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Perspectives on place – 15 professors’ ways of experiencing the importance of the place for learning and teaching outdoors

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Abstract

The study is phenomenographic and describes 15 expert professors’ ways of experiencing of the importance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor pedagogical context. Five qualitatively different categories express the outcome, namely the possibility to: discover and develop place-related propositions of sense, develop a physical, sensuous relation to various occurrences/phenomena, develop a personal relationship to the landscape, develop knowledge through familiarity and develop a wider understanding of society and environment. In a school-related context one finds ways of seeing with the focus on propositions of meaning and relationships to various phenomena. Here the place is also conceived as meaningful for the understanding of society, milieu and sustainable development, as also to develop knowledge through familiarity. The non-school related context one found oneself *in* in leisure hours during one’s childhood and youth are conceived as the basis of the development of a personal relationship to the landscape. The study points to the significance of direct authentic place-related encounters in the outdoor environment.

Key words: Outdoor education, place-based learning, landscape, learning environment, presentations of meaning, phenomenography.

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Introduction

A central pedagogical and didactic question is *where* teaching takes place, and thereby what *the place* means for the learning. This question has received especial attention through the development of different forms of outdoor pedagogical applications in Swedish schools. Increased interest also on the part of the academy related to teaching and learning in outdoor educational school contexts can today be discerned in the Nordic countries (cf. Jordet, 2007; Bentsen, 2010; Fägerstam, 2012; Sandberg, 2012), but the research in the area is still limited. The aim of this study is to develop understanding of the importance of the learning environment or the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor educational context. This is done by description and analysis of the ways of experiencing from selected professors of the importance of place for learning and teaching.

The respondent group was selected on the basis of possible influence on the teaching in schools via teacher education. In common for the respondents is the interest in teaching and learning as well as experience of teacher training. The article thereby aims to complement a previous study (Szczepanski, 2013) proceeding from the ways of experiencing of teachers in the primary/secondary school of the importance of the place for learning and teaching, with the aim of providing a basis for a comparison between the perspectives of leading academics and practicing teachers. In the results of the study of teachers, aspects of the importance of place which are related to the teachers' pedagogical work in the school appear. Learning and teaching outdoors were perceived as there implying opportunities to: discover other learning environments than the classroom, use greater open spaces, exploit the spatial diversity of the outdoor environment, promote the interaction between varied learning environments, unite theory and practice, apply a physical, sensuous learning, create richly varied meetings with different phenomena, create an outdoor platform for environmental work and finally to utilise time in a freer manner.

In the present article (the professors' study) are illustrated first a number of central place-related concepts and some theoretical points of departure. These form the basis for the interpretation of the phenomenographical analysis of the empiric, namely: *landscape*, *feeling for place*, *identity of place*, to be *in* and *one* with the landscape (*oneness*), space for action (*affordance*), and the creation of the feeling for place in time and space (*dwelling*). These concepts, together with physical, sensuous experience and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), create a meaningful framework which ties together the different conceptions of the respondents as they find expression in the interview material. This proceeding emanates from

the research question: *what is the place understood to mean for learning and teaching in an outdoor pedagogical context?* By place is here meant the physical place in the local environment.

Perspectives on place – theoretical points of departure

The place is part of a context, where we proceed from the concept of landscape in accounting for certain theoretical points of departure. These provide different perspectives on the importance of the learning environment for learning and teaching. Experiences in the landscape are perceived to increase and reinforce sense experiences; it is not only a matter of seeing and hearing, but also of apprehending smells, of tasting, feeling and touching (cf. *inter alia* Lundgren, 2006; Brusman, 2008). In the light of cited studies, the importance of integration with the place itself during the learning process is stressed, which illuminates its importance coupled with the experience of landscape and thereby the didactic where-question (see also även Neisser, 1994; Tuan, 2005; Moser, 2007; Szczepanski, 2008).

Place-related concepts

According to the National Encyclopaedia (NE) definition the concept *landscape* is a totality consisting of both natural and culture-bound elements. A totality which is both a palpable and characteristic result of the interaction between a specific society (mankind), its cultural preferences and potential as well as the natural geographic preconditions (NE, 2013).

Proceeding from this definition of the concept of landscape, the ingredients of a landscape can be read (interpreted) by the systematisation of the mentioned components, both in a school-related and non-school related context. One can here say that the landscape consists of different places with certain basic elements which are interwoven into a geographical whole by different constantly ongoing physical, biological and cultural processes (see Hägerstrand, 2009).

Mankind's creation of identity and meaning in relation to different places can also be expressed in the concept *place identity*, which actualises the fact that the social and physical environment can contribute to a feeling of attraction (topophilia) for or even fear (topophobia) of a place (Relph, 1976). The impressions a place conveys can also vary. Maria Nordström (1998) describes this:

The memory of the landscape and the natural world where one's childhood took place remains. It assumes different sorts of meaning for the individual during a

whole lifetime, from forming one's own identity in one's teens and adulthood to the more philosophical questions of old age about the meaning of one's own life relative to nature and history (ibid., p. 16).

One of Torsten Hägerstrand's time geographical concepts is the *progress landscape* (*har jag funnit??*), that which is immediately available for sense impressions and "touching" in the environment. The concept is described as an action framework within which patterns can be seen, thereby creating contexts in what he calls "the weave of existence". The significance of the place relationship and the close ties to place via physical direct experience and sense impressions are also made visible in his descriptions of the "silent knowledge" of the everyday landscape (Hägerstrand, 1988). The physical ties of the memory for place are expressed by Hägerstrand in the following way:

I can still feel in my body how it was to sit on a certain stone or climb *in* this or that tree. This kind of familiarity applies most intensely to the nearest kilometre around my home, since this was the area I could reach and explore on my own after school-mates had disappeared to their separate worlds (ibid., p. 335; our italics).

Mats Brusman (2008) also illustrates the concept *mindscape*, which he defines as a medium, a cognitive landscape by which the human being's conceptions of a place are shaped in the memory and experiences: "A mindscape is a cognitive landscape, anchored in the physical structures" (ibid., p. 199). The concepts mindscape and landscape both refer to place experience in a cognitively and physically experienced context.

In an educational context the concept "*sense of place*" is employed, which focuses the emotional dimension of how a place is characterised and experienced. The concept is often used to describe how people experience *affordance*, that is, those feelings, thoughts and reflections awakened by a specific place. The sense of place can in this way be said to compose our relationship with environments, both indoors and outdoors (Szczepanski, 2013).

Yi-Fu Tuan (2005) describes places which are central for what can be called "centres of meaning", from how people experience and give the learning environment a meaning. In his thoughts about place experience he integrates both cognitive knowledge, mindscape, and the physical dimension of experience, landscape (Tuan, 2005).

The scope for action outdoors

In learning and teaching the place-related meeting with the outdoor environment functions as a bridge between theory and practice and enables a concrete feedback to the problematizing and theory constructing teaching. Thereby this meeting contributes to making the interplay between different learning environments more obvious and thus enables a connection with reality in teaching and learning. In this way is established a more multimodal, sensuous, body-related teaching, “a soundbox for learning” which can arouse interest in the identification of new learning environments (Szczepanski, 2008, pp. 41– 42). The sensuous experience of place can also be related to the place-related concept of *oneness*. The holistic experience is emphasized, to be *in* and *one* with the landscape with all one’s senses and the whole body in action without an intermediary (Hutchinson, 1998). David Hutchinson (1998) also actualises the perspective around *oneness* in his thoughts about ecological awareness. It is here a matter of creating space in time, of discovering patterns that can encourage a feeling of coherence, continuity and integration with nature: “the search for patterns of integration and differentiation in the natural, physical, and cultural worlds that surround the child” (ibid., p. 136). Maria Montessori (1964) furthermore takes up the concept of *oneness* related to “a holistic experience” in close contact with the landscape, as a way of increasing ecological understanding and deepening the child’s feelings for nature. In the same spirit, too, Leesa Fawcett calls attention to the importance of “bioregional understanding” – active steps which change our way of seeing ourselves as individuals, but also seeing our affinity with the place, the total experience and everything existing in our collective world.

Interaction with the environment

For John Dewey involvement and first-hand experience were central to the learning process and were thus not separated from the contexts in which phenomena occur (cf. Szczepanski, 2008, pp. 18–22). Dewey’s (1938) progressive educational philosophy can also be related to the *concept of experience*, which in its turn is connected to the two criteria interaction and continuity. Interaction implies according to Dewey an interplay with the environment, while continuity alludes to the experiences that are continually generated in a social setting (“the school in the society and the society in the school”). The acquisition of experiences becomes a process of a rational character, since it is coupled with an external environment of perceived physical settings which are continually changing in the eye of the beholder. To learn through

practical action – “learning by doing” – and an extended physical sensing – “learning under the skin” – appear for Dewey as both socially and physically related to place.

At present the tendency is to conceive individual mind as a function of social life – as not capable of operating or developing by itself, but as requiring continual stimulus from social agencies, and finding its nutrition in social supplies. [...] Mind cannot be regarded as an individual, monopolistic possession [...] it is developed in an environment which is social and physical (Dewey, 1915, pp. 98–99).

Another place-related concept is *affordance* (scope for action). James Gibson (1986) visualises the importance of direct contact and scope for action in the individual’s relation to his or her environment. Further, he emphasises the way to knowledge of sense experiences and the intrinsic “power of attraction” that an environment can provide, but also the subject’s ability to take or not to take possession of this environment: “you have to see it before you say it” (ibid., p. 260). According to Harry Heft (1997), the scope for action is as dependent on the interest in the place as on its configuration and the intentions the individual can relate to the scope for action that the environment offers. The place-related action-borne knowledge is based on the resources that are offered in the surrounding milieu; the actions are thus the answers to what the environment can offer as possibilities and limitations (Gibson, 1986). Gibson’s focus lies on perception, but at the same time he stresses that experience broadens knowledge, “knowing is an extension of perceiving” (ibid., p. 258). The objects in the environment are not conceived by Gibson to be of neutral value, but give meaning to the previous experiences of the individual, which can be used in the encounter with new environments. The experiences are thus a fundamental element in a process creative of meaning, that is, meaning is continually created by actions in a context (Wickman, 2006). The different “affordance” of environments shapes both relations and actions. The concept includes different opportunities for or offers of interaction and it is such that Gibson (1986) calls “affordance”, “behavior affords behavior” (ibid., p. 135). These offers can include activities, events or attributes in objects and organisms in our environment which can lead to interactive acts. An experienced phenomenon can thus be given different meanings for different people in different contexts (cf. Linderoth, 2004).

Time and space

Dwelling is a further concept, tied to places that people have chosen to live in. Tim Ingold (2000) gives it a theoretical foundation in “time and landscape”. The future and the past are at the same time in the present: “like refractions in a crystal ball” (ibid., p. 196). He sees the actions of mankind as a living process – a journey in time and space between different places; “landscapes change; and change is itself an intrinsic aspect of our experience of landscape” (ibid., p. 208). In a later text Ingold (2011) refers to Gibson’s conception of perception, where body and intellect (the movements of the whole body) meet in the space for action (affordance) offered by the environment (ibid., p. 11). Ingold here describes the essence of his understanding of the concept “dwell”.

Here, surely, lies the essence of what it means to dwell. It is literally to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life [...]. To be, I would now say, is not to be *in* place but to be *along* paths. The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming. For this reason, I have begun to wonder whether the concept of dwelling is, after all, apt to describe how humans and non-humans make their way in the world (ibid., p. 12).¹

One of Hägerstrand’s time-geographical concepts, *the landscape of events* (*förloppslandskapet*) denotes the extent of the place in time and space, including the movement from past via present to future – an evolution that cannot always be perceived by our senses (Hägerstrand, 2009).

The experience of landscape is dependent on the depth of time. The landscape can be seen as a meaningful construction whose meaning is changeable in a time-space perspective (see Andersson, 2003). If we are to be able to capture the immediate environment as a learning environment, and thereby increase the connection to reality and first-hand experiences of phenomena, connections and contexts, a place and landscape based teaching will of course be meaningful (cf. Dahlgren et al., 2007).

¹ See also “walking as dwelling” in John Wylie (2012, pp. 370–371).

Personally encountered experience

Why do teachers teach as they do? A teacher's way of teaching is, according to Bengt Molander (1996), based on non-verbal knowledge transmitted via "silent" physical dialogue (observation of how colleagues act). Molander relates this to Michael Polanski's (1966) thought about silent knowledge embedded in the body, "bodily memories", which can be difficult to describe in words. Bernt Gustavsson (2000) takes up the question of practical knowledge, *phronesis*, the form of knowledge tied to the body and the sociocultural context. In his Aristotle-based three-way split of the concept of knowledge into knowing, *episteme*, practical expertise, *techne*, and ethical-moral wisdom, *phronesis*, there also lies a challenge for landscape and place-related teaching and learning. To this may be added that Lars-Erik Björklund (2008) throws light on the concept *förtrogenhet* (*familiarity*), a form of knowledge which is conceived as strongly context-dependent. In familiarity are accommodated place-bound memories and sense experiences, often action-borne and difficult to verbalise, so-called "tacit knowledge" (Polyani, 1966). In this context Gilbert Ryle (1949) discusses the concept "know how", that is experience and expertise that normally cannot be verbalised as they build on an emotional, sensuous experience (cf. Dahlgren & Szczepanski, 1998). Björklund (2008) here speaks of an extended concept of knowledge :

Not least the development of familiarity knowledge can now be understood as a construction of implicit memory patterns ("in the non-declarative memory system"), which make us competent and professional in our praxis (ibid., p. 132).

Central place-related concepts – a summary

In the theoretical framework of this article the focus is on the importance of sensual, physical integration and "centres of meaning". That is to say, a framework for action and a space for action within which context-related teaching can be created. The importance of developing place-identity and familiarity knowledge by being *in* the landscape (oneness) without an intermediary provides a meaningful basis for learning and teaching.

Further, attention is called to the value of memories close to place and physically embedded, and sensory experience (Björklund, 2008). Here light is thrown on the importance of variation and the interplay between learning environments indoors and outdoors, and their significance for the stimulation of implicit (intuitive) memory systems. There is, further, emphasis on the pedagogical meeting in time and space and the importance of the place's

variation in the interplay with the environment. The place-related perspective is also coupled with ecological awareness (Hutchinson, 1998), to see patterns, connections, in nature and the environment, and to create a feeling for place in time and space – *dwelling* (Ingold, 2011) and scope for action – *affordance* (Gibson, 1986).

Starting from this theoretical framework the picture is filled out of the meaning of the place for learning and teaching that is given by secondary school teachers' ways of seeing (Szczepanski, 2013) with an outcome of opinions expressed by expert professors (the professors' study).

Methodological considerations

The study is qualitative and inductive. It has a phenomenological approach and thus aims to describe the variation in the respondents' views in qualitatively distinct descriptive categories, which reproduce an overall structure of meaning of different ways to perceive the importance of place for learning and teaching. The categories and the relationships between them make up the outcome of the study. The qualitative analysis with this endeavour rests on a non-dualistic ontology, that is to say the only environment that can be seen as meaningful in this context is that understood by human beings. Proceeding from this perspective the question has been studied how expert professors connected to the field of teacher education understand an outdoor educational phenomenon – namely, the significance of the place for teaching and learning (cf. Marton & Booth, 2000). The phenomenographic analysis proceeds from the respondents' statements which are interpreted and categorised (Marton & Booth, 2000). It is here a matter of studying the implications and variations in how something is perceived, the so-called second order perspective, not how something actually is, a first order perspective. In accordance with Staffan Larsson (1986, 2005) we seek to capture implications, or variations in descriptions of how something appears or is thought to be.

The delimitations and character of the study

The study is based on interviews with 15 expert professors, a sample which is focused in the sense that they represent different disciplines, namely pedagogy, didactics, environmental psychology, cognitive science, child and youth psychiatry, landscape architecture and human geography. They were active at six universities and two university colleges in Sweden during 2010-2013, and all have some form of connection with teacher education. The age range encompasses 58-67 years with a gender distribution of five women and ten men. Their own

schooling took place in a time when local geography and history was a school subject and teaching about landscape was more or less a part of an education with educational reform features (see Arfedson, 2000). All have during their professional careers taught in and had the opportunity to influence the direction of teacher education at their respective universities and colleges.

The aim, as has appeared earlier, is to develop the understanding of the importance of the teaching environment or the place for learning and teaching. This is achieved by describing the variation in the respondents' ways of experiencing the importance of the place for learning and teaching. The choice fell here on a phenomenographical analysis with the aim, partly to identify the respondents' various ways of experiencing, partly to define differences and variations between these in the analysis of the empirical material (cf. Alexandersson, 1994). To conduct interviews with expert "elite interviewers" (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 163), with varying backgrounds in their own educational fields, meant a strategic selection in order to reach this group of respondents and at the same time secure as great a breadth of variation as possible within the group (Holme & Solvang, 1997, pp. 101–108).

Data collection

The interviews were conducted by the main author of the article in the years 2010-11 and the spring terms of 2012 and 2013 in as similar contexts as possible, at the respective university or college where the respondents were employed. A semi-structured interview form without fixed alternative answers was selected, with a low degree of standardisation (Uljens, 1989). The use of open questions has increased the possibility of variation in the replies in that the researcher is not regulating the conversation (cf. Holme & Solvang, 1997) at the same time as the questions indicate the framework of the interview. Mikael Alexandersson (1994) stresses the importance of the interviewer seeking to uncover the respondents' opinions and trying to get at what is ascribed to a certain phenomenon. The point of departure for this form of interview is, based on the respondents' own pre-understanding, to obtain a basis for analysing and describing how a phenomenon is understood or experienced. Steinar Kvale och Svend Brinkmann (2009) describe how the interview can be seen as a pragmatic tradition of knowledge with practical "use" for the activity in focus.

The interview embraced the following questions: *What is outdoor education for you, how was your relationship to the landscape during your childhood and adolescence, what do you see as the importance of the place for learning and teaching, what is the most central aspect*

for you in the concept of knowledge and how do you look on the concept of sustainable development and its relevance for learning and teaching (the school system)? A pilot interview of about 60 minutes was conducted before the main study itself to test the serviceability of the questions as framed. After the completion of the 15 questions “theoretical saturation” was judged to be achieved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The analytical procedure

The analysis forms the framework of the working process (cf. Uljens, 1998; Hayes, 2000). It builds on transcribed interview replies from 15 respondents. As is clear above, the interview guide also took up questions which were not directly connected to the research question treated in this article. The whole material did however form a basis for the analysis, which consequently also involves discrimination of the statements that were relevant for the research question. The analysis was conducted as follows: As a first stage various key words were indicated in the margin to create a context and an overall impression. In a second stage central sections of text were picked out from the statements which were sorted into various descriptive categories based on possible patterns – similarities or differences – to enable identification of different opinions. In a third stage, after further perusal of the interviews, a clearer picture of the contents of the text (the core of the opinions) crystallised out. After that, in a fourth stage, a naming and describing of characteristic features for each respective category was carried out. In a fifth stage the respondents’ opinions were collected into a system which embraced five categories – with the focus on the importance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor educational context. Finally, in a sixth stage, based on the category system described above, two place-related contexts were distinguished, namely a school-related and a non-school related (cf. Uljens, 1989, pp. 50–51).

The principal author of the article has been responsible for the work of analysis, while the co-author has studied the interview material and collaborated in the task of identifying and formulating the final outcome. Guiding the analysis have been Ference Marton’s and Shirley Booth’s (2000, p. 163) three-stage categories for the attributes that descriptive categories should encompass. First and foremost it is a matter of clarity about the phenomena of the investigation: that the categories are logically related to each other and that they are restricted in number so that the critical variation may be narrowed down (cf. Larsson, 1986, 2005; Kroksmark, 1987, 2007). The category system which is a result of the analysis creates the range of outcomes within which the mutual relations of the categories can be described (cf.

Uljens, 1989, 1998). The descriptions of the categories include both the referential and the structural aspects of the implications. That is to say, they should describe both the content and how different parts of this content are related to each other, all in order to clarify the structure of the category (cf. Marton & Booth, 2000). It is inter alia a matter of certain parts being more central or focused while others are in the background, at the same time as they are important for the signification of the category. Further, under each category we cite quotations which have been chosen to illustrate the meanings of the categories as clearly as possible. The figures given in brackets with the quotes refer to the respective interviewee. Here it should be emphasized that the analysis and the outcomes cover the variation ways of seeing within the whole respondent group, even if the account of the results does not contain quotes from the totality of the interviews. One and the same person can moreover have expressed several opinions, and in some cases different quotes from the same respondent are used to illustrate different categories - these quotes are those that most clearly represent the respective categories.

Methodological reflections

In the present study our pre-knowledge and understanding within the outdoor teaching field have been a basis for identifying and formulating underlying categories based on the respondents' statements. Interviews within a field of activity that the researchers know well, as in our case, may infer a risk of bias in the result. But experience and knowledge of the framework factors that may affect the results, just as theoretical subject competence, can also be an advantage (Alexandersson, 1994; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). We judge that to be the case in this context.

That the interview questions were formulated more broadly than the specific research questions is partly due to the fact that the research questions with different approaches were used as stimuli to get the respondents to express their opinions, which is usual in phenomenographical interviews, partly that the interview studies proceeded from a broader research interest than the research questions that are treated here. We judge that the questions have functioned to visualise a relevant variation in conceptions among the respondents, even if other questions could of course have led to more aspects of the phenomenon being highlighted. Further, the reliability of the results is reinforced by the fact that two researchers have collaborated in the analysis, where the co-author has functioned as a sort of co-judge (cf.

e.g. Dahlberg, 1997), even if a quantitative estimate of co-judge reliability has not been undertaken.

The results of the study cannot simply be generalised beyond the special research context, in this case the experience of the professors interviewed. Staffan Larsson (2009) however argues for a pluralistic attitude in his account of the problems of generalisation in qualitative studies – the results can have a general value in various ways. A similar context does not necessarily mean for example that the results can be used in another context, but it *can* be so. Similarities in context indicate that there is discretion, a pragmatic potential in relation to the empirical result. For example, the results of this study offer an understanding of the importance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor teaching environment, and this understanding can contribute to and influence thinking and application in other pedagogical contexts.

The generalisation is however loosely related to its context, in so far as the researcher cannot predict when the interpretation will be usable. The usefulness appears when the results are applied in new contexts. Thus it cannot be determined in advance whether the results can have a more general applicability.

The Research Council's ethical principles (2006), namely *the information requirement, the assent requirement, the confidentiality requirement* and *the right of use* form the basis of the study's configuration. That is to say that the respondents have been informed of the purpose of the study and have given their assent, and that the interview material has been treated confidentially and only used for the stated purpose of research. The notes from the interviews and the recorded audiotapes will be preserved (Research Council, 2011, pp.70-71). The workplaces of the respondents have been de-coded and the quotations anonymised.

Results and analysis

The analysis of the place relationship of outdoor teaching proceeds from the research question: what is the place understood to mean for learning and teaching in an outdoor environment? The result of the interview study is accounted for below in five qualitatively separate categories a – e, with descriptions and significant quotations to define the respective views. These five main categories together form the outcome of the study.

The place outdoors means the possibility to

- a. discover and develop place-related propositions of sense.
- b. develop a physical, sensuous relationship to various occurrences /phenomena.

- c. develop a personal relationship to the landscape.
- d. develop familiarity knowledge.
- e. develop a broader understanding of society and environment.

The meaning of place in an outdoor teaching environment

a. discover and develop place-related propositions of sense.

The focus in this category is on the possibility to discover and develop place-related *propositions of sense*. Meeting different phenomena in their natural environment provides the opportunity to understand connections and create meaning. The central point is that the place creates preconditions to establish relations between the individual who finds him- or herself there and the phenomena that are found on the spot. In the background there is the traditional indoor environment of the school. The outdoor environment is seen as a means to create meaning and understanding in a different way than in the classroom.

If one thinks in this way, it is important to create contexts for learning [...] It need not only be to go out into the natural environment, it may also be a matter of other things. There are after all other things in society outside the school that one should make use of in school (1). It is a matter of meaningful propositions which are to be found there. What place is secondary, as every place provides the opportunity for different propositions. This applies to every place, whether it is an avenue, a wilderness, a plantation or a normal patch of woodland, so to speak. If one is speaking of scientific concepts or whatever it may be, these places offer different things and it a matter of getting the learning pupil, the student to discover what the place has to offer and how to take advantage of these possibilities. Every place offers different opportunities but is a question of seeing them, a matter of pausing and learning to see (5). If in mathematics one is measuring circumference, what is meant by circumference and how one then measures a pine tree with a tape measure will make it perfectly clear and aid learning. What one is doing is using several channels for memorising and learning and quite simply using several different systems (12).

b. to develop a physical, sensuous relationship to various occurrences/phenomena

This category points to the importance of *physical, sensuous experience* – to create a physical relationship by touching the object, sensing smells etc. The relationship in this case is not primarily to create meaning and understanding. Central to the ways of experiencing is instead the opportunity for a direct relationship between the individual and different phenomena through bodily movements and senses. Such relations are perceived to be important conditions for learning and teaching. Here too the school context is present in the background. The opportunity for physical, sensuous relationships to phenomena is felt to be more restricted in the indoor school environment than when the place is situated outdoors.

I must say that for me the concept of body is important. It is important to be able to touch things and to turn one's body towards what one should learn [...]. It is deeply rooted in us that we shall go to the place and be where things happen and be able to touch the objects and sense the smells. There are many more senses that are stimulated and I think in fact that it favours learning (...). It is enormously important that one can touch things and that one feels with one's hand how big a stone is, for example, and you do not always need to think about it for that has already been intellectualised by the body [...]. It is in fact not so that you judge every single situation cognitively, and all this you have in your physical memory in some way (7). If you have a school building a structure is already laid down that says that like this should the children sit, however pernicious one knows it to be (8). It is important to use the phenomena in nature and the culture directly instead of only pictures and books indoors, in my opinion (9). It mustn't only be a matter of walking in the country, it should be fun to be in the countryside. I mean all this with scents and visual impressions and the feeling under one's feet (14).

c. to develop a personal relationship to the landscape.

In focus for this category stands the *personal relationship* to the local landscape. The individual is still important, but the relationship is not tied to specific phenomena but to the landscape context in which one finds oneself. In the background there is moreover the relationship to other individuals, where the meeting with the landscape is not only understood as an individual experience but as something that happens together with others. On the other hand the feeling is here not related to a school context, but is a matter of non-school related

learning. This learning happens spontaneously in one's leisure time in the urban and rural landscape, which is something the respondents relate to experiences from their childhood and adolescence.

I have scarcely any memories from playing indoors as a child, but I have always been outdoors. I lived in such a way during my early years that it was easy to get out into the woods and fields (2). It was important to learn how the countryside worked and we also used it in our play (...). It was a matter of being out in the woods, of fishing and building dens, it was very different if one compares with how it is today (4). When I was there in the woods, or in the fields or on the beach or in the streets of the town, then I can't suddenly switch it all off by pressing a button, but then you have to be able to deal with different situations in their context (5). We feel a need to meet and give feedback to what is alive that I feel is very primitive, but otherwise I have got my relation to the landscape and one gets that only as a grown-up, it is developed the older one gets (6).

d. to develop familiarity knowledge.

In this category stands the possibility to develop on the spot a certain sort of more profound knowledge. It is a matter of acting, in teaching and learning, in concrete situations and on the basis of one's own experiences developing practical knowledge, *phronesis*, and thereby being safe and sure in the teaching environment. The central factor is understood to be the form of knowledge that the individual develops via the relationship with practical action and then applies in a given context. What knowledge it is a matter of, from the point of view of subject, is not in focus, but the examples that are described are familiarity with plants and animals, nature and ecology. The school is again in the background as the context with which the place is compared and related to.

By the concept familiarity I mean being in the countryside, feeling things in the environment where you find yourself, beginning to understand by learning more about plants and animals and realising that it all hangs together and beginning to talk about this and about ecology (1). *Phronesis*, the practical wisdom, it also contains in a way the other forms of knowledge that one has, since it is a question of the practical application in action of one's knowledge, that is to say

the clever use of existing knowledge (8). You have greater opportunities outdoors than inside the classroom for you are so restricted there and you can more easily use the children's own knowledge and experience outdoors and develop them, as I see it (10). You can think over how to teach about something that you yourself have no experience of. So then the way is that you bring in this experience through a story or a film, a text. For the committed teacher it's a matter of adding depth to a context rather than just taking in the artefact in itself (13).

e. to develop a broader understanding of society and environment.

In this category we stress the importance of creating conditions for environmental understanding coupled with sustainability and an understanding of society and the world at large. This way of seeing thus goes beyond the relations between the individual and single phenomena or the local landscape that has been in focus in the preceding categories. In this context the place is understood to be the bearer of knowledge and understanding and thus functions as a link in relation to the surrounding *society and environment*. The specific place relationship, being *in* the environment, concretises the life milieu for the individual. The relationship can however be transcended and thus create the possibility to develop further understanding of the environment, for example of the meaning of the concept "sustainable development". Here too the school is in the background as the context to which both the place outdoors and the development of understanding are related.

You immediately get a quite different view on the world than if you have never been there [...]. The place you find yourself in, it's both the starting-point for your next context, but also the starting-point for you to understand the world, so to speak (8). If you think of sustainable development in relation to room and place and exploring the environment and respect for the outdoors, there must be some sort of feeling for place here [...]. I mean, you can understand the woods as such without having walked around in the moss but it's a matter of a different understanding, it's richer if you have access to several dimensions, so to speak (13). It's very much a matter of the art of seeing the world (...) and then it's a question of getting the pupils to see patterns and understand what these key theoretical concepts stand for in nature and the world around (15).

Summary of the results

The analysis of the results of the empirical material of the investigation shows that, based on the respondents' conceptions of the *importance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor educational context*, the place relationship and consequently the didactic where-question are associated with two different contexts: The concepts are related partly to a school context, with the focus on the place-related presentations of meaning, physical (sensuous) relationships, familiarity knowledge and a broader understanding of society – environment, partly to a personal relation to the landscape, that is to say a context outside the school, where the focus is on experiences of being *in* the landscape from one's childhood and adolescence.

The school-related ways of experiencing emphasize the scope for action that the place outdoors creates in respect of different aspects of learning and knowledge, which are compared with the more restricted scope for action that the traditional classroom-based indoor environment of the school is seen to create. It is here a matter of presentations of meaning in category a, the importance of physical and sensuous experiences in category b, and the development of familiarity knowledge in category d. These aspects of learning and knowledge are always in focus in categories a, b and d. Additionally there is a way of experiencing beyond the possibilities of the specific place in respect of the development of knowledge about society, environment – sustainability and the world, which is in focus in category e. The non-school related ways of seeing that is reported in category c, on the other hand, proceeds from experiences in childhood and adolescence, together with their relationship to the landscape and scope for action.

Discussion

With this article we wish to contribute to an increased understanding of the importance of the learning environment for learning and teaching. The study highlights thoughts that in various ways can help the development of the school and teacher education proceeding from a meaningful framework of place-related concepts like *landscape, feeling for place, place identity, oneness, affordance* and *dwelling*. Here we present ways of seeing among a selection of expert professors in respect of the significance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor environment. In the analysis we attach these ways of experiencing to a school-related (categories a, b, d, e) and a non-school related (category c) context respectively. Even if the ways of seeing are in the majority of cases school-related, one can see an interesting

difference compared to the ways of experiencing in respect of teaching's *where*-aspect which were identified in primary and secondary school teachers in the teacher study (Szczepanski, 2013). The teachers to a greater extent set the focus on the practical implementation of teaching and what the outdoor environment means for learning and teaching, for example by offering greater space, more teaching environments, a freer use of time and the opportunity to combine theory and practice. Also in the teachers' opinions such points were taken up as the opportunities for physical, sensuous learning. The professors' perspective on the other hand mirrors and focuses to a greater extent on knowledge about learning and teaching in respect of presentations of meaning, relations with the landscape, familiarity knowledge and a broader understanding of society and environment, based on a more reflective theoretical approach. Disparities between teachers' and professors' ways of seeing reflect in other words the existing differences between pedagogical practitioners in the primary/secondary school and universities and university colleges respectively.

Another prominent feature of the professors' opinions of the importance of the place for learning and teaching is how they look on taking advantage of the diversity and pedagogical opportunities of the place in different propositions of sense (see category a). It is here a matter of stopping and learning to see and discover several more ways (channels) of learning than the traditional classroom based. The more memory systems (memory channels) that are activated in remembering and learning, the more they can aid the learning process, which is also discussed by Björklund (2008). The cognitive and physical experience of place is understood to be central in a meaning-creating process (cf. Tuan, 2005; Brusman, 2008). In teaching and learning situations it is in other words a matter of taking advantage of the various places' scope for action (affordance), that is to say the opportunities and limitations that different learning environments and experienced phenomena have to offer (cf. Gibson, 1986; Heft, 1997; Linderoth, 2004).

A further prominent aspect that the results can be related to is the difference between the place-related encounter indoors and outdoors respectively (see category b). The professors express the idea that sense impressions *in* the landscape are the basis for bodily related memories that can stimulate learning. The inherent attraction and space for action of the place are here considered to be meaningful as a basis for a physical, sensuous interaction. And the firm physical ties in the memory in the form of scents, tastes and touch become in their turn central through experiences in the landscape and ties to place (cf. Gibson, 1986; Hägerstrand, 1988; Tuan, 2005; Moser, 2007; Brusman, 2008; Szczepanski, 2008). Ryle (1949) and Molander (1996) argue in the same way for the importance of know-how gained in a "quiet"

physical dialogue building on a non-declarative, implicit (intuitive) memory system (Björklund, 2008).

Our results indicate that the personal relationship to the concept of landscape is developed in childhood and adolescence, where they are dealt with in direct authentic situations (see category c). The relational importance of the landscape experience for the individual's development of identity is illustrated by Nordström (1998), while Hägerstrand (2009) elaborates the landscape relationship in his reflection on the concept the landscape of the passage of events, which clarifies the extent of the place in space and time. Via the concept "dwelling" Ingold (2000) describes activities in the landscape as the building of a place relationship in space and time.

Another prominent feature of a school context is that the professors reflect on the application of their own acquired experience transformed into action, practical wisdom (phronesis) proceeding from the physical environment one finds oneself *in* (see category d)). The direct contact and the scope for action are also highlighted in this context (cf. Heft, 1997, just like the importance of previous experiences. Familiarity knowledge (see category d) is understood to be developed via practical action in a given connection, that is to say the outdoor environment, which deepens and enriches place-bound action-borne memories and the use of already existing knowledge (cf. Polanyi, 1966; Gibson, 1986; Molander, 1996; Björklund, 2008; Szczepanski, 2008).

When it is a matter of the development of a further understanding of society and environment the results show the importance of being *in* the landscape, whereby the feeling for place is made manifest as a link to wider knowledge (cf. category e). The significance of the relationship between the place and the understanding for sustainable development is also touched upon. Both Montessori (1964) and Hutchinson (1998) relate the concept of "oneness" (being *in* the landscape) to ecological awareness and understanding, to the creation of coherence.

From the results of the study, new questions and reflections arise which give us cause to call attention to some possible points of departure for further studies. Thus for example knowledge of the significance of the place for learning and teaching in an outdoor teaching environment could be deepened considerably. It is a matter both of interaction with a classroom-situated practice, and the importance of outdoor teaching environments in a non-school related context. In a further social perspective with the focus on our common habitat, research concerning learning and teaching should have room to develop from an outdoor teaching place perspective.

It is in the contexts, in understanding, familiarity and the creation of meaning that knowledge grows and is transformed into deeper insights or something new. It is in the body-related meeting-place in time and space that knowledge is transformed and achieves new dimensions which in their turn can open new perspectives on the seemingly self-evident.

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