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Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Bergh, A., Englund, T. (2014)

A changed language of education with new actors and solutions: the authorization of promotion and prevention programmes in Swedish schools

Journal of Curriculum Studies, 46(6): 778-797

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.934718>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

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To cite this article: Andreas Bergh & Tomas Englund (2014) A changed language of education with new actors and solutions: the authorization of promotion and prevention programmes in Swedish schools, Journal of Curriculum Studies, 46:6, 778-797, DOI: [10.1080/00220272.2014.934718](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.934718)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.934718>



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Published online: 30 Jul 2014.



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A changed language of education with new actors and solutions: the authorization of promotion and prevention programmes in Swedish schools

ANDREAS BERGH and TOMAS ENGLUND

This article demonstrates how changes in the language of Swedish education policy have opened up a new social perception of education, in which space has been created for new actors, models and solutions in terms of managing activities in schools. Specifically, it seeks to illustrate how various *promotion and prevention programmes* have been authorized and disseminated without critical inquiry or resistance in the education sector. To this end, we analyse how the specific, essentially contested concepts of *health*, *value base* and *communication* have been employed in authoritative national documents over the two last decades. For our analysis, we draw on *speech act theory*, with a focus on linguistic *performativity*, as we have been interested in analysing how concrete authoritative actors have ‘performed’ various arguments. The analysis helps us to understand how the linguistic force originating from authoritative agencies can be used by different actors as a way to legitimize their arguments and actions. The results demonstrate how different national authorities, as a consequence of their use of the three concepts analysed, have contributed to the establishment of promotion and prevention programmes in education.

Keywords: policy analysis; Sweden; speech acts; national curriculum; health; values

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how changes in the language of Swedish education policy have opened up new ways of looking at schooling, in which space has been created for new actors, models and solutions in terms of managing activities in schools. Specifically, it seeks to illustrate how various, mostly psychologically based, *promotion and prevention programmes*¹ have been authorized and, from 2002 and for a number of years after that, disseminated without critical inquiry or resistance in the education sector, even though, in our view, some of these programmes conflict with the goals and values of the national curriculum.

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Earlier research on promotion and prevention programmes in Swedish education has been limited, until just a few years ago, to questions of efficiency or the best way of implementing the programmes. In addition, this research has often been conducted from an 'inside perspective', by researchers who, besides doing research into the programmes, have contributed to their development and distribution (see e.g. Karlberg, 2011; Kimber, 2011). In recent years, however, there has been a growing body of critical research on these programmes, among other things questioning the appropriateness of conducting therapeutic and behavioural activities in schools (Bergh, Englund, Englund, Engström, & Engström, 2013; Grønlien Zetterqvist & Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2013; National Agency for Education, 2009, 2011a; von Brömssen, 2013; cf. Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). Even so, there are no previous studies of how the programme phenomenon can be understood as a policy issue, as demonstrated in this article.

Although in the title we refer to programmes of this kind in terms of promotion and prevention, earlier research has shown that most of the programmes established and used in Swedish schools during the last decade seem to fall under the prevention label. More specifically, this is often expressed as prevention of different forms of mental ill health, such as depression, bullying, use of drugs, etc. This, together with the fact that the programmes have been introduced by new actors, marks a clear break from the earlier tradition in Swedish education, which had the broad aim of promoting democracy and well-being, a public good in the pursuit of which teachers were given a prominent role. In that tradition, teachers were given the authority to choose and use different means to achieve curriculum goals, whereas, as we will show, during the first decade of the new millennium many of these choices became embedded into ready-made programmes. In this paper, we raise critical questions highlighting the consequences of this development, for the role of schools in society and for teachers as professionals.

A crucial argument in the article is that, if we want to understand the rise and diffusion of promotion and prevention programmes, we need to understand them in relation to a wider social context than that of the programmes themselves. Although programmes of this kind potentially have an impact on the way we think and act, the point is that the needs they may be seen as a solution to must have arisen somewhere. The programme phenomenon is thus understood not only in relation to specific individuals or groups, but as a materialized result of linguistic, or more specifically, conceptual changes.

Against this background, our *aim* here is to show from *what point of departure* and by *which central actors* a discussion about promotion and prevention programmes in education was started, and how this may have changed over time. To study this, we take as our starting point the central concepts of *health*, *value base* and *communication*, and analyse how these concepts are employed in authoritative documents. This analysis can help us to understand how the linguistic force originating from authoritative agencies can, in the next step, be used by different actors as a way to legitimize their arguments and actions.

The analysis is based on a close reading of texts from national authorities that are often referred to by the representatives of promotion and prevention programmes, in manuals, on websites, in research reports, etc. By virtue of their respective sectoral responsibilities, there are four key authorities in this context. The National Agency for Education and the National Agency for School Improvement (2003–2008) both have overall responsibilities for the Swedish school system, while the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Institute of Public Health have a broad remit covering health issues in different sectors of society. The three concepts of health, value base and communication are chosen because of their central position, being ‘used’ both in the policy rhetoric and in the programmes, at the same time as they are applied, related to each other and understood in different ways. The centrality of these concepts in the Swedish context can be illustrated by the fact that the government declared the year 2000 to be a ‘Value Base Year’ and that health issues have been highly prioritized on the political agenda over the last decade (Ministry of Education, 2000; Prop. 2002/03:35). While the value base concept can be seen as more school-specific, the health concept is used more broadly in different societal sectors and situations, as is the concept of communication.

Using speech act theory to study linguistic performativity

For our analysis of the specific, essentially contested concepts of health, value base and communication we draw on *speech act theory* (Skinner, 1988a), with a focus on linguistic *performativity* (cf. Bergh, 2010; cf. Englund & Quennerstedt, 2008). Since concepts with performative functions not only describe, but also value and create, they can be used with distinct and contradictory intentions by different language users. Instead of merely examining the meaning of a concept, Quentin Skinner suggests that the analysis should focus on how the concept’s *criteria of application* (i.e. the terms for using it) are struggled over rhetorically. According to Skinner (1988a, p. 123), we might disagree about one of at least three different things, not all of which are self-evident disagreements over meanings: ‘about the criteria for applying the word; about whether the agreed criteria are present in a given set of circumstances; or about what range of speech-acts the word can be used to transform’. In the present paper, the notion of criteria of application is used as a theoretical tool to analyse how authoritative actors use the central concepts of health, value base and communication.

With Skinner (1988a), our interest is in analysing language as an intersubjective tool that can be used for different purposes. Language therefore plays an important role in shaping our understanding of contemporary processes and changes. Skinner (2002) argues that, instead of just studying individual texts and actors, we need to relate different speech acts to a wider social context. When the language surrounding a certain concept changes, this is also a sign that the meaning of that concept is changing. What is important to note here is that disputes over

conceptual interpretation not only say something about the meanings of an isolated concept; rather, they can—as in this case—be understood as fundamental disagreements over societal issues and ways of solving social problems.

From this, there follows a need to place individual texts in their communicative contexts and to understand the conventions imprinted in them (Skinner, 1988a). What it is possible to express in one context is largely dependent on the contextual conditions. There are, Skinner (1988b, p. 283) asserts, no ‘histories of concepts as such; there can only be histories of their use in argument’, which mean that we have to analyse the pragmatic contexts in which the concepts are used. With this theoretical understanding, we will empirically demonstrate how the linguistically performative power of policy changes during the first decade of the new millennium.²

International trends and parallels between countries

The Swedish school system has quite a long history of comprehensive education for democracy and equality, as part of the social and cultural project of building the nation and preparing for national citizenship (Ball & Larsson, 1989). However, beginning in the early 1990s, there has been a restructuring of the school system and a shift away from a view of education as a public good towards seeing it more as a private good with an emphasis on freedom of choice, which over time has given rise to tendencies of greater segregation (Englund, 1994; National Agency for Education, 2012). In the very first years of the 2000s, there was disagreement at a national political level between forces seeking to promote this ongoing restructuring and forces supporting the democratic value base, equality and education as communication (Theme: The political battle of school, 2002). At the same time, several different educational actors were criticized in the official debate, which was countered from the political level with a significantly strengthened control system, involving among other things more tests and inspections (Bergh, 2010; Rönnerberg, 2012).

Just as we argue that the phenomenon of promotion and prevention programmes has to be understood in relation to a wider social context than the programmes themselves, it is important to look at national authorities and education policy in the same way. While educational issues have for a long time primarily been of national concern, reports from several countries illustrate how in recent decades education has gradually become part of an international development (Biesta, 2009; Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, & Simola, 2011; Wahlström, 2010; Waldow, 2009).

Even if the changes in European countries are sometimes labelled as a ‘Europeanization’ of education (cf. Grek & Lawn, 2009), this does not mean that we now have one homogeneous Europe or, still less, one homogeneous international community. The point that many researchers raise, rather, is that there are many parallels between countries, such as in the use of language and structures, and that there is a need to gain a

greater understanding of how internationally influenced policy takes shape in relation to national and local educational contexts.

In the USA, for example, there is a restructuring movement similar to that found in many European countries, as well as a critique of how testing and choice are undermining education (cf. Ravitch, 2010; Tanner, 2013). In the light of these developments in the USA, Hopmann (2013, p. 1) has recently posed the question whether they mean 'the end of schooling as we know it, destroying the possibility of a public school as a common good for all people'. He has also, in an earlier article from 2008, characterized the changes as a gradual shift from a management of placement to a management of expectation. In the latter, different dimensions of accountability explode and 'the balance will always tip towards those expectations which are well-defined enough to become part of the implied accountability of the treatment providers. The rest, that which is not addressed but seems to need to be taken into account (e.g. issues such as mobbing/bullying, gender, migration, etc.) is embedded into transient intervention programmes of limited scope, sufficient to ensure the public that no ill-defined problem is left behind' (Hopmann, 2008, p. 424). With reference to this trend, Hopmann (2013) suggests that researchers should address how such developments come about and the diverse impact they may or may not have on schooling.

A more specific parallel to the USA is that most of the programmes studied as part of the project within which this article has been written are inspired by US originals (Bergh et al., 2013). This is in itself an important starting point for the article, as there are significant cultural differences between the USA and Sweden which must be taken into account. One example of this is the way national health services are organized, as Yates (2013, p. 45 f.), from an Australian horizon, also points out in response to the recent US debate over health reform: 'those of us from countries with national health systems have been forcibly reminded of the wide differences in how nations interpret what is core to their democracy'. All in all, as a consequence of a growing international influence, there are many similarities between countries when comparisons are drawn at a policy level. However, as overarching policies always take shape in relation to specific contextual conditions, it is particularly important to describe and analyse what is happening at a national level and a local level.

In the next part of the text, we will demonstrate how, in the Swedish context, the changed policy language has authorized the dissemination of the programmes touched on here. Following Skinner (1988a, 2002), the point is not to investigate what different language users, in this case the chosen national authorities, might 'really' have meant, even though they of course have a privileged position in formulating their intentions. Although the effect that follows might be precisely the one that an actor has intended, it is also possible that other effects might arise, intended or otherwise. With the approach chosen, we intend to contribute both to policy research and to a discussion of the impact this specific development might have on education.

The role of education policy—on linguistic legitimization

In Sweden, there have been two waves of extensive educational reforms in the last two decades. In earlier research, the 1990s have been characterized as a period when different perspectives on education were simultaneously given prominence in educational policy (Englund & Quennerstedt, 2008). This can at least be said in relation to what happened a few years later. From both a linguistic and a structural point of view, several researchers have described a shift in educational policy in 2002–2003, as international trends such as New Public Management, Total Quality Management and accountability became increasingly influential (Bergh, 2010; Morawski, 2010). One example of this was the introduction of national quality reviews, later followed by a significant strengthening of educational inspection, with the aim of developing a stricter and more efficient system of quality control (cf. Rönnerberg, 2012). There was also a reorganization of the national educational authorities, as part of a larger reform project that included increased sanctions on schools not complying with the regulatory framework and actions to enhance the achievement of goals.

Taken together, these changes can be understood as expressing an acceptance of a new social perception of education, whereby earlier educational discussions were challenged by new actors, perspectives and demands (Bergh, 2010; cf. Hopmann, 2008, 2013). Just a few years after the new millennium, the earlier, more pluralist discussion in educational policy was marginalized by a more one-dimensional focus on increased goal achievement and on bullying and other abusive treatment. Or, expressed another way, there was a change from proactive governance of education, with an emphasis on goals, to a more reactive approach, with a focus on results and shortcomings (Bergh, 2011; Forsberg & Wallin, 2006). As a consequence, from 2002 to 2003 onwards educational issues became an (open) arena for different actors, and thus a market for actors capable of providing solutions to all the reported shortcomings which teachers and school leaders were not expected to be able to manage by themselves.

The following analysis is presented under five headings, demonstrating how the three concepts of health, value base and communication have been used in different ways by the earlier-mentioned national authorities.

The National Agency for Education—a linguistic door opener

While some of the issues addressed in texts from the National Agency for Education in the years around 2000 can be said to continue earlier educational discussions, others can be seen as ‘new’ or, at least, as representing perspectives previously not given much room. The first text we refer to is chosen as an example of how the National Agency for Education makes a ‘move in argument’ (Skinner, 2008, p. 651).

In one of the first national quality reviews, the Agency highlights what are called ‘social and personality-stimulating goals’, and argues that the

1994 curriculum (Lpo 94) contains several provisions that correspond to the concept of social skills (National Agency for Education, 2000a, p. 3). Rather than being limited to what are called superficial rules on how to interact with other people, this concept is elaborated with reference to formulations defining some of the tasks entrusted to schools: strengthening every pupil's self-confidence, enabling them to understand other people's conditions and values, encouraging all pupils to discover their own uniqueness as individuals, and thereby enabling them to participate in the life of society by giving of their best in responsible freedom. 'Asserting these values is thus the mission of schools,' the Agency concludes (p. 31). From this standpoint, the text gives examples of how local schools are working with courses in ethics and life skills education, and highlights the need for educational professionals to develop their competence:

The audit has highlighted the need for social pedagogical and social psychological competence. Support, and examples of how to influence values, and observe, understand and use group processes to develop social competence, are also required. (National Agency for Education, 2000a, p. 50, our transl.)

Other arguments that are used stress the need to develop wider promotion-based health education in the area of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, and to 'strengthen pupils' self-esteem, develop their emotional intelligence and increase their social competence' (2000a, p. 135). A point worth noting is that the quality audit report cited here was presented during the 'Value Base Year' declared by the Swedish government in 2000. In other words, the same year as the National Agency for Education also highlighted the concept of the value base of schools, interpreted as open communication (see below).

The theoretical point we want to make is that the reference to the value concept, in the speech acts presented here, is used as a way of legitimizing arguments whereby 'new' concepts and activities, such as the need to develop wider promotion-based health education, are introduced. Following Skinner (2002), we understand the shift in the surrounding language as a sign of that the meaning of the value concept is also changing. Although social competence, social skills, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, etc. have not been emphasized in subsequent texts from the National Agency for Education, that does not mean that discussions about them have disappeared. Rather, these issues are now authoritatively initiated and legitimized, with the potential to be further pursued and developed by other actors.

Health in education—an interest of different national authorities

Besides the national educational agencies, there are two other national authorities in particular that must be considered if we are to understand from what point of departure and by which central actors a discourse on promotion and prevention programmes in education became established. This brings us to the concept of *health*, which is crucial to understanding

the rise and diffusion of such programmes. If the National Agency for Education functioned as a linguistic door opener, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Institute of Public Health also need to be considered, in order to understand more fully why and how the programme phenomenon has developed in Swedish education. In citing texts from these two authorities, our interest here is in showing how various normative arguments have been formulated regarding what schools and their staff should do, and also how this has been linguistically legitimized.

The question of health in education is of interest to the National Board of Health and Welfare (2004) on account of the fact that, since 1997, that body has had a regulatory responsibility for the school health system. With this supervisory role as a starting point, the Board initiated an inquiry to describe both the content of and the constitutional and organizational conditions for school health services. A conclusion drawn from the inquiry was that:

It is important that school health personnel are actively involved in health education work in schools by following the development of knowledge in this area, and making use of new evidence-based methods for successful interventions. Both pupils and other school staff and parents are target groups for this work. (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2004, p. 28, our transl.)

According to the Board, different bodies and agencies in society have high expectations regarding the contribution schools can make to public health efforts, especially to preventing drug use and the development of antisocial behaviour. As the quote makes clear, the arguments put forward are directed at both school health personnel and teaching staff, and evidence-based methods are proposed. In general terms, without specific references, the Board also links health promotion activities to work on the value base of schools and the national curriculum:

Health education is part of the curriculum of schools. School health promotion efforts and value base work are other examples of how health issues are part of the everyday work of schools ... Schools, in cooperation with parents, have the best possibility, using group methods, of influencing young people. Internationally, there are well-developed educational programmes that have been shown to influence drug use, problem behaviour and the development of criminality ... Promoting health through health education and health information is a shared responsibility of all school staff. (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2004, p. 29, our transl.)

Thus, as we can see in this quote, the value base concept is used in a speech act that argues in favour of school health promotion activities as a shared curriculum responsibility of all school staff. In addition, from a Skinnerian (1988a) perspective, the link that is made between school health promotion efforts and value-based work can be understood as an argument that the ordinary criteria for applying a particular concept are present in a wider range of circumstances than has commonly been allowed. This opens up the possibility of meanings being transferred

between different concepts and the respective social contexts in which they have been used before.

One of many questions that can be asked concerns the balance between a general ambition to improve the knowledge of teaching staff and more specific recommendations with direct implications for educational activities. This question is even more pertinent when it comes to the National Institute of Public Health.

From a search of the Institute's website as late as 2013 (23 February 2013), it becomes clear that issues of promotion and prevention in schools are of central interest to this body. In addition, there are references there to all the programmes being analysed as part of the project *A School of Considerable Value* (cf. note 1), with just one exception, Friends. Two of the programmes analysed within the project (SET and Skol-Komet) can be used to exemplify this, as they are presented as educational programmes and methods in a brochure entitled 'Toolbox for school-based prevention', produced as part of the Institute's 'Prevention in Schools' project.³ Based on that project, the Institute claims that the school's role of promoting learning and good preventive work complements one another, and explains that the programmes presented in the brochure have effects that are documented in studies with experimental and control groups. According to the Institute, these interventions involve methods that promote school attendance, strengthen teacher leadership in the classroom and train pupils' social and emotional skills.

With the support of a broad concept of health, educational activities are thus coupled to health prevention interventions, undertaken through ready-made programmes. So how, when and by whom was the problem which the National Institute of Public Health intended to solve by these programmes formulated? Although this question of course cannot be answered in terms of one isolated incident or actor, an illustrative example can serve to show how different needs can later come to be accepted as larger societal problems. As already mentioned, the National Agency for Education (2000a) authoritatively legitimized a discussion about social competence, etc. in education just before the new millennium. Among other things, the Agency stressed the need to develop a wider, promotion-based approach to health education in the area of alcohol, drugs and tobacco.⁴ Two years after it was written, the Agency's report was referred to by the National Institute of Public Health:

The quality reviewers also ask the question whether schools should deal with ANT issues only in teaching or whether teaching [in this area] should be incorporated into broader health work in schools, which could contribute to them becoming more of a health-promoting environment than they are today. (National Institute of Public Health, 2002, p. 18, our transl.)

In the light of this question, formulated with the support of a broad concept of health, the Institute concludes in its report to the government that schools

have a great need of knowledge support in terms of training and materials. An overview of prevention work and knowledge of risk and protective

factors for alcohol and drug abuse are needed, as are methods of parental cooperation and training in methods of social and emotional learning. But for the individual teacher or school, there are few opportunities at present to gain access to quality-assured, knowledge-based research in this field. (National Institute of Public Health, 2002, p. 8, our transl.)

To sum up, for the purposes of this article it is important to note that the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Institute of Public Health both formulate arguments regarding what schools are supposed to do with reference to a broad concept of health. Proceeding from their respective roles in the health sector, they establish links between arguments about evidence-based methods and the responsibility of schools to work with value base issues. As a consequence, a linguistic ‘bridge’ is established between concepts that were not previously used together. When this happens, the value base concept is given a new criterion of application: evidence (cf. Skinner, 1988a). This is thus an example of how a social perception is transferred from one context to another, i.e. from the health sector to education. We therefore conclude that, on the basis of their respective interests, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Institute of Public Health, alongside the national educational authorities, are central actors that have contributed to the establishment of promotion and prevention programmes in education.

An authoritative interpretation of programmes as ‘value base strengthening’

We now return to the national education agencies, but this time in order to examine more closely how the concept of *value base* was interpreted in different ways around the new millennium. As a consequence, this concept, too, became a specific driving force for the establishment and expansion of promotion and prevention programmes in schools.

For a couple of years after it was first introduced in the national curriculum of 1994 (Lpo 94), the value base concept was not given prominence. But later, around 1999–2000, the national syllabuses were revised, with a clearer connection between the value base and the different subjects, and a specific ‘Value Base Year’ was launched to highlight the concept (National Agency for Education, 2000b). In authoritative texts published in 2000, from the Ministry of Education and the National Agency for Education, the concept of value base was exhaustively elaborated in terms of open, respectful mutual communication for democracy, giving teachers as professionals a delicate task to perform. These intentions are reflected in the titles of the following reports, one from the Ministry of Education (2000): *A book about fundamental values: Conversation as a tool for democracy in schools*, and two from the National Agency for Education: *An in-depth study of the value base of schools: Encounters, relationships and conversation as necessary conditions for the development of fundamental values* (National Agency for Education, 2000c) and *Deliberative conversation as a value foundation—historical perspectives and current*

preconditions (Englund, 2000a).⁵ In the years around 2000, the route to realizing this value base was considered to be by encouraging and promoting communication on democracy, human relations, etc., with teachers as professionals given the main responsibility for achieving these aims.

However, in a new authoritative document from 2003, we see that the question of how the value base is to be realized is shifting. In Skinner's analytical terms, we understand this as an indication that the criteria of application for the value base concept are changing. A text of very obvious significance in this process is a report from the National Agency for School Improvement (2003),⁶ which uses the specific terminology of 'value base strengthening' to describe nine very different programmes. Most of the programmes in question are psychologically based, drawing on one psychological tradition or another, and some of them make use of ready-made manuals for training and communication. These programmes had begun to appear in the late 1990s, and for a couple of years from 2003 on they spread and were disseminated in the school 'market' (Englund & Englund, 2012).

The 2003 report's general characterization of many of the programmes as 'value base strengthening' can be problematized as part of our interest in showing how different national authorities contributed to starting a discussion about promotion and prevention programmes in education. It can also serve to exemplify the tensions between different criteria of application applied to the value base concept, on the one hand evidence and on the other an emphasis on democracy. In the report, the general question asked is what works (in terms of solving problems of bullying and other forms of abuse), and the methods and programmes presented are referred to as tried and tested, a use of language that we understand as easily combined with so-called evidence-based methods and programmes. Thus, in the report cited the question of realizing the value base is shifting away from promoting and encouraging democracy (as the value base) through open communication, towards preventing the problem of bullying. The implication is that the broader problem of how to educate for democracy and form democratically oriented citizens is fading from the agenda. In Skinnerian terms, this means that the performative function of the value-based concept remains, at the same time as its criteria of application have changed, from an emphasis on democracy and open communication to evidence-based work to prevent bullying.

Use of an undifferentiated concept of communication

We can analyse the displacement of the value base concept with reference to Skinner's (1988a, p. 124) observation that 'when a word changes its meaning, it also changes its relationship to an entire vocabulary'. The question that can then be asked is: how is the argument about 'value base strengthening' made in the report from the National Agency for School Improvement (2003)? To answer this, we need to consider the third essentially contested concept referred to earlier, that of *communication*, and its use and application:

most methods use communication as an instrument. Through communication, the democratic, empathic and social competence of individuals is expected to increase. It is through communication that understanding for other human beings grows and problems and possibilities can be made visible. (National Agency for School Improvement, 2003, p. 55, our transl.)

It may be noted that the report refers here to the earlier recommendations from 2000 and to the use of communication, but that this is done without any analysis or problematization of what kind of communication different programmes use and aim to achieve. Thus, the report from 2003 does not question how the type of communication involved in various more manual-based programmes might be characterized in relation to the kind of open communication proposed in the reports around 2000. The observation that 'most methods use communication as an instrument' is without nuance and totally obscures the qualitative core of different kinds of communication. There is no analysis of the entirely different perspectives on communication on which the programmes are based, and no investigation of the preconditions, direction and degree of predetermination of the communication proposed, for instance with a manual-based approach as compared with the earlier recommended open conversations.

The authoritative proposal from 2003 just analysed was thus used by different programmes for the prevention of mental ill health, overriding the interpretation from around 2000 which saw the value base in terms of 'respectful mutual communication for democracy'. In all, 21 programmes are mentioned in the 2003 report. Besides the nine so-called 'value base strengthening' programmes,⁷ there are three that are preventive and action-oriented, three 'buddy support' approaches, and six methods directed towards conciliation and conflict resolution. All the programmes are presented in a rather uncritical fashion, and the whole report can be seen as an open invitation to schools to use whichever of them they like. There is no discussion about them being very different, and of course this might be seen as an invitation to professional teachers to evaluate the quality of the programmes. However, the dominant approach after the 2003 report seems to have been that elected representatives and officials at the municipal level, together with school head teachers, decided what programmes to use and how to implement them.⁸

It should also be stressed, as mentioned before, that the main focus of the use of programmes from 2003 onwards was on bullying and relational problems in the classroom, i.e. on what can be called preventive programmes. What happened during the years just before and especially after 2003 was a huge expansion of programmes of this kind in schools. This expansion was underpinned by authoritative calls for schools to respond to and tackle bullying and similar problems. For some years, the expansion of these programmes was able to continue, without being problematized. As an expression of the belief in the effectiveness of programmes addressing bullying, the following view was put forward by a representative of the National Institute of Public Health who headed a governmental inquiry that reported in 2006: 'If we had known the effectiveness of different

methods, more young people might have been spared being bullied' (SOU 2006:77, p. 269, our transl.; cf. Englund & Englund, 2012, p. 39).

Questioning of the programmes from 2009 onwards

As a consequence of the development described here, which thus started soon after the new millennium, programmes were for a number of years disseminated without critical inquiry or resistance in the education sector. In 2009, however, there was a change, as the programmes began to be questioned. As Skinner argues, we are

of course embedded in practices and constrained by them. But those practices owe their dominance in part to the power of our normative language to hold them in place, and it is always open to us to employ the resources of our language to undermine as well as to underpin those practices. (2002, p. 7)

One of the first examples of how language is employed to question the use of programmes is a report from the National Agency for Education, titled *Talking about bullying*, where the following is noted as a conclusion:

It is interesting to observe that all these programmes used in an educational setting have their primary scientific base in a psychological theory. Individual psychology, developmental psychology, learning psychology and to a certain extent social psychology are the main theoretical starting points. The principal focus of the programmes, however, is on influencing the environment of schools, leadership in classrooms, relationships between teachers and pupils, and group climate, areas primarily related to the educational field, which ought to take their starting points in educational theory. But medical and psychological explanatory models seem today to have been accepted and to be guiding the internal work of schools and the way problems within schools are understood and handled. In this way, the professionals of education, the teachers, are being questioned, and they are expected to work with tools they have not been trained for or do not have the competence to use. (National Agency for Education, 2009, p. 193, our transl.)

The same year, there were other signs, too, of an incipient problematization of the expansion of promotion and prevention programmes. Some of the project participants presenting this article, for example, drew attention to the need for an ethical turn in the discussion of the programmes, questioning the use of manual-based programmes where 'the agenda for what is to be communicated about is set by the programme, rather than by real situations arising in schools', and asking what it meant for teachers as professionals that 'manual-guided activities are replacing communication and interaction taking place in the everyday life of schools' (Englund, Englund, Engström, & Engström, 2009, p. 21; cf. Englund & Englund, 2012, p. 40–47). We also questioned the appropriateness of programmes based in behavioural theory, with 'features that can be said to be directly alien to the value base of Swedish schools', and asked whether some of the programmes could be seen as 'suitable for Swedish schools, when they

present a view of children and young people which is not in accordance with either the Convention on the Rights of the Child, modern developmental psychology or moral foundations' (Englund et al., 2009, p. 21).

The linguistic change that happens around 2009 is also reflected in a report from the National Board of Health and Welfare (2009), where the Board discusses the role of schools in relation to health in a more exploratory and problematizing manner than a few years earlier (cf. National Board of Health and Welfare, 2004):

Schools do not as such have a remit to promote mental health and prevent mental illness. Yet these tasks are important for their core assignment of promoting democracy and the transmission of knowledge. The curriculum [Lpo 94] ... contains several wordings relating to pupils' mental health, even if the concept is not directly mentioned. (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009, p. 10, our transl.)

The Education Act and the curriculum are written with a focus on the role of schools relating to democracy and knowledge. These include several aspects of pupils' mental health, even if this is not explicitly mentioned. (p. 23, our transl.)

Thus, even if the health concept is still coupled to and argued to be a part of schools' responsibility for promoting democracy and knowledge, it is also made clear that schools do not as such have a remit to promote mental health and prevent mental illness.

In subsequent years, there has also been what can be described as a growing critique and scepticism at the authoritative level. In a research-based report published by the National Agency for Education in 2011, an *Evaluation of methods to prevent bullying*, it is noticeable that programmes created in other cultures are questioned. It is also stressed that 'planning work on norms and values as separate lessons is, according to representatives of the *Value Base Project*, which is summed up in *A book about fundamental values*, to go against the whole idea of seeing the value base as an attitude that is to permeate everything that goes on in schools' (2011a, p. 24).

It is also noticeable that the support material for teachers issued by the National Agency for Education (2011b) for value base work, published the same year as the report just mentioned, stresses human rights and the equal value of all, and once again puts the focus on open, rather than manual-based, communication.

Concluding discussion

Finally, we return to our earlier stated aim: to show from *what point of departure* and by *which central actors* a discussion about promotion and prevention programmes in education was started, and how this may have changed over time. Although the dissemination of these programmes has mainly taken place in the last decade, a central point we have wished to highlight is that the process can be analysed as a materialized result of

what can be termed changing movements of history. In that connection, we have wanted to show that the programme phenomenon has to be understood in relation to a wider social context, a social context that we as humans interpret and understand with the support of the language we use. For this reason, the period examined here is the two last decades, as we have been interested in analysing how concrete authoritative actors, through different speech acts, have 'performed' various arguments. Whether intended or not, those arguments have in various ways contributed to and opened the way for the later rise and spread of programmes of the kinds described.

Earlier in the research process, we found it understandable, on the one hand, that some schools and their teachers hankered after 'methods' that promised to solve problems such as bullying. On the other hand, we found it surprising that schools, their head teachers and other higher decision-making authorities at the local level often acted uncritically and recommended or purchased expensive, ethically dubious programmes with uncertain qualities, instead of trusting in the capacities of teachers as professionals. We also found it highly problematic that the national authorities were so uncritical of the value of using different ready-made, often psychology-based, programmes in schools. We still consider these questions important. However, with support from the theoretical perspective used in this article, we also see a constructive possibility to raise and discuss other questions. As Skinner (2002) puts it, history can help us achieve a distance to our own time and its hegemonic ideas of timeless truths.

We have wanted to show how three central concepts with performative functions have been used in different ways by the national authorities referred to. The rather uncontrolled development that continued for a number of years can, with reference to speech act theory, be explained theoretically by making a distinction between illocutionary force and illocutionary act (Skinner, 1988a, 2002). While the illocutionary force constitutes a resource in language, the illocutionary act is a capacity connected to the speaker's ability to use that force in communication. Thus, based on this distinction, it is possible to say that many arguments carry an unintended illocutionary force. In the present context, this can be exemplified by the argument performed by the National Agency for Education in 2000, in which the Agency argued for the need to develop wider *promotion*-based health education. The illocutionary force from that statement was later used by the National Institute of Public Health (2002), but with another interpretation, namely to argue the case for *prevention* activities. So, although we earlier concluded that the National Agency for Education authorized and legitimized questions of social competence etc. that is not to say that the intention of that specific speech act was to contribute to the later development, with its dominant focus on health prevention interventions undertaken through ready-made programmes.

The new criterion of application, evidence that has been applied to the concepts of health, value base and communication can be seen as an obvious manifestation of how a social perception is transferred from one context to another, i.e. from the health sector to education (cf.

Skinner, 1988a). As a consequence of these linguistic changes, earlier interpretations, such as the intention of promoting open communication on democracy, have been challenged by a more individualistic approach highlighting social competence, social skills, self-esteem etc. Thus, the Swedish case presented here can be understood as an example of what Hopmann (2008, p. 420) calls the age of accountability, with its focus on 'redistribution of resources, risks, and responsibilities', as well as the pressure it puts 'on systems and actors towards taking a reflexive stance towards themselves and taking responsibility for their own "well-being"'.

From this perspective of different interpretations and uses of the communication concept, we argue that there is a considerable difference between, on the one hand, an idea of open and deliberative communication, starting with different views and leaving room for argumentation, and on the other, manual-based communication, as for example in the Social and Emotional Training (SET) programme, used in a therapeutic framework. However, there is a need for further discussion about how we use the concept of communication, and about the consequences that might follow from different interpretations. One example that can be used to illustrate how communication can be understood is provided by Dahlstedt, Fejes, and Schönning (2011). When those authors, working from a Foucauldian perspective, analyse manuals and interviews with school staff using the SET programme (and also the ART—Aggression Replacement Training—programme) and characterize these approaches as technologies for confession, we can agree, but we would fundamentally question whether they can also be characterized as 'deliberative' and related to deliberative democracy. Consequently, when Dahlstedt et al., in their introduction, closely link these manual-based technologies to the deliberative conception of democracy, we disagree and question the mix they are creating by bringing very different ideas of communication under one umbrella.

Today, educational activities are framed to a large degree in expert language, highlighting for example evidence, clarity and structural systematization. At the same time, other demands highlight the responsibility of schools to meet and communicate with every pupil in an open way as a unique human being, and both to live democratically here and now, and to educate for a democratic future (cf. Solbrekke & Englund, 2011). The actors who are expected to handle this complexity daily are the teachers in our schools. As Braun et al. (2010, p. 547) put it, 'schools and teachers are expected to be familiar with, and able to implement, multiple (and sometimes contradictory) policies that are planned for them by others, while they are held accountable for this task'. To further understand today's complex educational situation, more research is needed. We need to discuss different actors' roles and limits in relation to important questions concerning health, the value base of schools, and communication, as well as to further investigate the consequences that might follow from different actions.

Notes

1. This article has been written within a research project financed by the Swedish Research Council [grant number 2010-5697]: *A School of Considerable Value—A Study of Value Premises in Promotion and Prevention Programmes in School in Relation to the School's Value Base and the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. In the project, six programmes are being analysed: DISA, Friends, ICDP, Lions Quest, SET and Skol-Komet.
2. As the analysis here presented places a lot of weight on language, we will shortly comment on this in relation to the challenge that might follow of having to translate from Swedish to English. Although much can be said about this generally, we have not had a specific translation problem of the three concepts here touched on as we, with the theoretical perspective used, have been analysing the pragmatic contexts in which these are used. However, in an earlier study of the Swedish concept of 'likvärdighet' this was more problematic, as the English terms used over have time shifted from equality, equivalence and later to equity. See e.g. our references to the National Agency for Education (2012) and the article by Englund and Quennerstedt (2008).
3. In Swedish: 'Verktyslåda för skolbaserad prevention' and 'Skolan förebygger'.
4. These issues are referred to in Sweden by the abbreviation ANT (Alcohol, Narcotics and Tobacco).
5. All these works are in Swedish. In English, the idea of deliberative communication is presented in Englund (2006), and there is also a more general contextualization of the idea of deliberation in Englund (2000b).
6. The report is titled *Olikas lika värde* [Different but of equal value], cf. Englund and Englund (2012, p. 36).
7. These programmes were: *Building a Value Base* (Bygga värdegrund), *Knowledge for Life* (Livskunskap), *Step by Step* (Stegvis), *Important for Life—Social and Emotional Training* (SET) (Livsviktigt—social och emotionell träning, SET), *Project Charlie and Fair Buddies* (Projekt Charlie och justa kompisar), *EQ—Emotional Intelligence* (EQ—emotionell intelligens), *Daring to Meet* (Våga mötas), *ICDP International Child Development Programme—Guiding Interaction* (ICDP Vägledande samspel) and *Lions Quest*.
8. How this process unfolded at different local levels and which actors were the central ones merits closer attention, but the general impression up to now seems to be that decisions were mainly taken and implemented at the municipal level and by head teachers. It can also be noted that another text issued by the same authority that year (Nilsson & Norgren, 2003), focusing on health and the value base of schools and seeking to relate these questions to a larger contextual frame, seems to have been forgotten in the ongoing discussion of the next few years. In that report, a 'promotion perspective' is underlined, the communication concept is problematized, and 'real dialogue' is sketched out in terms of 'an encounter, listening to one another without preconceived opinions and reflecting on what is said without the need to polemicize' (p. 12).

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