

When anxiety matters as a condition of possibility: about student-teachers' anxiety experiences towards becoming a teacher

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the emotional dimension of the student-teachers' experiences, which is marked by anxiety. This study is based on a combination of a phenomenological informed theoretical framework and a phenomenographic approach. The empirical material refers to in-depth interviews with student-teachers. Through an abductive analysis of the material, anxiety experiences appeared to be a significant matter in the student teachers' emotional life. Our study showed that anxiety in different variations to a large extent characterized the emotional dimension of the student teachers' experiences. The variations were expressed through three overarching categories of anxiety. The first category of anxiety is about losing one's dignity, the second about not being recognized as a person, and the third about doing something very wrong. To operationalize the purpose of this study, we will discuss the importance of considering anxiety experiences as a didactical content component in teacher education.

Keywords: Teacher education; Student teachers' emotional life; Existential Anxiety; Professional development; Phenomenography.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the emotional dimension of the student-teachers' experiences marked by anxiety and to discuss how these experiences can contribute as a valuable matter. To operationalize this purpose, we will discuss the importance of considering anxiety experiences as a didactical content component in teacher education.

In an overall perspective, both Hargreaves (1998), Nias (1996) and Zembylas (2003) has described the significant impact emotional understanding and emotional consciousness has on the teaching profession. At the same time, according to Timoštšuk & Ugaste (2012) emotions play an important role and influence the development of professional identity. It is especially this last aspect that we will draw attention to in this article. There are several reasons and obvious arguments for strengthening the student teachers' emotional and pedagogical preconditions through teacher education. At the same time

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emotions as a curriculum content area seem to be underexposed in both international and Norwegian teacher education (Bjørkelo, Sunde, Fjeld & Lønningen, 2013; Dolev & Leshemb, 2016). Even though, studying to become a teacher is a highly emotional experience and emotions are omnipresent in the educational system, they have not, as both Anttilaa, Pyhältöb, Soinic and Pietarinend (2017), Biesta (2016), Brinkmann (2018), Chen (2019), Jacobsen (2018), Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne (2011) and Sutton & Wheatley (2003) argue, taken the position of a central concern in pedagogical research. Within pedagogical research, emotions are often considered something to discipline, regulate, suppress or ignore. Brinkmann (2019) claims that emotions "...still are regarded as a disturbance of a rationality- and competence- centred processes of Bildung and education" (Brinkmann, 2019, p.2). In order to counter a tendency to ignore the emotional dimension of teacher education and student-teachers' experiences, we have chosen to highlight the importance of listening to the student-teachers' voices and pay special attention to the emotional part of their experiences. The empirical material of this study is based on in-depth interviews with student-teachers. Through an abductive analysis of the material, anxiety experiences appeared to be a significant matter in the student teachers' emotional life.

Against this background, we have worked in line with the following research question:

- What characterizes the emotional part of student teachers' experiences which are marked by anxiety?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. An intention of understanding anxiety as an existential and relational matter

Anxiety appears to be the most important emotion for all human beings and therefore also central in all emotion-theory and emotion-research in general (Moxnes, 2009). Tillich (2000, p.75) distinguishes between existential anxiety and pathological anxiety. The existential anxiety is given with the existence itself and pathological anxiety is existential anxiety under given conditions. Arguably, there are many levels of anxiety. From the completely paralyzing and clinically pathological anxiety to the one we have all experienced that occurs at different situations in life that we all live just fine with (Moxnes, 2009). In this study, we have focused on the latter variant. In common sense, anxiety is considered as something that will limit and reduce our sense of freedom, as something we need to control, get rid of or even treat as a disease. When bodily experiences such as anxiety occur frequently or in situations where they are not "normally" expected, we will most often regard them as a symptom of something that differs from how the body should be experienced. Since the feeling of anxiety is unpleasant and even upsetting, our primary response will most often be a wish to get rid of, regulate, handle or control such an emotional experience (Grau & Lykke, 2019). Therefore, it might seem counter-intuitive to consider anxiety as a relational matter with a potential of emancipation and as a condition of possibility as suggested in the title of this article. We will return to this in the discussion.

In this study, anxiety is understood as an existential matter and refers to a philosophical assumption that the idea of death invariably controls our lives, even though our consciousness is not directly directed to death (Nyeng, 2006, p.133). It means that we live out of death as a background and through the anxiety that inevitably helps to give resonance to our existence. Existential anxiety is most often diffuse, without any rational reason, and can manifest itself without any direct reason. Central to existential anxiety is that, while it may appear obscure and diffuse, it can, on some occasions, provide a clear vision that can awaken man to a more authentic way of living his or her life (Nordhelle & Sakhi, 2014).

Existential anxiety is an emotion deep rooted in the inner life of a human being and can be considered as a voice from within the person that provides the human being with knowledge regarding its own values and intentions. In this perspective, the human awareness can, through our emotions, as in this case through anxiety, direct our sensibility and thoughts towards our inner life to become more aware of what information it brings forth.

Existential anxiety is a relational phenomenon. As human beings we are always already in the world as everyday life. In everyday school life, existential anxiety arises through interaction and relationships,

where important values are at stake. May (1977) argues that “anxiety is the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value that the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality” (p. 205). This means that existential anxiety is not an abnormal state of mind, such as neurotic or psychotic anxiety. But instead, with reference to Kierkegaard (2014, p.100), we consider anxiety as a core part of the life of all of us, which we all can recognize. Existential anxiety is an inevitable part of humanity itself and occurs when we are confronted with the opportunity to choose (Kierkegaard, 2014, p.100). The anxiety will be expressed by bodily reactions or lack of action. The situations in which anxiety occurs will depend on what values the subject identifies with her existence and identity. This means that anxiety tells us that we have more than one option and the crucial choice contains a threat of values connected to the person’s existence.

Tillich (2000) differentiates between three forms of existential anxiety. The three forms, *anxiety of arbitrariness and death, of guilt and condemnation, and of emptiness and meaninglessness* are in Tillich’s view “interwoven in such a way that one of them gives the predominant colour but all of them participate in the colouring of the state of anxiety” (Tillich, 2000, p.54). In this context we will emphasize anxiety of guilt and condemnation. This form of anxiety leads to a feeling of being judged, not to external punishment, but to despair of having lost one’s essential being. This non-pathological anxiety drives man to try to avoid anxiety, also called bad conscience, by avoiding guilt. Through moral self-discipline and habits, man strives to achieve moral perfection (Tillich, 2000, p.75).

2.2. The distinction between fear and anxiety

In philosophy of existence, anxiety is separated from fear by being objectless and all-encompassing. Fear is directed towards something particular, whereas anxiety is directed towards the unknown or where there is nothing to hold onto. Kierkegaard claims that anxiety has no object and therefore nothing(ness) is its source (Kierkegaard, 2014). Despite the fact that fear and anxiety are separate phenomena, anxiety presupposes fear. Anxiety can be said to be the shadow of fear and in that way, they are each other’s prerequisites. Fear arises due to events in the present, while anxiety arises when we feel helpless and cannot protect ourselves from what is frightening. In the beginning we will experience anxiety as a fear reaction and we refer to it as a fear, but as we have time to think, we get the opportunity to think thoughts that can create anxiety (Nordhelle & Sakhi, 2014). We begin to ask ourselves questions like: “What if I will never be able to do this and this?”, like in this study when the students start to think: “What if I am not really wise enough to become a teacher?”, or “What if I am not at all eligible to obtain a teacher education degree?”. In the mind we create hypothetical situations and move away from reality here and now (Nordhelle & Sakhi, 2014).

2.3. Anxiety as a normative dimension of emancipation

The understanding of existential anxiety as a relational phenomenon provides a positive normative dimension. Existential anxiety may show the way to one’s own self. With reference to Kierkegaard (2014, p.199) we consider anxiety as an existential emotional dimension, that despite only being perceived as negative, painful and unpleasant, might bring with it a potential for emancipation. Kierkegaard (2014, p.199) consider anxiety as a possibility which contains the formative power that enables the individual to become aware of him- or herself. In that sense, anxiety plays a key role in figuring out who we would like to be by meeting our deepest living conditions. Anxiety is in many ways the main condition for how we choose to relate to the world. Not by removing or controlling anxiety as part of being, but by let be as an engagement. Although anxiety can be perceived as aggravating and at times devastating, one can still choose to regard it as a voice that can show us a way to the values that are essential for our existential choices.

3. Method

3.1. A phenomenographic approach

In this study, our intention has been to give the participants an opportunity to describe and talk about the emotional part of their experiences throughout teacher education and allow these descriptions to be the subject of the study. We have used the qualitative research interview and a phenomenographic methodological approach. By choosing a phenomenographic approach we emphasize a collective meaning, which leads to a common identification and conceptualization. Phenomenography aims to describe human qualitative experiences of the world (Marton, 1981; Ornek, 2008) based on the descriptions of individual experiences, in line with the aim of this study.

3.2. Participants

In this study we have used a convenient sample. The participants were recruited from a Norwegian teacher education institution. Three men and seven women from different terms in teacher education, four first-year students, three second-year students, and three third-year students, in the age between 19–32 years were selected. Subsequently, to ensure variation in the material, the selection of participants was made in accordance with the student-group in Norwegian teacher education, regarding sex and age. An information letter about the study was e-mailed directly to those students who showed an interest and volunteered as participants. In average, every interview lasted approximately two hours and we ended up with an interview material of 18 hours in total. All interviews were conducted in a quiet, closed room in order to prevent interruptions. To create a common understanding of the purpose of the interview, the interviewer started each interview by asking the participants about their perception of the information letter they had received in advance. The participants were informed of their possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time. None of them withdrew from the study. On the contrary, all participants expressed appreciation for being invited to a dialogue about the emotional dimension of their experiences. During the interviews, the students talked relaxed, easily and freely about their emotional experiences. The participants are anonymized and given fictive names.

3.3. The interview as a dialogical process

Talking about emotional experiences demands a dialogical climate, based on trust and mutual recognition. Since the focus was on the emotional dimension of the student teachers' experiences and not on all other parts of their experiences, the participants were asked directly about which emotional experiences they have had during their teacher education.

On this background, we have worked in line with Tanggaard's (2009) understanding of the qualitative interview as a dialogical context for gathering personal narratives and descriptions of social life. During the interviews, the thematic content did arise naturally from the dialogue between the interviewer and the student. This in contrast to a position where the interviewer takes a more distanced role in order not to influence the content of the interview. According to the dialogical approach to the interview, we have found it appropriate to name the student teachers, participants instead of informants.

3.4. Ethical considerations

This study has required some ethical considerations due to the asymmetric relations between the participants and the interviewer, the theme of the interviews, and some language issues.

When it comes of the asymmetry between the participants and interviewer, we consider it reasonable to assume that the participants have chosen only to share some emotional experiences and omitted others. They might have done this in order to live up to a silent expectation of what kind of emotions that are acceptable and appropriate during teacher education. Some participants might have brought forward themes into the dialogue, in a way they assume that the interviewer liked or wanted to hear. These considerations may arise in every interview concerning personal matters. In order to respect the participants' choices, the interviewer did not try to avoid these possible concerns. Instead we consider

it as a positive way for the participants to protect themselves from extraditing themselves and thereby maintaining a distance between the interviewer and themselves.

The use of verbal language in an interview is also something we have to take into consideration. When it comes to emotions, the verbal language will always have some restrictions. It is problematic to express our inner life in a proper sense. The verbal language is also causal. When we speak, we speak in causes and consequences, trying to rationalize our inner experiences. This means, the student teachers could try to direct and explain their emotions through reasoning. At the same time, expressing emotions through words can help to raise awareness of their emotions and even have a therapeutic effect. Deep emotions like anxiety may be observed and expressed through metaphors or examples (Æsøy, 2020).

The interviewer intended to strive for a high level of awareness considering the role as a qualitative researcher, especially according to the considerations of how the interviewer have influenced the dialogue in the interviews. All interviews were conducted in Norwegian, recorded as sound files in accordance with the participants' written consent, transcribed and translated into English. The project is registered at The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

3.5. Analysis and interpretations

Through an abductive analysis (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009; Peirce, 1994, p.164) of the material, the students' anxiety experiences as a relational phenomenon rooted in sociality emerged. After listening carefully to all interviews, they were transcribed. The transcription was done verbatim, detailed and coherent. The transcribed interviews were translated into English. The transcribed interviews were read through by both researchers to get an overview and to establish a common understanding of the collected material. During the analysis of the material we worked with an open and holistic approach to identify thematic aspects of the interviews. Parallel with the analysis of the material, we explored theoretical perspectives that shed new light on our material. At this point of the analysis and interpretation process, we discovered that in each interview the participants at first, almost intuitively, directed their attention towards experiences that even hurt, put pressure on, or challenged them in certain ways, such as experiences of anxiety, unease and inferiority complexes. Based on this consideration we coded, categorized, and condensed the material in order to identify every description related to any kind of anxiety experience. Our analysis implied a process where we constantly alternated between interpreting our empirical data crosswise by our theoretical framework. We continued the analysis and interpretation process by staying close to our understanding of anxiety as an existential matter.

When it comes to our categories, we had some difficulties regarding the difference between the two concepts *fear* and *anxiety*. The reason why it can be difficult to distinguish between the two phenomenon is both a matter of language, translation and the concepts in itself. Our oral norwegian language has some limitations, in the sense that when we speak, we have a need to give the narrative a direction, which may appear as an object, without being so. For instance, when a student teacher describes that he is afraid of raising his voice in the classroom, raising the voice appears to be the object of the feeling of being afraid. Thereby, the description appears to be about fear because an object is presented. However, it is not the actual raising of the voice in the classroom that is the object, but rather the possible future scenarios that can follow as a consequence of raising one's voice in the classroom. Then it is not fear we are talking about, but anxiety of something that might happen in the future. This relationship is expressed several times throughout this article, both when we cite and interpret the quotes from the interviews. In everyday speech, we seldom say: "*I am anxious*", or "*I feel anxious*" unless we want to refer directly to the anxiety diagnosis. Instead we say: *I am afraid*, or *I feel fear*. So, the way we express ourselves might be misleading regarding the differences between the two concepts *anxiety* and *fear*. That is why the difference between fear and anxiety is easier to maintain in theory than in practice.

During the analysis of the empirical material of this study, we recognized how Tillich's (2000) definition of anxiety of guilt and condemnation covers and creates a form of synthesis of the themes of anxiety which has emerged through the analysis.

4. Findings

Through the analysis of the material it emerged that anxiety in different variations to a large extent characterized the emotional part of the student teachers' experiences. The variations were expressed through three overarching categories of anxiety. The first category of anxiety is about losing one's dignity, the second about not being recognized as a person, and the third about doing something very wrong. These categories have in common that they are all connected to a feeling of not being good enough, not living up to others' and own expectations, and of appearing as someone not worthy to be recognized.

In the following, we will elaborate on how these categories appeared in the material.

4.1. The anxiety of losing your dignity

Throughout the material, anxiety is connected to experiences of not being good enough or even considered as stupid and of not being recognized as a person. In our interpretation, this experience of anxiety is connected to the losing of dignity as a relational phenomenon. One participant describes how she during several lessons at campus, has realized that she has been afraid of admitting that she needed help to understand and even tried to camouflage that she had not been able to understand what a certain text was about. She says that she has been afraid of being the only one who wasn't able to understand. She expresses it like this:

Even though, I really have tried to get it, read it many times, I decide to lie, claiming that I haven't read the text before, just to avoid admitting that I have not yet understood anything.

She continues:

It feels like some kind of fear, even though I'm not afraid of the teacher or my fellow students, it is just like it somehow costs me so much to admit to others that I don't get it. (Interview 2 – Rakel)

Rakel expresses this emotion as a fear, even though she is not afraid of the teacher or fellow students. In our interpretation, what she tries to express, is a deeper sensation, where it seems difficult for her to pinpoint the emotion, but there is something in the relationship that threatens her dignity, to be revealed as someone who does not understand anything. This example refers to this slightly confusing relationship between the two concepts *fear* and *anxiety* as they are used in everyday speech, which we have explained in the analysis section.

Another example where the anxiety of losing one's dignity is unfolded, is shown in a participant's effort to find a way of dealing with a situation during her practical training, where the students were responsible for the teaching.

I was about to give a math lesson, where my fellow students and I didn't agree on who was supposed to do the repetition with the class. Suddenly it was me who should go through areal and things like that, and I was just standing there, and my calculations were all wrong. I wasn't able to do the math at all, and I stood there feeling just so unsecure and embarrassed. Especially towards myself, I was so disappointed. And then, this was in the 7. Grade – I saw the looks between the pupils, I just wanted to cry and run right out of the classroom. But I couldn't do that. I was stuck. At last I had to ask my fellow student to do the math for me. Seventh grade, these are the tough ones. (Interview 4 – Marianne)

Here, Marianne is afraid she might not be able to teach the expected theme of a math lesson. Even though, practice should be a training arena, the students often have high expectations to themselves that might explain the negative emotional experience. But the existential emotion of anxiety is expressed in this moment, where she is just standing there, without knowing what to do, in the classroom. Probably, every eye is on her, time is standing still, and she is not able to ask for help and wishes to run out of the classroom. This feeling of being stuck with yourself as a disappointment, is probably an existential anxiety that is deeper than the question of having to choose. In our interpretation, Marianne seems to be in a situation where she feels that her whole existence as a future teacher is questioned.

4.2. The anxiety of not being recognized as a person

The second recurring theme is how the participants do not dare to raise their voice both during lessons at campus and during mentoring in dialogue with their practice teachers. One participant explains that she through her process as a student in teacher education has felt as just a number in the row:

I don't think any teacher educator at any time during teacher education, would be able to point at me and say: This is Johanne! (Interview 5 – Johanne)

This is an experience of not existing as a unique human being. The feeling of being part of the grey masses might bring forth existential anxiety. Because of this feeling of not standing out as an individual, as a subject, the participants feel that they are not important and are not taken seriously, which has a significant impact on the students' assertiveness.

Another participant, Tobias (interview 1), explains that he expected himself to do pretty well when he started in teacher education, because he had been working as an assistant for four years in school. But already during his first year of teacher education he got a crack that reduced his self-confidence. He remembers how he felt neglected and rejected when he in a text wrote that he had a feeling of something, and the teacher educator with clear red letters wrote: "*I am not interested in your feelings*"! And later in the same written feedback the teacher educator wrote: "*Can't you hear how you yourself have no sense of history at all*". Tobias explains how these two comments have followed him throughout his educational process telling him that he might not deserve the position of becoming a teacher.

4.3. The anxiety of doing something very wrong

This theme of anxiety appears to be an underlying theme through all the participants' descriptions of their experiences. They often tell how they experience the sense of something being very wrong, but not understanding what and why. In the following example one participant describes a certain episode that repeated itself for three days in a row during an in-service period. The participant tells how he and his group every morning, were calling up the pupils by name, and the pupils were asked to say yes when their name was mentioned. But at a certain name, the class became completely silent, and he sensed an awkward and uncomfortable atmosphere in the classroom. He described the episode as follows:

It was during the practical training, where I observed one of my fellow students calling the pupils' names one by one, and when one name was mentioned no one answered. Then such a strange atmosphere in the classroom appeared. The atmosphere changed right away. You could see there were some glances. First between the pupils and I just... oh, what happened now? Then the same thing happened next time — and once again — and I saw our practice teacher sitting here, just: should I say something? It turned out there was one pupil in the class who had changed gender and the name had not been changed on the list because it was an old list. It was a feeling of "now I am about to do something really wrong, as I have been careless". It was a kind of panic, like if you are about to fall and you have to hold yourself against the wall. That feeling that hits you right in the chest, a kind of emptiness, as you are about to do something that is very stupid. (Interview 3 – Marco)

Marco explains how he always is afraid of hurting some of the pupils or even contribute to offend some of them. He tells that he regrets that he did not follow up the episodes by explaining, both to the class and the certain pupil, why they were reading from an old list and by that make it clear towards the pupils that he had no intentions of not using the correct name, that it was a mistake, and then apologise for the incident. Unfortunately, he did not do this, and he regrets it even though it happened two years ago. The anxiety, that is experienced through this interaction of awkwardness, is expressed through a panic metaphor of falling and of being hit in the chest. Such metaphors express the emptiness or stupidity teachers might feel by not being able to know their pupil as an "ideal" teacher is supposed to do according to own expectations.

Another participant tells about how her anxiety of doing something wrong appears as a sense of distancing herself from certain tasks. She describes it like this:

It is a kind of feeling that you must do well, oh, I must do well, and you do not quite know why you must do well. You feel you have some expectations that you just have to fulfill. You feel like you're getting so many negative feelings around it. You want to get as far away as possible — that's what is dangerous about performance anxiety — that you choose to go the full distance. (Interview 2 – Marianne)

She continues:

It is like I feel myself in my stomach. When I am nervous, then I am in my stomach. I'm getting nauseous, and my heart goes like if I am about to get a heart attack. I can hear my heart all the time, it is awful. It is a kind of feeling of losing control.... You can in way just lay down and go to sleep. I'm exhausted. Because several days before you have problems going to sleep, so when the in-service period is for four weeks, it is pretty hard, so to say. I wake up all the time, asking myself what time it is and then I have to remember to write down everything, so it goes like... Uhhhh in every in and out breath. So, I get very tired. Luckily my mother is a nurse, who works in psychiatric services. So, at last I called her telling her that I was about to losing it. I asked: What do you do with your patients? She said: The only advice I can give you right now is that you must relax. Try to take a couple of paracetamols before you go to bed, so that your body can slow down a bit. So that's what I did, and still almost every morning when I was sitting in the bus I was crying, like everything built itself up. But when I stand in front of the class, nobody can tell how I feel. (Interview 4 – Katrine)

But even though Katrine goes through all these unpleasant moments, she accepts it because she knows that it is a part of the game and a way in which her bodily reactions are telling her that she is highly motivated. She puts it like this:

And still, I'm still here, because I know this is what I want. I guess this it is the point, my emotions control my will. The underlying motivation, the future aspect, you know, in ½ year I am ready, then I am done, and I can work as a teacher, that is my motivation. (Interview 4 – Katrine)

This anxiety experience is closely related to be forced to do choices based on high expectations. This expectation is connected to the theoretical ideal of a perfect teacher. Some even would claim that teachers and student teachers live in a society of perfection, which would also include the teachers' ambition to perform to perfection.

Another result of the analysis show that the students' experiences seem to be a matter of a more comprehensive and generally valid existential form of anxiety, a kind of anxiety which corresponds with Tillich's (2000) definition of anxiety as anxiety of guilt and condemnation. During the interviews, the anxiety experiences that the research participants refer to, are connected to a question of their professional and educational success. The anxiety strikes the students at a deeper level, where something in the "core" or "essence" of their identity is affected. A person's self-confidence as a teacher is closely connected to the knowledge or one's own competence (Molander, 2015). As, for instance, when one of the participants were being considered and criticized as history less, it is a kind of knowledge critic that led to loss of confidence in his own actions and eligibility to being trained as a teacher. Here the participant started to consider the possibility of never to become a teacher and by that he created what Nordhelle & Sakhi (2014) describes as a hypothetical situation where he moved away from reality here and now and by that stimulating his anxiety by imaging a future scenario which differed from his hopes for the future. Anxiety as guilt and condemnation will occur when the values connected with the ambitions of being a teacher are put under pressure. This could be a threat to the teachers' moral assertiveness or emotional wellbeing. In the end it is an anxiety of condemnation or denial of their identity as a teacher.

5. Discussion

This study has explored the research question: *What characterizes the emotional part of student teachers' experiences which are marked by anxiety?* In the light of the results described above, in this section we

will discuss in what ways these experiences contribute as a condition of possibility towards becoming a teacher.

It appeared that the students' anxiety experiences were awakened in a variety of intersubjective meetings, both in connection to life at campus, in the classroom, but especially the anxiety experiences were connected to the in-service periods in teacher education. This result emphasizes how existential anxiety is as a relational phenomenon which in line with Kierkegaard (2014) appears to be a core part of life, which we all can recognize.

There is a distinct tendency in the material, that all the anxiety experiences that the students described are associated with bodily discomfort such as heart palpitations, body turmoil or emptiness, that they all wanted to get rid of and control. This result confirms in line with Kierkegaard (2014) how anxiety comes to us through bodily reactions or movement. It also confirms how the feeling of anxiety in the body is both unpleasant and upsetting and brings forward an immediate wish to get rid of, handle and control the bodily feeling anxiety brings along (Grau & Lykke, 2019).

But even though these experiences hurt, they have also shown the participants a way into themselves, to their own wishes and goals. In line with Kierkegaard's (2014) understanding of anxiety, the results underpin how the situations in which anxiety occurs, depend on what values the subject identifies with her/his existence and identity. All the teacher students' anxiety experiences seem to be linked to something they wanted to achieve and can even be considered as a driving force for them. Their anxiety has told them something about who they want to be and what aspects of life are crucial for them. This aspect supports Kierkegaard's (2014), understanding of anxiety experiences as a condition of possibility by, despite being perceived as painful and unpleasant, being regarded as a resource and an inner voice that can give the student teachers a clue of who their want to be as teachers.

5.1. Anxiety as a didactical content component in teacher education

This study show how anxiety, links us to the surroundings as a matter of human existence that we cannot escape. Also, in teacher education, anxiety is a phenomenon that we all share and therefore a common experience we can choose to listen to in order to get a closer understanding of what really matters in our lives. The fact that our anxiety experiences show us the way to what really matters in our lives is the biggest reason to consider anxiety as a potential and a condition of opportunity in teacher education. Against this background, we want to argue for the resource that lies in regarding student teachers' emotional experiences, including anxiety experiences, as a didactical content component in teacher education. In line with Timoštšuk & Ugaste (2012) we will recommend that teacher educators will encourage the students to develop the ability to express their own emotions and help the student teachers to understand their emotional experiences, in addition to understanding the emotions of others, as a key component of becoming a teacher.

By taking an overall view on all the descriptions of anxiety experiences in the interviews, it is a repeated theme that all participants express anxiety of losing control over their own body and in a way being overpowered by their emotions. Therefore, in order to provide a way of getting some kind of control or at least contact with these bodily reactions, we imagine a future teacher education that will invite the students into a more observant relationship to his or her own body, as an active response to the person's life world.

Regarding the limitations of this study, one concern relates to the limited sample and how new solid research results can be generated by combining and comparing relatively little interview data in a meaningful way. Despite these limitations, we still consider the results as relevant. It is reasonable to assume that student-teachers from other countries and other students in an educational process with a distinct relational responsibility, will be able to recognize themselves in the results from this study.

Conclusion – final remarks

Based on the results of this study we will suggest that future teacher education will consider anxiety, as well as all other emotions, as a curriculum content area in teacher education. If we want our future teachers to be able to understand emotions, the teacher educator has a huge responsibility in providing

the student teachers with a vocabulary of emotional concepts in order to think and reflect upon emotional experiences. If the teacher educator distance her or himself from emotions as a crucial matter in the student teachers process of becoming a teacher, they will in our point of view, lose their opportunity to get in contact with and gain access to the students' lifeworld. To understand how, what, and, why anxiety occurs in the relational landscape, the student teachers need educational support and nurturing of their emotional sensitivity and consciousness. Regarding the development of a professional identity in an existential perspective, listening to one's inner voice is crucial. This involves listening to our existential basic mood, the value of living, and acknowledge the emotional dimension of our experiences. In that sense we suggest that teacher education can contribute by inviting the student teachers to consider their anxiety experiences as a potential matter on their way becoming teachers.

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