as influence over the content, working methods, and examination patterns present in distance-based teacher training

- teacher trainees’ and teacher trainers’ conceptions of one specific societal value, namely democracy

All in all, the aim of the thesis is to present an understanding of the process of *edukation*, the establishment of an educative relation between the individual and the society in distance-based teacher training.
THEORETICAL RATIONALES

Bearing in mind the aim of the thesis, it might be appropriate to distinguish the aspects that have guided the work on the thesis. This is carried out in the following, in which the ambition of establishing distance by the use of a hermeneutical research approach and the research design as a case study are described. This implies a necessity to provide sound theoretical accounts for using an interpretational approach (Gadamer, 1989), as well as rationales for providing thick descriptions of the case study (Geertz, 1973).

The way the research has been conducted and the idea of considering the teacher training programme in question as a case, provides an overall context for the research reported in the thesis. To provide one possible understanding, arguments are given for the need for an interpretational approach. Therefore, the basis of the approach is an understanding of a certain form of hermeneutics; philosophical hermeneutics. Philosophical hermeneutics rests on assumptions of ontology as well as epistemology that in one sense forego those of case study research.

The hermeneutical approach and the case study design have been aligned as well as possible; hence they are presented in this specific order. The overall intentions are, though, to provide the reader with enough insights into the rationale behind the thesis so that he or she can grasp both its limits and its ambitions. The limitations are discussed in terms of valid, reliable and general aspects of conducting research. The ambitions here are to produce one possible and, hopefully, well-argued understanding of edukation in one demarcated social context.

On the issue of using a hermeneutical approach

To enable an approach to interpretation in which the researcher can account for different kinds of threats to the validity of the claims made, several issues need to be considered. In this section, the idea of a hermeneutical approach in social science and educational re-
search is developed, and the issues of validity and generalisation are elaborated upon.

Research from a hermeneutical stance implies an approach to science and knowledge relying on interpretation and understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1962; Ricoeur, 1995; Ödman, 1979). Philosophical hermeneutics appears to be a resourceful approach to use within the discipline of Education since it can take into account that education and interactions between humans are always embedded in a certain amount of relativity (Arendt, 1998). In hermeneutics it seems, that the distinctions between science building on objectivity and science that includes subjective qualities are taken into account (Bernstein, 1983; Winch, 1958). A philosophical hermeneutical stance implies argumentation for the validity of interpretations. Legitimated in and by dialogue, understandings are made more distinct but never absolute. Instead, interpretations are understood as leading to an open possibility of posing another informed question.

The issue of internal validity, then, has been considered within an approach based on a deductive rather than an inductive approach. By aligning the interpretations to the researcher's predetermined understandings, the assumptions and conceptions held before gathering and analysing data, it is acknowledged that the researcher needs to clearly and explicitly state the theoretical assumptions the research rests upon, and strengthen validity by providing thick descriptions and a distinct picture of the origins of the interpretations made. In this research, this has been done by elaborating upon the use of frames of reference for all interpretations, i.e. interpretational frames.

In a philosophical hermeneutical approach, prejudice, tradition and effective history sum up the influence and contextual aspects of humans always being caught in a web of predetermined meanings (Arendt, 1998; Gadamer, 1989). In every tradition, effective history seems to ensure that consciousness is historically situated within the prejudices that make up the world-view that is held.

To make possible a distance between the researcher and the other aspects of the research that is invested with historically and culturally determined meanings hermeneutics uses the theoretical concept of horizon. The idea is to open a productive gap, between two horizons; the researcher's prejudices and the data gathered (Gadamer, 1989). This provides two predetermined meanings with the potential to provide an understanding of the issue. Thus, interpretations have been made in a circular process of going from parts
to whole, from data to interpretational frame and back again in a controlled process of illumination, argumentation and dialogue. Without striving to close the gap, the productive aspects of using the frame are to keep focus and provide for yet another question. As Gadamer states, understanding is closely linked to its application, which in turn makes further questions possible to pose.

The overall underlying frame of reference for all of the analysis provided in the thesis is based upon two dimensions with bearing on education. Conceptualised as a field, it is illustrated in figure 1 in article II. The two dimensions of the field concern two philosophical questions about human; the origin of human becoming and the possibility of human agency. The questions are formulated as follows: Are humans individually or socially conceived? To what extent are humans able to act and affect what they are becoming? These two questions are given a possible scope and meaning in two dimensions; individual-social and predetermined-uncertain. In the first dimension, the intention is to capture the relative emphasis, given the distinction between individual or social conceptions. The second dimension has the intention to provide an understanding of how features of learning and education are perceived in regard to normative aspects, as either predetermination or uncertainty. In the field, aspects of the relationship between the human being and society are assumed to be captured. This relationship is understood here as an educative relationship (Björk, 2000). This includes an understanding in which humans are inculcated into certain notions, a process of being formed in an ongoing process of *edukation*.

The analysis of the data has been done in several steps, or movements, where the first step has been a thorough reading of all the data. Data have then been read and re-read, in a process of relating what sometimes are described as parts to what sometimes are described as a whole, back to parts, and then back to the whole again. In scientific literature this procedure is often referred to as the hermeneutical circle (e.g. Risser, 1997). Even though what is considered parts and whole are partially impossible to discern, the description of a continuous process where interpretation gradually is achieved gives one kind of picture of how the process of interpreting the data has been done. The readings have continually been related to the field, and the two dimensions used as the primary frame of reference. These interpretations have then been subject to inference from the other theoretical frameworks we have provided and used, and in that process the interpretations have been invested with meanings captured and ascribed to the theoretical frameworks that
were developed for each study. There has been an ongoing development of these frames. Using a frame cause, as Gadamer implies, some prejudices to be overcome, new questions to arise and new prejudices to come into play. However, by relating to our understanding of the process of edukation, that is to establish an educational relationship between human and society, the interpretations are considered to have coherent internal logic.

On the issue of doing case studies

In trying to demarcate a social context for a study of edukation, the decision fell upon a distance-based teacher training programme, in which several critical issues came together. Since the points made about edukation seemed to open the possibility for a variety of settings, it was an early interest in the social dimension in distance-based educations using ICT, and the societal commission in teacher training that informed the choice. Case study literature (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003) provided good arguments for doing so.

As Stake (1995) puts it, the real business of case studies is particularisations, not generalisations. This statement supported the demarcation of the teacher training programme as a single case, as opposed to choosing several programmes that differed in certain aspects to support, if not a true experimental design, then at least some kind of quasi-experiment. In light of Stake’s rhetoric, the programme in question seemed hard to penetrate with quasi-experimental methods. Sampling different programmes to find typical or representative ones to contrast with this particular seemed an unproductive way of generating insights into the aspects of edukation. As Stake puts it, case study research is not sampling research. Instead, the design was to have multiple units of analysis, an approach which Yin (2003) calls an embedded case study design, where the analysis can include outcomes from different projects within the boundaries of the single case.

According to Yin (2003), there are five rationales for choosing a single unit as a case. The first being whether the unit in question can be considered to be a critical one, in the sense that it can critically test a certain theory. A second rationale is whether a unit can represent what Yin calls an extreme or unique case. The third rationale Yin proposes is whether the unit can be considered as a representative or typical case. The fourth rationale is whether the unit can serve as a revelatory case, revealing something that was previously in-
accessible. And finally, the fifth rationale is whether the unit can be studied within a longitudinal design. Of these five rationales, the programme was chosen on account of the second, third and fourth.

To conclude, a single programme was demarcated as a social context for understanding edukation, where the design would enable the kind of understanding Stake (1995) implies when stating that “The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world, but to sophisticate the beholding of it” (p. 43). The programme could be a case where a desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2003), could roam free. However, at the same time, a single unit demands rigor and structure in its study, since it combines several aspects at the same time, and thereby represents a case which Merriam (1998) would describe as difficult to manipulate in cause and effects, and where the variables are too entangled to allow easy analysis.

A question that has occupied us during this research process is what about the problem of doing research on one single unit, and balancing the uniqueness with the scientific demands of validity, reliability, and generalisation? In the case study literature, these issues are all dealt with at length. In researching this programme, these issues were considered and efforts were made to accommodate the strategies suggested. Therefore, it was considered that data should be gathered in different ways and from different sources.

Our intention was to strengthen the validity of the research by allowing for inferring that the design of the case could answer to certain research questions, even though there are only weak links available and in different parts of the analysis (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1998) proposes some strategies to strengthen the internal validity that have been applied in this design. These strategies are: (1) member checks as a form of participant control, where participants have been exposed to parts of the interpretations made in the research, (2) peer examination and critique from colleagues and associates, (3) the explicit clarification of the biases taken into the research by the use of an explicit frame of reference for interpretations.

The issue of reliability in case studies has in this design been accounted for by the use of three strategies, proposed by Merriam (1998). Firstly, the reasons for doing the research, the assumptions and theories it rests upon are as thoroughly as possible described and accounted for. Secondly, there has been an attempt to capture different aspects of the demarcated social context considered as the
case. And thirdly, that we used rigorously held procedures regarding both data gathering and analysis, to make the research as transparent and open to critique as possible.

An additional issue considered has been the possibility of making generalisations, or put another way, the issue of the external validity. Generalising from one single case study does not seem possible in a more traditional sense. However, case study literature seems to claim that a re-conceptualisation of how generalisation is to be understood allows us to regard the results of one case study to be of general importance. Merriam provides three strategies for enhancing the possibilities of generalisation. The researchers should (1) provide rich descriptions, (2) describe how typical the case is so that readers can make their own comparisons, and (3) several sites, cases and situations should be used to maximise diversity in the phenomenon of interest. Here, the contextual descriptions are also provided as a way of applying these strategies. By being as detailed as possible with a practical applicative approach to interpretation and understanding, it is believed that the thesis can be considered within these notions of a more non-traditional understanding of generalisation.

To conclude, this case study design seems to be possible to align with at least three of four distinctive characteristics of case studies presented by Merriam (1998), namely: it is particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. It focuses on a single unit, it aims at producing a thick description and it aims at improving the readers understanding by enabling other forms of understanding. This leads to the aspect of the researcher’s role in a case study research design. It is commonly maintained that the researcher should aim at being involved in a far more subjective or personal manner than in traditional (natural science) research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). It is also apparent that interpretations cannot be avoided in any research (Merriam, 1998). Interpretations can, as conceived in this thesis, be made about anything (as in the statement from Vattimo (1997), that all facts are interpretations) and can provide a voice for the researched rather than the researcher (as in relying on prejudice, earlier understandings, biases and so on). This implies that the hermeneutical approach taken as a stance for this research is well aligned with the design of the research as a case study. Stake (1995) claims that even though the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasised more than the interpretations of those
being studied, the aim is to enable different and contradictory views of the case. In order to enable possible interpretations, it seems that a hermeneutical approach is called for.
PARTICIPANTS AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To understand the process of *edukation* in the demarcated social context of a distance-based teacher training programme, two groups involved in the programme seemed more important than others to approach; the teacher trainees and the teacher trainers. In deciding to gather data from those directly involved in the programme, the trainees were considered to be the primary group to be contacted. Since the number of trainees was not particularly high, the entire group was approached. The trainers were also approached through their association with the different departments involved in giving the teacher training programme. In the following text we will account for the rationales that have guided the work concerning data gathering. We include a more detailed account of the trainees and the trainers, and provide some insight into the use of data gathering methods.

The teacher trainees

The participating teacher trainees were all attending Swedish teacher training, organised as a distance-based programme in which ICT was used for administration, communication and support. The number of teacher trainees enrolled at the time of data gathering was 77. The whole group was asked to participate, and a total of 55 teacher trainees did so, approximately 71 per cent. Of these trainees, 42 were women and 13 were men. They were aged between 20 and 50 years old. A group of 22 teacher trainees attending the programme volunteered for an interview. Out of these 22, three were unable to take part and interviews were carried out with the remaining 19. The interviewees were between 20 and 50 years old. 13 were female and 6 were male.
The teacher trainers

The teacher trainers were approached through their department coordinator for undergraduate education. With the help of the coordinator (Patton, 1987), trainers were approached with an open question of participating in an interview concerning the particular distance-based teacher training programme. A number of trainers volunteered immediately, and thereafter a few trainers were specifically approached with reminders. Thus, trainers were recruited to represent as many university departments and courses as possible within the programme (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The trainers all volunteered for the study. The courses provided within the programme were in the area of social science, natural science and humanities, so trainers were included that came to represent three departments within those fields. Three of the trainers were women, and five were male. They all had experience of teaching within teacher training programmes; seven had taught between 9 and 14 years at the same university, one female trainer had experience of teaching distance education courses in at least three different departments. They were experienced in working as teachers, for example in the compulsory or secondary school system themselves, and all but one had themselves graduated from teacher training.

Data gathering methods - a questionnaire and two sets of interviews

The teacher trainees were first approached with a questionnaire. This was published on the Internet through the use of a web-based evaluation tool (eVAL), and all teacher trainees were asked to participate through their web-based learning environment. The questionnaire was reached through a hyperlink, protected by a password. Information about the questionnaire and the purpose of the study was then also sent by ordinary mail, and follow-up mails were sent to encourage the teacher trainees to participate in the study. Before the deadline for replying, a reminder was sent. After the deadline had expired, ordinary mails encouraging the teacher trainees to reply within a week were sent to those who had not already responded to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was constructed to include areas or activities that could be understood as common and central features of the
programme in question, and to supply data that enable an understanding of the working conditions in the programme (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The questionnaire was constructed by sampling questions from several prior studies conducted in Sweden. The questions were modified to suit this particular study, and to ensure that the questionnaire was usable, it was tried on another group of teacher trainees (n=23) and several department colleagues (n=5). After testing, the categories were adjusted and the questionnaire was modified to exclude open questions. The final version was slightly modified and included 15 themes and 79 highly structured questions, to which answers were to be given on predetermined scales (see for example Graziano & Raulin, 2000; Kerlinger, 1986). The questions used are available in appendix A.

The interviews with the trainees were semi-structured and conducted in accordance with an interview guide, appendix B (see Fontana & Frey, 2000; Kvale, 1997). The interview guide contained 15 issues divided into 4 different themes. The interviewees were given the interview guide in advance to be able to prepare for the interview. The interviews lasted between 25 and 60 minutes. All answers were recorded on tape, transcribed and analysed. Each interviewee was given the chance to comment on the transcripts before the analysis (Kvale, 1997).

The interviews with the teacher trainers were also conducted in accordance with an interview guide, appendix C. The teacher trainers were given the interview guide in advance, and they had time to reflect over the questions before the interview (one trainer, however, received the questions at the time of the interview). The interviews lasted for about 30-45 minutes, and were tape-recorded. They were thereafter transcribed and given back to the teacher trainers for comments and correction. The commented transcripts were the data used for analysis (Kvale, 1997).

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1 Due to the limited space only the questions used in this thesis are included. The entire questionnaire could be received from the authors.
PROVIDING A THICK DESCRIPTION

In the following section the intention is to provide a thick description (compare Merriam (1998) and the discussion about reliability and external validity). The aim of this is to provide the reader with insight into both the rationales behind the programme and its implications for the participants, as well as some further background information concerning the participants. The description is based on data gathered concerning the teacher training programme, governmental as well as local policies and curricula, questionnaire and interview background information and reports concerning the specific programme. The description firstly concentrates upon the considerations formulated at a governmental as well as local level. Secondly, the organisation and practice of the programme, as well as some further details on the participants, are described.

Considerations at a governmental level

In autumn 2000, the Swedish government decided that teacher training had to be improved. The decisions taken for a new and reformed teacher training indicated a change in direction concerning how central concepts such as education, teaching and learning should be understood. In the directives to the universities offering teacher training, this new understanding was presented, and with it followed indications on how this should permeate the teacher training programmes. In the process, the teacher profession was also intended to be changed. The government emphasised that this understanding ought to be a part of all the teacher trainees’ activities, including both theoretical and practical aspects of the internal work of the teacher training programme. It was suggested that teaching

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1 In the thesis, specific references to documents from the university in question are omitted due to issues of anonymity.
should be characterised by teacher trainee influence and participation (SOU 1999:63).

The trainees should be given opportunities to develop themselves into active and independent teachers, and be prepared to collaborate with pupils, colleges and the surrounding society. It was further stated that a central task for the teacher training programmes was to anchor, among the trainees, certain constitutive values that Swedish society is assumed to be built upon, such as multiculturalism, equity, democracy and freedom. The training of teachers should be conducted through the use of democratic working conditions, and thereby develop each trainee’s ability and willingness to become an active part, ready to assume responsibility for their own studies and achievements (SOU 1999:63).

Considerations at a local level

Within the university responsible for the teacher training programme, it was especially stressed that teacher training should educate critical and reflective teachers. Trainees should have an educational competence in relation to the needs of Swedish society. The education should provide both the theoretical knowledge and practical experience regarded necessary as a foundation for a life-long learning as a teacher. In this work, the university decided to integrate and allow the teacher trainees to develop skills in ICT. The purpose for this was two-folded. First, it was intended to provide the trainees with a competence to continuously develop new knowledge through the use of ICT. Secondly, it was intended to enable the trainees to participate in networks with other teachers both at a local and global level.

The organisation of the teacher training programme

The first discussions concerning the architecture and organisation of the programme took place in 1999. The discussions included ideas about a special kind of teacher training that was aimed at serving the needs for sparsely populated areas in Sweden. The starting point for the discussions was the special kind of school-related problems that these areas might have; low-scale schools with a large variation in the numbers of pupils attending the schools from one year to another. In short, the results of the discussions were that sparsely populated areas were in need of schools in which the skills to strive for were creativity, initiative and solving different kind of problems.
The solution was assumed to be a school characterised by a spirit of entrepreneurship, flexibility, and technological competence.

After these initial discussions, a process of organising the teacher training started. Funds were given to develop an access education that should, for example, prepare future teacher trainees for attending the programme, develop a curriculum directed to working in sparsely populated areas, and educate teacher trainers in the domain of ICT.

The programme then offered the trainees a degree ranging from kindergarten to secondary school teacher. The trainees had their specialisations interwoven with common compulsory courses for all despite specialisation. The programme varied from three and a half years to four and a half years, depending on the specialisation chosen. The programme also contained periods when the trainees were located in schools. This was an idea of both relating theory to practice and allowed the trainees to become familiar with their future workplaces.

**Recruiting the trainees**

Recruiting the trainees included several stages. The main criteria for this process were to find individuals that were highly motivated to work as teachers. Furthermore, individuals being in their middle ages (more than 80% were older than 30 years old and almost 36% were aged between 40 and 45) and individuals of foreign origin were especially sought for. Trainees who passed the recruitment tests had to choose in which school level they wanted to teach in the future.

**The trainees attending the programme**

The recruited trainees consisted of both females and males, and the majority were raised by parents with non-academic occupations. Examples of common parental occupations were builder, cleaner, electrician, farmer, taxi driver, telephone operator and forestry worker. When questioned, they stated that success in life was due to their own ambitions and accordingly, most of them did not relate success in higher education either to their parents’ educational achievements in higher education or their parents’ financial status.

In addition, most of them stressed that they aimed to start working after finishing teacher training, while only a smaller amount of the investigated group were worried about ending up unemployed.
Further, they thought that different occupations should be considered as equally important, but not that everyone should be paid the same salary independent of occupation. Paradoxically, most of them claimed that an occupation that creates a feeling of doing something meaningful is more important than one which renders a high salary, without a feeling of personal satisfaction. Further, key components of a future occupation were that everyone in the workplace should be dedicated in reaching common goals, and that the occupation must include inherent opportunities for developing one’s own personal competencies and skills. Yet another important part of a progressive and challenging occupation was considered to be the possibility of continuously attending further education, and relating teaching as practice to a life-long learning.

Regarding their own family and whether these were supportive in relation to studies in a higher education, most of the trainees agreed that the rest of the family encouraged them to attend higher education, and that they were interested in the overall success in the programme. Conducting higher education studies was in many cases articulated as an investment for the future. Family members were also referred to as being open for and interested in discussing the teacher training programme in question, and a rather large group of family members expected them to be successful in their studies.

When asked more explicitly about their understanding of how they intended to work in the future as teachers, most of the trainees stated the importance of teaching permeated by flexibility, enabling each individual pupil to develop themselves in a personal way, and that the teaching content, to the highest level possible, should be based upon the pupils’ personal interests and abilities. Additionally, they expressed that it was equally important to create teaching situations that require the pupils to work collaboratively. Thoughts of collaboration were furthermore extended to include the surrounding society. The trainees here stressed the importance of engaging other individuals that were external to the school, possessing specific competencies the teachers themselves did not have. These individuals should come to school and enrich the content of the teaching.

**The teacher trainers - a few words on those working with the teacher trainees**

The teacher trainers working in the programme represented many different university departments. The courses given in the pro-
programme were in the areas of social science, natural science and the humanities. The majority of the trainers had both an academic teacher training degree of their own and a rather long experience of working as teachers in different levels of the school system before entering the occupation as teacher trainers at the university. Additionally, two of them had doctoral level academic degrees and one was a doctoral student. Most of the trainers had been involved in teaching activities at the university for more than ten years.

Regarding important issues in relation to teacher training, the trainers stressed the process of becoming a teacher, developing a teacher identity, as being ready to meet the school practice outside the university. Further, they claimed that a critical task for them as trainers was to integrate theory into practice. Teacher training was by most of the trainers articulated as a vocational education that motivated a rather strong emphasise on practice. Furthermore, some of them stressed the importance of using a historical and cultural perspective in their teaching. The reason for doing so was claimed to be the importance of knowing about, for example, the role of teacher training in Swedish society, as well as different understandings of the human being stressed over time.

One of the trainers had a formal degree in open and distance education. Since this was known in advance, it was remedied with courses and mentoring in distance education techniques for trainers. These courses included issues such as education, the use of different computerised learning environments, the role of the trainer and the trainee in distance education.

**ICT and the intended distance education practice**

The teacher training programme in question was built around the idea that the trainees would mostly be able to conduct their studies from their home municipality, and if possible also home town. These towns were often places in the sparsely populated areas of Sweden, areas that the trainees should be trained for, and ready to work in. The programme included a few number of on-campus gatherings. As a complement, the trainees were divided into different study groups, who either had to meet themselves at local learning centres.

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5 The teacher trainers are also described in article VI.
in their municipality or use ICT in the form of a computerised learning environment, for administrative, educational and (formal and informal) supportive purposes. The ICT alternative was intended to allow a large degree of independence from the constraints of space and time. For the departments involved in the programme in general and the teacher trainers in particular, this meant both an opportunity of an alternative to the learning environment provided on-campus and if, and when needed, an immediate and continuing access to the trainees.

Some of the organisational issues that were characteristic for early distance-based teacher training were still present in the new programme. One example is that the trainees had to attend on-campus meetings during which teaching, lessons and seminars were given in a rather concentrated form. Another example is that the trainees had to communicate and collaboratively solve educational-related problems or tasks between the on-campus meetings. The significant difference here seems to be the way in which communication was conducted. Earlier distance-based teacher training programmes relied more on the use of ordinary mail or phone for communicating with each other without meeting physically. In this programme, the main forms of communication were web-based conference systems and web-portals, systems that served as computerised learning environments.

In the programme in question, ICT was used to allow the trainees to be a part of a joint learning environment despite their geographical separation. The learning environment could in that way be understood as an extension beyond an on-campus definition of a learning environment. For the departments involved in the programme in general, and the trainers in particular, this offered an alternative to the learning environment provided on-campus. The communication between trainers and trainees and between trainees on the distance-based programme was primarily, when not being on-campus, conducted via ICT.

The computerised learning environment had a joint entrance that contained several different functions enabling the trainees to communicate both synchronously and asynchronously. There were, for example, functions or tools such as email, chat, discussion groups with threaded discussions, electronic portfolios (including themes like a personal presentation, a learning contract and a log-book), study-group conferences and students’ chat room.

The use of the computerised learning environment aimed to provide the programme with a social dimension, i.e. a learning environ-
ment that did not require physical meetings. Trainees had to rely on the computerised learning environment as the main form of communication and collaboration on their assignments in the study-groups between the on-campus gatherings. Furthermore, there were a computerised learning environment for more informal communication.

The courses within the programme contained tasks that were both individual and group-related, and the trainees had to collaborate to complete the tasks in their study-group and produce answers that were group-related. They were also expected, within the computerised learning environment, to comment and reflect upon the other teacher trainees’ individual assignments as a requisite for grading. Furthermore, the courses included both chat-seminars, conducted within the computerised learning environment, and online tutorial sessions. Additionally, the trainees were required to provide feedback and responses to each other on the individual electronic portfolios, all intended to support a collaborative and social learning process within the programme. As can be seen in relation to the aspects of distance education earlier mentioned in the thesis, the organisation was based on an emphasis on social dimensions, collaboration and participation for learning in accordance with a learning community perspective.

Now that the programme has been provided with a context, the overall questions asked in the objectives of the thesis can be dealt with. The informed practice of a teacher training programme, built on specific assumptions of distance education, has here been described. In the next part of the thesis, the articles are intended to provide an understanding of how the teacher training has been researched, and what the overall findings of the research might be. In particular, we hope that the reader will understand and appreciate the efforts taken to organise a distance-based teacher training programme through the use of ICT. The concluding remarks will re-align the articles with the objectives of the thesis and provide a more focussed account of how we perceive that the objectives have been met. In the epilogue, we will return to the issue of community and the fostering of values such as democracy in distance-based practices, and briefly touch upon the possible need for an ethical stance in relation to education.
ON THE ARTICLES

Article I

In this article, the aim was to contribute to a public discussion about research in Sweden within the discipline of Education (Pedagogik). It provides a link between the research conducted and reported, and the broader picture of writing in an academic discipline at a specific time in history by aligning the research with the dominant traditions and perspectives in the discipline, i.e. (in our view), teaching and learning in general, and teacher training and distance education in particular.

Attempts are made to sketch a picture of Education as a discipline, and from that picture, trace a line of thought pointing towards a renewed interest in philosophy as a necessary ground for Education. The idea of tracing and illustrating some of the theoretical assumptions underlying the research reported in the thesis, is part of the overall idea of rendering a thesis open for critique on its own accounts. If aspects of the research tradition are taken for granted, remain un-reflected, and are not made explicit regarding its assumptions, conceptions, and notions, the thesis would probably be easier attacked and defenceless to threats to its validity. For that reason, this article positions the thesis within the discipline of Education, and aligns itself to the traditions of carrying out educational research in Sweden as it has herein been defined.

In the article, a possible research approach for Education is presented, and in the end a possible object of study in Education is formulated, which would imply and enable other understandings within the field of educational research. The approach and the object of study are claims raised to support the work reported in the thesis.
The research approach put forth is based on a specific form of hermeneutics: philosophical hermeneutics, and the theoretical object of study argued for is *edukation*.

**Article II**


In this article, we intended to argue for an approach to research in Education based on philosophical hermeneutics. What is primarily in focus is the position within a tradition that enables understanding. Often in research, this position is regarded as bias. The researcher must attempt to control, or sidestep, the aspects of bias that make interpretations a question of subjectivity. Here, the approach adopted was deliberately chosen to use interpretations that could lead to an understanding of educational issues grounded in both empirical data and theory. A key idea was that this should be done without resulting in a claim of interpretations based on subjectivity alone. To be able to successfully deploy such an interpretational process, a philosophical hermeneutical approach to research was used. This approach positions the idealistic trait of hermeneutics within a tradition of social sciences, in which the social sciences are considered to be occupied with philosophical matters that cannot be settled by empirical accounts.

The argument here was that various aspects of the educational system can be understood if a productive gap is enabled between a pre-specified theoretical frame and the empirical data collected. In hermeneutics, this productive gap is often referred to as two different horizons. It is argued that these horizons should be treated as the gap between data and prejudices, where the prejudices are productive if they create an understanding of the thing in question. The understanding thus enabled would be directed at its application, and thereby directly connected to empirical aspects of the educational system.

The predetermined meanings of education within a contemporary Swedish society were articulated as educational prejudices. Conceptualised as a field, the prejudices are captured in a frame of reference enabling interpretations. In the field, the two dimensions, individual-social and predetermined-uncertain, open a gap for inter-
pretation, in those aspects of the relationship between humans and society where different prejudices can come into play. The interpretational frame suggested illuminates different aspects related to educational theory, and thereby interpretations of that which is near and taken for granted in relation to the educational system are made both explicit and possible. Claims are made that interpretations are thereby possible to use in educational research without becoming expressions of the researcher's bias or statements that are only of academic interest.

Article III

This article concerns a possible way of understanding the concept of teaching. It is an interpretational frame for designating agency for forming and developing the aspects of norms and values present in educational settings. One of the most prominent traditions within the theories on teaching is taken as a starting point; that of the teacher as a reflective practitioner. This notion is then expanded upon to include aspects of teaching more commonly found in education, under the headings of moral or character education, rather than knowledge-building.

Beginning with an elaboration on three different aspects of knowledge with roots in ancient Greece; *epistémé, techné* and *phronesis*. Thereafter, some traditions and lines of development in research on teaching over the last thirty years are presented. It is claimed and shown that *phronesis* still seems to be a useful concept when trying to understand teaching and teachers' knowing in practice. *Phronesis* is possible to align with the hermeneutical research stance taken for interpretations. It is therefore suggested to serve as an argument for connecting understanding through interpretations with the application of these understandings.

In an attempt to go beyond the Cartesian dualism of subject and object, *phronesis* is then described within a philosophical hermeneutical approach. The conclusion points towards a possibility of understanding teaching and teachers' knowing in practice in terms of embodied moral.
Article IV


This is the first empirically based article included in the thesis. It reports on the working conditions within a Swedish ICT-supported distance-based teacher training programme. It rests on the assumptions of learning as a process of negotiation of meaning, and attempts to provide for an understanding of the working conditions within the programme regarding aspects of influence and choice.

Data were gathered through a questionnaire, and the responses were analysed and discussed in relation to Swedish governmental policies concerning teacher training and distance education, and theories emphasising the importance of social aspects of education. The possible understanding of the working conditions was thereby asserted through the policies and theories used. In the governmental policies, certain opportunities for the trainees to exercise influence and choice were explicit, mainly directed towards being able to select courses and content in a future academic degree. Teacher training departments are also expected, according to the policies, to organise teacher training in accordance with democratic principles of influence.

The findings indicate working conditions that are mainly controlled by the teacher training department, and that trainees to a high degree are fostered into viewing education as an individual concern. Exceptions are in group works, where trainees seem to be able to exercise some influence. These seem, on the other hand, to be given only minor attention by the teacher training department. This raises questions related to the intentions of teacher training. Firstly, concerning issues of flexibility and choice, and more precisely about which aspects are flexible or not. Another concern is the possibilities of teacher training for providing an education that enables trainees to develop the competence needed to be able to teach within a societal context of change and multiple views of reality. If teacher training is inflexible in its organisation and focussed on individuals, what kind of teachers does it foster?

This implies that the conditions within which the trainees are given the opportunity to form a sense of community seem to be rather formalised and structured by the teacher training department, and that the steering of group work seems to be the exception. If teacher
training is considered to be a practice in which individuals are being fostered into shared values by a process of negotiation, then it seems that the values being negotiated are based on the notions of individuals. The main impression seems to be of an individualised programme, with restricted room for influence and choice regarding working conditions.

Article V

The intentions of this article was to discuss the various understandings of how trainees’ on a distance-based teacher training programme using a computerised learning environment have come to view aspects of learning and education. This article is considered relevant since it focuses on the social dimension of distance-based teacher training practice.

Educational research today often stresses the importance of a social dimension in learning and education, and computerised learning environments are said to create and fulfil the social dimension of on-campus education as well as distance education. The social dimension is important here in relation to the ambition of capturing the process of negotiating values and norms within a community. Here the community is conceived to be the trainees’ study-group, and learning is related to aspects of a social dimension within this group.

The social dimension of learning and education is investigated in a Swedish distance-based teacher training programme supported by ICT, using semi-structured interviews with 19 trainees. In the interviews, the trainees elaborate upon issues of giving other trainees help with their studies, and helping other trainees to be accepted within their own study-groups.

The findings imply a complex relationship between the use of the computerised learning environment and the physical meetings in the programme. One conclusion is that, even though theories emphasise the social dimension of learning through participation, trainees seem to view participation with others as important primarily in relation to the social aspects of well-being, rather than in relation to learning.
The use of ICT for creating a community of learners through participation seems to individualise the trainees' learning rather than bringing them together in their learning processes. This appears to contradict the aims of using ICT in this particular programme, and supports a conclusion that the process of forming values and norms within a teacher training programme seems to a large degree to be up to the trainees themselves. Control over the values being negotiated and the aspects of balancing the individual efforts needed to participate in the programme, and the collective responsibilities assigned to the study-groups seem not to be addressed in the programme. Trainees seem to be expected to assume a high amount of responsibility for their own studies, and this also implies that other trainees are individually responsible for their studies. The social aspects of learning and education seem difficult to realise.

Article VI

This article is an attempt to use data gathered from teacher trainers that have been involved in giving the programme studied. The aim of the article was to investigate the relationship between online learning and teacher training. The trainers were interviewed, and responded to questions about how they thought, conducted and reflected upon issues of influence and choice, teaching and learning, organisation and structures concerning distance-based online teacher training. The use of technology is conceptualised as a matter of being able to ‘walk the walk’, i.e. of building bridges between the text-based learning environments of conference-systems and situated practices relevant to teacher training. For that reason, an understanding of knowing in action based on phronesis is used, which captures the idea that engaged social practice - doing something ‘well’- is said to have both contextual and moral dimensions.

From an analysis of the interviews, certain pedagogies, considered by the trainers as possible to use in the programme, were constructed. Other pedagogies, though, seemed to be rather difficult to include through the use of technology. Instead, these pedagogies were considered possible to include or use within the few physical meetings in the programme. The pedagogies that seemed to require
physical meetings are related to the phronetic approach to teaching, included in article III. Using this combination, a possible enhanced use of technology in the service of learning is described, in which *phronesis* is considered as the knowledge required for common values to be achieved. In relation to such a phronetic approach to teaching, online learning communities as a valid base for fostering a practice built around common societal values was discussed.

**Article VII**


This article is concerned with conceptions of democracy among trainees attending a distance-based teacher training programme through the use of ICT. It is an attempt to capture, analyse and discuss the issue of negotiating meanings and understandings within an online learning environment in terms of belonging to a learning community. The curriculum at both national and regional level, stresses that the programme should instil the importance of democracy in the trainees. This is thought to be both about including democracy as content per se, and about organising and building the inner work of the programme, the pedagogies used, on democratic principles. Thus, the intentions are to provide a theoretical insight into the need for and scope of democracy, and also to enable the trainees to practically enact democracy.

The analysis of the interviews with teacher trainees provided an understanding of the trainees’ conceptions of democracy. The analysis is done by using a framework for understanding democracy, and points toward a view in which the trainees focus foremost on individual aspects of democracy, rather than on social or collective conceptions of societal values. Thus, a possible conclusion is that distance-based teacher training is highly individualised, to the point of conceiving values connected to a social dimension as an individual enterprise, and even aspects connected to values such as democracy.

Thus, this article concerns the educative relationship between humans and society, i.e. the values and norms that are negotiated and upheld within a community as it evolves and is maintained within an online teacher training programme. It is, in this case, an example on how the ‘I/We’ balance can be interpreted as tilted to-
wards the 'I'. Furthermore, individual responsibilities and rights in a society or community are seen as important. If the good in any ethical or moral sense is to be decided by humans, it seems as though it has to be negotiated and deliberatively addressed within a dialogue or discussion that formulates the premises of education, schooling and learning in a far more explicit way than here. It might even be harshly formulated that it is disputable whether teacher training could be used to induct values held by previous generations in a society through politics and policy making alone. This indeed seems to be the case if the notions of teaching and learning, education and schooling and the purpose and basis for those activities are not explicitly dealt with.

Article VIII


By trying to avoid using the same prejudices that had been found in each minor study, and to enable a joint analysis, the analysis in this article started with a philosophical stance in relation to education. That choice opened for a discussion of different understandings of participation in an ICT-supported distance-based teacher training programme in Sweden, as elucidated from an analysis of the two studies reported in article IV and V.

Thus, this article is an attempt to use a different interpretational framework to explore the possibilities of using the data and the interpretations in order to generate a further understanding that was related to the trainees and their distance-based teacher training programme. It is to be understood both as an attempt to use the hermeneutical approach for deepening the understandings reached, i.e. to use the hermeneutical means of relating supposed parts to supposed wholes and back again, and as an attempt to embed the analysis of two studies within the case study design.

The analysis was therefore based on some early results from the two studies; one interview and one questionnaire. According to the result, it appears that there is a need to be more explicit about the ontological assumptions inherent in the intended use of ICT. A productive feature of this analysis that can be regarded as approaching a meta-analysis was how aspects of the programme could be illumi-
nated through the use of other assumptions about educational issues. Viewed together the conclusions carefully drawn are that the programme in question seems to be built on assumptions of realism, and that ICT paves the way for individual participation, thereby working to tell the participants apart.

On the articles as parts of an embedded case study design

In the articles it was intended to be included theoretical accounts of education. This includes frameworks for a number of theoretical accounts of education, as well as theoretical accounts of teaching and learning. These have been accounted for to various degrees in all articles, but perhaps most prominently in articles I, II and III. Article I has been included because it positions the thesis within its academic field, an idea further elaborated upon in the earlier parts of the thesis. In article II, the framework results in a possible field of educational thought aimed at understanding the relationship between the individual and social, which thereafter has been used in the data analysis as a primary frame of reference. In article III, the framework based on the reflective practitioner paradigm points towards a possible understanding of teaching and learning as activities permeated by moral. The relationship between the individual and social is also visible in article IV, where working conditions and aspects of influence are related to flexible learning, in article V, where learning is related to social aspects of participation, and in article VI where an understanding of knowing in action based on moral is elaborated upon in relation to on-line teacher training.

Intentions were also to include different governmental and local policies. These have been accounted for in articles IV-VIII. These frameworks serve as a means for understanding how distance education practices are realised within online learning contexts, and they are aimed at enabling an understanding of the relationship established between individual and social aspects of distance education. Frameworks for enabling an understanding of governmental and local policies concerning teacher training and its organisation and practice have also been accounted for in articles IV-VIII. These frameworks serve as a foundation for an understanding of a practice, with the aim of training teachers with a societal commission. With these frameworks, an understanding is enabled where the practice of teaching teacher trainees is not only about ensuring that they master content matter, but also that they themselves are to be
inculcated into common values such as democracy, and thereby become democratic persons. In short, teacher training can be regarded as a practice of fostering those who in turn should foster others.

Further there were intentions to include different conceptions and notions of values and ethical issues. For example to describe and understand the conditions whereby the teacher trainees come to understand their societal commission, as a strive to uphold and develop the constitutive values assumed to be held in common in Sweden. This was intended to be captured in different conceptions of societal values such as democracy, different conceptions of the specific relation between individuals and society, and in notions of the importance of ethical and moral issues in teaching. In the articles, these aspects of the case have been addressed in different ways, for example, in article IV, where the working conditions of the programme is related to trainees’ experiences of influence and choice, and where distance-based teacher training seems to emphasise individual performance and accountability. This is also present in article V, where a social dimension in education is related both to learning and to feelings of being at ease within the education and the study-group. This has also been addressed by including the teacher trainers in the data gathered, and in article VI an account of how these have constructed the educational practice of the programme is provided. In article VII, another point of interest is the trainees’ conceptions of democracy, as an example of a societal value that the programme is intended to uphold.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

Before ending the thesis in an epilogue, there appears to be a need for returning to the objectives of the thesis. In doing so, this section tries to comment upon and reflect upon both the possible understandings generated in the thesis and their shortcomings.

How have the objectives been met?

What can be said about the process of *edukation*? In what ways do we understand how the organisation and practice of a distance-based teacher training programme establishes a relationship between the teacher trainees and the rest of society? Based on the contribution of each included article, we now intend to align the articles with the objectives and conclude with a few assertions. With the overall objective of the thesis specified as to describe and contribute to an understanding of the process of *edukation* in one demarcated social context, namely distance-based teacher training, this has initially been addressed by specifying and generating theoretical frameworks serving to enable an understanding of the data gathered accounted for in the articles. What, then, are the concluding assertions that can be made, and what can be said about the process of *edukation* in this demarcated social context?

Implications for the overall objective

It appears as if individuals are supposed to possess competencies that include self-sufficiency, self-direction in their learning and self-confidence providing independence from their fellow trainees, their trainers or the society at large. In stating this, the somewhat paradoxical intentions of teacher training organisation, mostly relying on individual choice and self-sufficiency, can be understood as affecting how the trainees come to understand the purpose of schooling and education in a society such as Sweden. The phrase paradoxical is used, because these outcomes do not appear to be those intended...
of teacher training, in terms of the constitutive values of multiculturalism, equity, democracy and freedom. In official policies concerning teacher training, for example SOU 1999:63, far more emphasis is put on the social and societal dimensions of schooling and education in a society such as Sweden. We therefore believe that these aspects should be better incorporated within the practice of the educational system as a whole. There seems to be a need for a debate and a deliberation among the teachers, not only about which values should count as constitutive in a society such as Sweden, but also about the ethical considerations behind those values. This might not be a question about whether democracy should be a value, but how democracy is to be conceived. This could be one aspect of the educational struggle for democracy, and is something that perhaps always should be a question open for debate and deliberation, as Englund (1989; 1995; 2003) so often has argued. Furthermore, we can say that articles IV contribute to the understanding of the process of *edukation* in distance-based teacher training as being controlled by the individualised ways open for teacher trainers to assess the learning of the trainees. Being assessed primarily on an individual basis does not seem to encourage the trainees to take a collective responsibility for their learning. This might also be the issue in article V, where the trainees seem to associate the social dimensions in the programme primarily to feelings of being at ease, rather than to aspects of learning. Seen as overall aspects of a process of *edukation*, this might also be an aspect of the norms and values developed when the trainees are asked to elaborate on issues of democracy in article VII. In line with the ideas of being part of and belong to an OLC, the negotiation of meaning and values appears, in this context, to negotiate individual aspects of democracy as well. A joint understanding is being formed, consisting of democracy and individual rights. This could also be an effect of the trainers’ outspoken ideas of challenging the trainees when they are present on campus. When trainers find it difficult to include issues of *phronesis*, as it is understood in article III and VI, in the pedagogies used online, this might well work to further sharpen the trainees’ view of their own efforts as the primary issue of teaching.

As for article VIII, the attempt made at generating a further understanding could be seen as problematic. What is interesting in retrospect is the idea that a further understanding could be reached and here it might be possible to view this attempt in the relation to the other articles. One might wonder, if there are any options to rethink this result in the light of the concept of community. Are there any
possibilities to turn this understanding of the role of ICT within the programme into, for example, a collaborative learning venture? In accordance with Gadamer (1989) and Arendt (1998), who stresses that prejudice, tradition and effective history sums up the influence and contextual aspects of humans as always being caught in a web of already determined meanings, it might seem to be a rather difficult task. Striving for a turn in direction towards a more learner-centred community-oriented (in the sense of for example Selznik, 1996; Sorensen & Ó Murchú, 2004; Wenger, 1998) programme, we here carefully suggest, without any normative intentions, that one possibility could be to include lectures and seminars that make explicit an understanding of online learning, building on the idea that knowledge could be built collaboratively within this kind of learning environment, through a process characterised by, for example, mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise, and that this could be done early in the programme (Wenger, 1998). Making the assumptions of the programme as explicit as possible, would perhaps admit the teacher trainees to align their learning processes to those expected within the programme, and perhaps that would make the teacher trainees more aware of their learning as a part of a social process.

**Issues concerning the research reported**

One might wonder how appropriate has the philosophical hermeneutical approach been, and what we see as its benefits and shortcomings in our research. One might also ask how appropriate the rationales strategies applied to the research in its design as an embedded case study actually worked in practice. In the following paragraphs these questions are given some attention.

Answering the first question about the hermeneutical approach seems to be a problematic issue. This is not only caused by the difficulty of having used a hermeneutical approach, but is also due to the fact that many of the actions taken to demarcate the social context of the programme and to provide restriction to the case study also include and affect the hermeneutical approach used. Hermeneutics also seems to imply in itself that a degree of uncertainty remains, i.e. a possibility to pose yet another question after the initial prejudices have been overcome and new understandings have been reached. In turn, these might be the only reasons for conducting research in the first place; to be able to pose further initiated questions. Nevertheless, an answer seems to be required here.
A constant strive has been to make the process of interpreting the data gathered as open and transparent as possible. Therefore, much effort has been put into generating theoretical frames to allow interpretation. These frames not only serve to embrace the particularities of each aspect in the research design, with each part embedded in the case study, but also reveal and displace prejudices. Validating the hermeneutical approach has therefore involved writings concerning possible theoretical positions at all levels in the process. These range from explicating the researcher’s assumptions on research traditions to explicating traditions in teacher training and teaching, as well as distance education and flexible learning, ICT and the Internet and assumptions about the use of community in relation to education. Similar to the thoughts put forth concerning validity and reliability in relation to conducting research by the use of a case study design, it is probably possible to write more at length, and about other aspects and from other perspectives.

In retrospect, shortcomings in our research can be identified. One important aspect is the question of time in relation to making interpretations that stem from productive prejudices to be overcome in the process of interpreting. That which becomes a possibility of posing another question also emanates as a prejudice. As can be seen in the articles, interpretation relies on one primary frame of reference, the establishment of a relationship between humans and society in terms of an educational relationship developed in article II. This understanding can also be regarded as having been breached by time and consistent interpretation. By using the field consequently, we hope that the interpretations in the thesis are coherent. However, we also acknowledge how hints in our later works point towards a new understanding of the educational relationship in which ethics and ontology intersect with the becoming of humans. This theme becomes more and more prominent as we continue to work, while Heidegger becomes less and less dominant. It is our opinion that the writings put forth in the thesis are possible to understand as coherent, and that they allow the assertions made in the thesis to be acceptable.

One final word on the approach in relation to the articles seems necessary. In all articles, we have mostly described the theoretical aspects of research in relation to interpretation. In the articles, the teacher training programme has not clearly been referred to as being part of a case study. When required, each reported aspect has been claimed to be part of a larger and ongoing research project. This is due to two different aspects. Firstly, case studies and case
study research are conceptualised somewhat differently around the world. In some cases, a case could be a smaller example of a specific phenomenon, whereas in this thesis it has been regarded as a larger context or phenomenon in need of a larger research design. This has also been a consequence of regarding *edukation* as the specific object of study. If included in each article, this matter would require clarification each time. This has therefore sometimes been omitted, primarily though because of space and time. Secondly, using a (philosophical) hermeneutical approach to empirically conceived social science seems to be uncommon. We have therefore tried to make the hermeneutical approach as explicit as possible in the articles.

Answering the second question seems to be about giving words to the restrictions implied in demarcating the social context of a teacher training programme and regarding it as part of a case study design, that is the ambitions of the design as a case study, and the data gathering procedures chosen. Regarding the case study as a unique and extreme case, and at the same time a representative and typical case, might seem a bit too much. In retrospect, it probably was, but because of the way it has been treated, it seems likely that the case study is possible to relate to those aspects. It is possible to understand both as extreme and typical, in the sense that the teacher training programme is part of a movement of the early 21st century, where education can be provided on a non-national basis through the use of ICT. It seems important that research is directed towards these issues, to critically examine the assumptions behind this trend as well as the possible outcomes. If education is regarded from the social science standpoint of being part of an overall process of *edukation*, with the implications sketched in the early parts of the thesis as well as in article I and II, then these new possibilities for education world-wide can probably be seen as a part of a new formation of human. The programme seems possible to put forth as both unique and extreme in Sweden, and at the same time regarded as part of the overall structure of teacher training at the university where it is given. This also seems to enable an understanding to be regarded as typical, and at the same time representative of this new trend. In this thesis, an attempt has also been made to be revelatory, an aspect that must truly be treated with utmost care.

As for the case study methodology used to ensure validity and reliability, these seem in retrospect to have been necessary and, in a sense, sufficient. Since a strict procedure has been used in the data gathering, and a strive has been made to enable as many assump-
tions behind the research as possible open for others to criticize, it is assumed that the claims of the research are validated both by peers and participants. By using different sources and different data gathering methods, it is also believed that the programme is more accounted for than if it was researched from only one point of view. One aspect of this is the trainees’ views on their possibilities of exercising influence and choice included in the analysis in article IV, and their notions of the social dimension included in the analysis in article V, when their views are contrasted with the trainers’ intentions and perceived afforded pedagogies in article VI. Here, the views of the two groups of participants intersect and enable additional understandings, especially in relation to the included context and thick description. However, conducting perfect research and covering all aspects of validity and reliability seems to be impossible. In this thesis, the strive has continuously been to take these aspects of conducting research seriously. There are probably aspects that have not been treated especially well throughout the research process, but we consider the case to have been described thoroughly enough to make the thesis and the assertions made understandable and acceptable.

The appropriateness of the different methods of data gathering referred to earlier seems to be another difficult matter to assess. As far as we can tell, and this could be said to be a common issue in qualitative research in general, the procedures and methods appear from our point of view to have been appropriate (see for example Fontana & Frey, 2000; Kerlinger, 1986; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1987; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Since we have followed strict procedures, provided insights into the rationales of our interpretations, provided theoretical insights into the foundations of our interpretations and provided as open arguments for our interpretations as possible, it seems as if we have covered at least some of the academic expectations on research elaborated upon in the literature mentioned above, concerning method and methodology.

**Issues concerning concepts used**

Something that appears to deserve some attention is the way these included articles complement one another at a principal or conceptual level. Since they have been written and submitted to different journals and book projects, both national and international, they have been subject to different historically and culturally affected assumptions about the way this kind of research could, or should, be
conducted. The articles have also been subject to opinions about how these phenomena could, or should, be described, and they have accordingly been altered on the basis of, sometimes rather divergent, rationales. We will in the following text briefly comment on how the central concepts used in each article can be aligned to each other, and at the same time provide an understanding of how the work has progressed over time.

One question of shifting descriptions or conceptualisations has been the aspect of using ICT in the programme. As the work on the thesis has progressed, it has become more and more clear to us that there has been a shift in focus in the research literature in this field, from talking about ICT as a learning environment towards a view of ICT as a medium for creating learning communities.

When the demarcated social context of a distance-based teacher training programme first was considered it was as an example of a teacher education given as a distance-based programme. In particular, the interest was on becoming teachers and teacher educators. When the ERIC thesaurus was consulted, these concepts were changed into teacher trainees and teacher trainers, and teacher education was changed into teacher training.

**Potentials for further questions**

When considering all eight articles, one might wonder whether this was a story of community at all. This aspect is dealt with in the epilogue of this thesis. The intention is to provide both the being-together adopted from Heidegger with a well sought-for ethical ground, and to allow *phronesis* to be the aspect of education that balances the ‘I’ with the ‘We’, gives rights and responsibilities equal importance, but also provide possibilities for deciding what education for a viable future might be. If politics is considered to be the way that Swedish society has chosen to handle ethical issues related to education (Carr & Hartnett, 2002; Svensson, 2004), issues concerning, for instance the meaning of constitutive values like multiculturalism, equity, democracy and freedom, these values seems to be rather important to further scrutinize and thoroughly investigate within the practice of distance-based teacher training. Finally, what do we see within our research that might further provide distance-based teacher training programmes (and perhaps education at large) with productive insights and prejudices? Following Etzioni (1993) and Elias (1991), this question might even have a name as its answer: Lévinas. We believe that the organisation and practice of
education could benefit if ethics were acknowledged as the first philosophy, in accordance with Lévinas (1989). This would perhaps provide opportunities for people to actually negotiate values and deliberately conceive the premises for being human as being open. We return to this issue in the epilogue of the thesis, beginning with the question of community.
EPILOGUE

In this epilogue, we want to end the thesis with some overall thoughts about the research we have concentrated on for several years. Given the chance to regard the teacher training programme from different theoretical positions over time, we want to comment upon the issue of considering the teacher trainees and their studies as belonging to a learning community. The OLC intersects the issues of education, learning and technology with the issues of values and society, and thereby it promises a great deal. However, do the promises hold in this case?

A fair starting point for this issue could be: was this a story of community? To answer this question, it might be appropriate to begin with a similar question posed by Sergiovanni: “what is the story of community?” (1999, p. 9).

It seems that the concept of community is not to be associated with a fixed and objective definition with a clear and central meaning, but rather as a concept open to different kinds of meanings, depending on social, cultural and societal framework (Selznik, 1996). Bauman (2001) argues that the concept of community is associated with a tension between safety and freedom. He describes this as a two-folded understanding of community that on the one hand creates a feeling of being part of and sharing something positive with others (for example a society), and on the other hand threatens our autonomy. Community, Bauman claims,

is a ‘warm’ place, a cozy and comfortable place. It is like a roof under which we shelter in heavy rain, like a fireplace at which we warm our hands a frosty day. In here, in the community, we can relax – we are safe, there are no dangers looming in the dark corners (p. 1-2)

On the other side, being part of a community means paying a price and “the price is paid in the currency of freedom, variously called ‘autonomy’, ‘right to self-assertion’, ‘right to be yourself’. (p. 4)
A further understanding of the in-built tensions within the concept of community is found in Tönnies (1963), who makes a distinction between Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft. In the latter, a coherent community in which culture and social practice are infused with moral unity and intimacy is described as a kind of norm-based enterprise. In the former, social contracts connect individual human beings. In a community coloured by Gesellschaft, each member’s autonomy and mobility is favoured. Instead of negotiating a system of norms to live by in the community, the members have to live by certain rules that ensure that each member gets what he or she wants (Sergiovanni, 1999). In the words of Tönnies (1963), in Gemeinschaft, human beings “remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the Gesellschaft they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors” (p. 63). This accentuates one possible built-in paradox or tensions in the concept of community: what unites and what holds the community together?

From a communitarian understanding of the concept of community, Etzioni (1993) claims that an essential property of a community is a shared morality. He states that “Communities speaks to us in moral voices. They lay claims on their members.” (pp. 31. italics in the original). Through a process of negotiation of what is right and what is wrong, members of a community adjust the own behaviour. In this process the individual member still has some degree of freedom, but in case of repeating misbehaviour, the community will respond powerfully in order to end behaviours not included in and sanctioned by the negotiated ways.

Thus, in one sense, community could concern the aspect (prospect) of creating an identity, and the tension between individual identity and assimilation within a group (Hand, 1989). However, the concept is illusive, letting itself be defined and used in multiple ways (Söderström, Hamilton, Dahlgren, & Hult, 2005; Olofsson & Lindberg, 2005). One problem that appears to be beyond the educational use of the concept, but a problem that seems rather important to address when it comes to educational communities, is the boundaries of the community and the values defining it as a community. If community is about sharing values, negotiating values and creating shared understanding then these questions becomes important enough to deserve a thesis of their own.

Another problem is the persuasive manner in which community connotes positive aspects, such as warmth and cosiness, and the appeal to something fundamentally human that is hard to reject. If the trainees’ views on education and learning stems from a sense of
community, then it might be that of a community as a place of belonging. This could be why they put the sense of being at ease in the study-group ahead of the aspects of learning in the study-group. Learning might incorporate conflicting views and contrasting standpoints that potentially challenge the group and their sense of belonging. Feeling at ease and taking an inclusive stance might then be one way of ensuring that the group provides what it promises; a safe and warm place. This could be contrasted with the way community carries with it a strong normative tendency to embrace while disciplining, or as the trainees put it; you may belong here if you adjust to the norms of the group. This paradox begs the question: what is the ethical stance taken in a community, society or study-group? In this thesis, we have tried to provide one possible interpretation of this matter.

In the next chapter of our lives, as researchers, we might allow ourselves to be guided by Lévinas, and the call for the Other in a simple question like one that could have been posed by Lévinas: “what have you done with your sister?” and the possible educational consequences that the different answers to this question, this call for the Other, might imply.
REFERENCES


Virtual Communities – Learning and Change in Cyberspace (pp. 159-190). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Jedeskog, G. (2000). *Teachers and computers: Teachers’ computer usage and the relationship between computers and the role of the teacher, as described in international research* [Teachers and computers: Teachers' computer usage and the relationship between computers and the role of the teacher, as described in international research]. (Doctoral thesis). Uppsala: Pedagogiska institutionen.


ARTICLES I-VIII
APPENDIX A-C
Appendix A

Background information

Male

Female

Age

below 20 36-40
20-25 41-45
26-30 46-50
31-35 above 50

What is the occupation of you parents?

Mother

Father

Do you think that you, after graduating, will work as a teacher?

No

Yes

Explain your answer!  


Below are a number of propositions concerning working life
Mark with an X to what extent you agree:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>To some extent do not agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>To some extent agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) All occupations are equal important</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Everyone that works should have approximately the same salary</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) The most important in a working place is that everyone collaborates</td>
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<tr>
<td>to reach a common goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) It doesn’t matter what kind of occupation you have as long you enjoy</td>
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<td>the company with your working colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) If you didn’t have to work in order to get an income few people</td>
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<tr>
<td>should work</td>
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<td>(f) The most important with an occupation is that you can develop within</td>
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<td>that occupation and that you a feeling of progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>(g) It is more important to have a meaningful occupation than receiving</td>
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<td>a high salary</td>
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<td>(h) Women are suitable for technical occupations</td>
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<tr>
<td>(i) The changes in working life demands further education continuously</td>
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<tr>
<td>(j) In the working life of tomorrow it is more important than today to</td>
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<tr>
<td>be able to work collaboratively</td>
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<tr>
<td>(k) It will always be a need for working forces that don’t have any</td>
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<tr>
<td>degrees from higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>(l) Unemployment is due to the fact that the technical development has</td>
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<tr>
<td>made some occupations disappeared</td>
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<tr>
<td>(m) In our economical system we have to accept a certain amount of</td>
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<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(n) The time we work each today should be reduced so that everyone could</td>
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<tr>
<td>have an occupation</td>
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<tr>
<td>(o) Lower salaries should provide more people with working opportunities</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are a number of propositions concerning how you will work as a teacher.

*Mark with an X to what extent you agree:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>To some extent do not agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>To some extent agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) As graduated teacher it is important that I know how to assess my students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) As graduated teacher it is important to invite persons with special competences that enhancing my teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) As graduated teacher it is important that I, to the highest extent possible, relates my teaching to the surrounding society</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) As graduated teacher it is important that I teach in a way that make possible for every single student to develop her or himself in their own individual pace</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) As graduated teacher it is important to adjust the content in the assignments in relation to the students’ interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>(f) As graduated teacher it is important to show the students your &quot;true self&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(g) As graduated teacher it is important to use a mix of theory and practice in your teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>(h) As graduated teacher I will strive for creating as many teaching situations as possible to make the students collaborate</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) As graduated teacher I will strive for providing all the students equal opportunities for learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>(j) As graduated teacher I will encourage my students to be creative when solving their assignments</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think back upon the programme. How frequent have the working methods listed below been in the programme? *Mark with an X to what extent you agree:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>A few times</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) The teacher trainer talks and asks questions, single teacher trainees answer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) The teacher trainer and the teacher trainees discuss</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) Teacher trainees work in groups on assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) Teacher trainees work on their own with the same assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) Teacher trainees conduct investigations of their own</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below are a number of propositions concerning your relatives and your studies. To what extent do they fit you and your relatives? *Mark with an X to what extent you agree:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>To some extent do not agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>To some extent agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) They don’t ask how I do on my assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) They are truly interested in my studying results</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) They want me to start working directly after graduating</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) They encouraged me to attend higher education</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) They don’t think that my university studies will pay off</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) They think it is important how I do with my studies</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) They expect that I am always successful in my studies</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) They are not that interested of discussing how I do with my studies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
To what extent are you and your fellow students given opportunities to have influence over the following aspects of the programme?

*Mark with an X to what extent you agree:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) We, teacher trainees, decide how to work with in group exercises</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>To some extent do not agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>To some extent agree</th>
<th>Totally agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) How we, teacher trainees, should work with assignments is decided by us</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) We, teacher trainees, decide the number of examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) We, teacher trainees, can decide what literature is used in the programme</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How frequent are the following examination forms in your programme?

*Mark with an X how frequent these examination forms are used in your programme.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Oral examination</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>A few times</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) Written examination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) Group examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) Written home assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) Accounts of individual work</td>
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<tr>
<td>(f) Discussions in the study group</td>
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<tr>
<td>(g) Drama, film or likewise</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

Interview guide – teacher trainees

Hi!

Below are the questions we would like you to reflect upon before the interview. The questions are divided into 4 themes; questions about the future, questions about working life, societal questions and questions about education. If you find any of the questions un-clear or something else you want to ask you will be able to get in contact with us by either e-mail or telephone. Once again, thank you for volunteer and by that contribute to our research.

Ola Lindberg

Anders Olofsson

Questions about the future
1. What would you do next spring if you had the possibilities to choose without any restrictions?

2. When you have graduated from the teacher training, do you think you will work as a teacher? Explain your answer!

3. Describe how you think the future will be?

Questions about working life
1. Which are the two most important criteria’s to be fulfilled for you to consider an occupation to be good? Explain your answer!

2. You have a holiday work in a factory. Your Boss has told you exactly the way the work shall be done. After a while you find a way to do your work that is both more effective and easier. How do you deal with this situation?

3. You are going to have a party. When the party begins someone has to stand up and say a couple of words to welcome the guests. How should manage to do that?

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1 In the original interview guide the researchers’ telephone number and e-mail addresses were included.
**Societal questions**

1. There are not one but many explanations to why some countries are poor. Basically, there are four main explanations. 

*These are:*

a) Poverty is mainly caused by the fact that there are too many humans and too little food.

b) Poverty is mainly caused by the fact that the rich countries, both yesterday and today, take both resources and money from the poor countries.

c) Poverty is mainly caused by the fact that rich humans in poor countries decides the most and are not willing to share their incomes.

d) Poverty is mainly caused by the fact that knowledge and money is missing in order to improve the industry, agriculture, and education.

Choose the explanation you find the most trustworthy and explain your answer.

2. What are the most important to do in order to reduce the differences between poor and rich countries?

3. How will you describe democracy?

4. How will you describe a democratic person?

5. Imagine that you have 50 guitars and that there are a group of 50 persons, all of them wanted a guitar. Some of the persons play the guitar rather good. Other can’t play at all. Some of the guitars are rather good, while some of them are not that good. A) How do you think that the guitars shall be distributed? and B) Why?

**Questions about education**

1. You have a co-student in your study group having difficulties keeping the pace in the education and for that reason needs help. How do you feel about taking responsibility for this? Explain your answer!

2. You have new co-student in your study group. How do you feel about taking responsibility for the new student feeling at ease in her/his new group? Explain your answer!

3. Which are the most important questions you discus in your teacher training programme? Explain your answer!

4. What have you learnt in the teacher training programme that is especially important in the future?
APPENDIX C

Interview guide – teacher trainers

Introduction
This interview is focused upon 4 themes, which we will discuss during the interview. Anonymity is guaranteed and you always have the possibility to interrupt the interview whenever you want to. If an interruption, the things you have said until that moment will be excluded in the total amount of data gathered.

1. Background information
   - Could you tell a little about yourself? Education, employments and interests.

2. Educational related questions
   - Which are the important issues for you in relation to teacher training?
   - Are these issues relevant just because they concerns teacher training?
   - Which are the important issues for you in relation to distance education?
   - How did you reason in relation to issues like organisation, content, working methods, examination and students’ influence in teaching you were part of in CASE (the special teacher training program investigated, the authors comment)\(^1\)
   - Why did you reason the way you did?

3. Questions related to social aspects of studying
   - How do follow up the distance students’ participation in the programme?
   - Students that in some way having difficulties to keep the pace in their studies?
   - How do you reason about creating a feeling of being at ease both in relation to the whole group of students and the minor study groups?
   - How do you regard the responsibility for this?

4. Additionally…
   - Is there anything that you want to discuss that hasn’t been covered during the conversations around the three themes above?
   - Anything else you want to add?

Thank you for your participation!

\(^1\) In the thesis specific references to the university in question are omitted due to issues of anonymity. Therefore also the name of the teacher training programme is changed in this version of the interview guide to simply CASE.