

# Teachers' Interdisciplinary Meaning Making in Education for Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

The lack of competences in education, to address the interdisciplinary and holistic nature of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is seen as a key challenge by UNESCO (2009). The main purpose of this paper is to analyse how social language and different speech genres affect teachers' interchanges and holistic interpretations. This paper illuminates a Swedish example of a discussion of an intertwined problem as climate change, in a seminar between subject teachers from secondary school. The study analyses possibilities and challenges for new meaning making of ESD, between teachers with different experiences and subject approaches.

The empirical material consists of an audio recorded and transcribed book-discussion seminar among seven teachers in an in-service course. The teachers represent the subjects of natural science, social studies, language, mathematics and home economics. Bakhtin's framework is used to analyse the conversation. Univocal authoritative utterances are seen as mainly conveying information while dialogic makes it possible to generate new meaning. The three dimensions of ESD (economic, ecological and sociocultural) reveals as different genres to talk about "knowledge" and to interpret the world. The ability of interchanges is different due to which dimension and genre that dominate the discussion. The social dimensions are mainly characterized by intersubjectivity. The ecological dimensions are mostly treated as fact based knowledge, more univocal and authoritative, while the economic dimensions could be described as more dialogic. The more the different dimensions are interrelated in the discussion the more dialogic the conversation turns out. Traditionally intersubjectivity is often seen as a way to reach common understanding between interlocutors or teacher and student. On the other hand this study shows how more dialogic conversation gives possibilities for a more pluralistic thinking and holistic views, where different views emerge.