

Preschool Teacher Students' Thinking of Play– in the light of Charles Taylor

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Abstract

Reflections on young children's play as it appears in texts written by preschool teacher students will in this article be seen in light of the philosopher Charles Taylor's thinking about authenticity. In today's Norwegian reality there is a national framework plan for ECE, and all children from the age of 12 months, have the right to a place in early childhood education where they spend most of their playtime with a professional staff. This implies significant responsibility for the teaching staff, and expertise about play is essential to understand the importance for children's development and formation. The ideal of authenticity as described by Charles Taylor can be a useful term in connection to young children's play as he sees the importance of developing an autonomic and authentic identity. Human beings are reflecting on essential questions in life, and in that way able to make individual ideals of authenticity come true. Play is part of children's normal behavior. Our preschool teacher students are reflecting on play in their creed-texts, and the importance of giving children time and space to play in kindergarten.

Keywords: children's play, student text, authenticity, formation

1. Introduction

This article will discuss children's play as preschool teacher students at our university college are describing this in their personal *creeds*, a mandatory assignment in their educational program. We discuss this in the light of Charles Taylor's thinking of authenticity. Our students are writing individual texts in their first and third year of studies, a text concerning what they believe is essential for their future professional position in early childhood education. As educators we find this to be important in the students' ethical formation. A lot of the students are writing reflections about children's play as an essential quality in children's social-ethical formation. Some of these student-texts will form the empirical foundation of this article. Our preschool teacher students find a lot of qualities in children's play when they are reflecting in their writings. From 2009 all children above the age of 1, have the right to early childhood education in Norway. As a result of this and other social changes in Norway, there have been an increased number of young children in the kindergartens. Children are more and more spending their childhood in the company with professional teachers, and in an environment with increasing degree of organized activities. But first – what will characterize Charles Taylor's thinking of authenticity, and how can this be used as an interpretation key to children's' play, with emphasize on children's social-ethical development? Within the field of pedagogic, the term professional is closely linked to authenticity (Dale, 1997), in the understanding that the educator is genuine, honest, and trustworthy in his profession. This article is based on the ideal of authenticity described by Taylor, and we see this term in connection to children's play in early childhood education. Taylor lays as a ground that human beings are in themselves moral, and form their identity in relation to other people/their peers and to the culture. Essential in his thinking is how he sees the forming of a modern identity, especially the importance of developing an autonomic and authentic identity.

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We will take a closer look into the characteristics of this thinking by giving some aspects of his anthropologic and ethical thinking, related to children's play in early childhood education, through preschool teacher students' creed-texts.

2. Charles Taylor's Thinking of Authenticity

The term authenticity is etymological leading out from the Greek term *authentikós*, meaning original, underlining what comes forth as genuine and real. Taylor defines the term authenticity to (Taylor, 1991, p. 66): ... (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true, as we saw, that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) self-definition in dialogue. Taylor's thinking of authenticity can be linked to the formation of the self, and is characterized by creation and construction of an original identity. Such an identity formation can be judged to be in conflict with a given moral standard, meaning that each individual person is raised within a certain horizons of significance, forming the identity and authenticity of each individual, and important to be conscious and aware of (Taylor, 1991), but also at the same time depending on the changing norms of the society. A significant horizon of value takes place when a human being ahead of his ethical choice validates something to be of greater value than anything else. A person's individual life is independent and free, but at the same time determined by something commonly underlying seen as valuable and good. According to Taylor, the individual human being's ethical choices are grounded in established, but often tacit and unwritten, ethical ideals and manners, as parts of the given "horizon of meaning".

2.1. Emotional and Situated Ethics

A central part of Taylor's moral philosophy is linked to his discussion of the good, and he is asking himself what makes the moral good and how this can be legitimized. In the first part of Taylor's major works, *Sources of the Self* (Taylor, 1989), he discusses the moral ideal of kindness in light of man's self-understanding (ibid., p. 92f.): We can then say that for Platon the constitutive good is the order of being, the principle of that order, the Good. But we can see right away that this plays another role or perhaps in addition to constitution or defining what good action is. The Good is also that the love of which empowers us to use this term here: that is, it is a something the love of which empowers us to do and be good. What constitutes "the good" is in Taylor's term named hypergoods, as he says is "understood by those who espouse them as a step to a higher moral consciousness" (Taylor, 1989, p. 64). The fact that there in our time are different kinds of norms, is not a problem to Taylor, but what he sees as more important is to ask what kind of reason for being such norms are built on. The dogma of the Christian kind of love, *agape*, is the ontological starting point for Taylor (ibid., p. 516), meaning that all men are here for a reason, and are loved by God. To reach a deeper reflection into what this Christian caring implies, it has to be related to the actual human life. According to Taylor, the good as an ontological principle cannot be limited to a construction of thinking apart from the living human life. Reflections about moral ideals have to be made on the foundation of how these ideals look like (Taylor, 1991). Ethics cannot be reduced to just moralism, as Taylor sees it; about right or wrong questions and answers, or about behavior, but must include what we see as "valuable in itself, or what we should admire or love" (Taylor, 1989, p. 84).

Such a practical-oriented "taylorian" kind of ethics also involves our emotional life. When we react on strong episodes in life with empathy or disguise, this is exactly expressions of our authentic self. Taylor refers to this as part of an original way of being human, and he shows to Herder in writing that "Jeder Mensch hat ein eigenes Mass, gleichsam eine eigne Stimmung, aller seiner sinnlichen Gefühle zu einander" (Taylor, 1991, p. 28). Taylor gets deeper into this in his moral philosophy (Taylor, 1989, p. 9): Moral argument and exploration go on only within a world shaped by our deepest moral responses, like the ones I have been talking about here; just as natural science supposes that we focus on a world where all our responses have been neutralized. If you want to discriminate more finely what it is about human beings that makes them worthy of respect, you have to call to mind what it is to feel the claim of human suffering. We can see his emotional ontology as part of his moral ontology, meaning that our significant values are not something we can understand or gain in a neutral way or in a distant manner. When a child or an adult spontaneously is reacting to a behavior, this is exactly an authentic expression of the register of emotions he or she inhabits, and their moral capacity.

2.2. Strong Evaluations

We find that Taylor holds action and reflection up against each other in his ethical thinking. It is as vocal creatures we are able to reflect upon whom we are, morally speaking. The self-formation of human beings is depending upon the fact that we are free, thinking and vocal creatures, and as such individuals; we are able to do strong evaluations. This will mean that human beings are able to reflect on essential questions in life, about our own self-understanding and our relation to other people, and in that way able to make individual ideals of authenticity come true. So-called weak evaluations are typical for the “contemporary culture of authenticity”, according to Taylor, and so called “soft relativism” (Taylor, 1991, p. 36). We have to look behind this trivial culture, and deeper into our ethics of authenticity. That means we have to reflect upon the essential questions in life: “The agent seeking significance in life, trying to define him- or herself meaningfully, has to exist in a horizon of important questions” (ibid., p. 40). And this horizon is something given. As humans we are naturally seeking a higher purpose for our life, more than what’s “the menu at McDonald’s, or next year’s casual fashion” (ibid.). Our ideals of authenticity are not something that the individual human being can define by themselves. If we did so, we would end up with a soft relativism where everything is considered equally valuable. In Taylor’s more thorough determination of the strong evaluations these concepts are listed as respect, commitment and dignity (Taylor, 2011, p. 93). The strong evaluations will also concern social relationships, says Taylor. In his ethics of authenticity there is a clear demand for the term “us”. To be a part of a larger society touches something essential about being a human being and to be of human kind. For Taylor freedom will not mean a detachment from other people, but a society with others, and that the human way of being is to be part of a relationship. For him the collective life constitutes for both identity and humanity. The social-ethical thinking of Taylor has similarity with the Danish philosopher Knud Løgstrup’s (1997) ethical demand, underlining that men are morally given to each other (ibid, p. 16): Unconsciously, we nonetheless have the strange notion that the rest of us are not part of another person’s world. We have the curious idea that a person constitutes his own world, and that the rest of us have no part in it but only touch upon it now and then [...] This is really a curious idea, an idea no less curious because we take it for granted. The fact is, however, that it is completely wrong because we do indeed constitute one another’s world and destiny.

2.3. The Ethics of Authenticity – to take Children’s Perspective

Taylor’s ideal of authenticity is connected to the importance of taking the child’s own perspective; to take children serious as real, individual persons with integrity – including their relation to other people, their whole world and needs, not least according to their play activities. The fact that Taylor’s ethics of authenticity incorporate the entire lived life, including the spontaneous expressions of life, is interesting in meeting with children who in many ways express themselves immediately and spontaneously. Solveig Østrem (2005) is discussing why it is important to take care of the child’s perspective in the light of Taylor’s term authenticity. She shows that Taylor’s ideal of authenticity can be used as justification for taking care of the child’s basic human dignity and legal protection. Østrem points out, referring to Taylor, that the ethical ideal springs out from the individual person’s orientation in life, the essential understanding of the world, and, not least, the individual person’s experiences. In this case it concerns the child and its fundamental need for care and protection of body and mind. Østrem is discussing children’s protection against physical punishment from their own parents, referring to Taylor’s ideal of authenticity also has its source in something common and universal, because an authentic self will always be something relational and responsible. She points out that physical punishment is not something you stop because children do not want it, but also because it is a right according to Norwegian and international laws.

3. Children as Linguistic, Reflexive and Democratic Society Individuals

In Norway we have a history of a socio-democratic society with lot of welfare support for young families. Lately we see increasing degree of organized activities for children, also the younger ones. In early childhood education there is a lot of possibilities for social relationship and for spontaneous play, if the teaching staff will allow this to happen. For the children to be able to do strong evaluations, it is essential for them to be given time and space for reflections, and different forms for challenging activities to take part in. As the children spend most of their childhood within the kindergarten, this is even more important. It is also interesting to talk about some “equality side effects” as various forms of control, compliance, perceptions of traditions and habits (Akslen, 2012).

The Norwegian *Framework Plan for the content and Task of Kindergartens* (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006) says that “the plan emphasizes the importance of adults’ attitudes, knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society” (ibid., p. 5). The plan also says that the teaching staff in their educational work with ethics, religion, and philosophy shall see to that the children “acquire society’s fundamental norms and values” (ibid., p. 40). The outcome of formation and education is to take part in the democratic society. In early childhood education the development of democratic qualities, for instance by looking at kindergartens as a democratic society in miniature, is mirroring in miniature the antique Greek *polis* (Løkken, 2007). The focus in early childhood education on children’s wondering and on philosophy should underline that the teaching staff is dealing with such democratic ideals in Norwegian kindergartens (Olsholt et. al., 2008). This kind of philosophic thinking should also be a clear expression of the earlier mentioned strong evaluations by Taylor. The demand for taking responsibility, openness, and dialogue about ethics and values, will function as a guarantee for democratic societies. To work in direction of strong evaluations for the children, will mean that they are reflecting around their daily life where play is central. We find play to be an important part of children’s practical activities and experiences (Lindahl, 2005, p. 34). Play and strong evaluations connected to it, is part of the child’s identity forming project, and is linked to Taylor’s underlining of moral values and ideals in the situated rooms of activity. Taylor’s understanding of human beings as genuine thinking and vocal creatures implicates that we take children seriously as reflective and vocal creatures. Children’s participation can contribute to take serious and to stimulate children’s natural way of wondering, and make them active participants in the daily life of early childhood education. This also will change our way of viewing the child, from traditionally to be seen as a passive “political”, to be viewed upon an active member of the society allowed to be “an expert in own life”. Such co-participation does not take the responsibility or power away from the adults, but leads up to a closer look at how power and influence are dealt with concerning children and adults. The fact that children’s participation has been part of children’s rights does not necessary mean that every kindergarten emphasizes this in daily work. It seems like there is still some way to go when directors in kindergartens find areas like ethics, religion and philosophy - which takes care of reflection, amazement and good conversation - to be the most demanding, and the subjects less worked with in kindergartens (St.meld. 41, 2009). Despite this somewhat gloomy picture it is still a fact that more and more kindergartens are directing a stronger focus on children’s needs and ability to reflection and philosophy. Recently there has also been established institutional focus on this competence among children in kindergartens and school (Matthews, 1994; Olsholt et. al., 2013).

4. Play – the Child’s Core Identity Project

Children’s play is an expression of their view, their own perspectives. This is because play seems to be children’s core formation project, and in that kind of life- and learning fashion in which the child expresses itself (Skram, 2007). This is also pointed out by the preschool teacher students, as they refer to the framework plan (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p. 27f.): “Play shall play a prominent role in life at kindergartens. Play has intrinsic value and is an important part of child culture. Play is a universal human phenomenon, which children are skilled at and enjoy”. We find that play often is used as a tool in early childhood education, and that children’s play activities are reduced to a means to achieve something else. This can be skills in mathematics, better competence in language and more. According to Johan Huizinga (1955), play is not entirely for children. He claims that all people are *homo ludens*. To him play is an expression of a cultural creator force which every society formation is assuming. He sees play as a voluntary activity valuable in itself. It is also said in the White Paper (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013), that children’s play, physical activity and sports have own intrinsic value. In the Nordic countries play is valued as a natural activity of childhood (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006), but when young children’s play is discussed in Norway, it is often linked to children’s motor skills or physiology such as achievement, stress, or tension (Adams, 2001; Stephenson, 2003). There is less focus on the ethical and moral dimensions of play, but if such perspectives are discussed, it is mostly connected to how the staff approaches children’s play, as to restrict play activities (Bredesen, 2004). The Swedish researcher Eva Johansson (2002) claims that it is through children’s overall social being, including play understood as a part of their inter-subjectivity, that moral education takes place. Why is play so central for children’s self formation and society formation? We find answers particularly in the autonomy and self-value of play. A third year’s student writes that children play just for the fun of it without thinking if they get smarter or learn anything. Play itself is the goal. Another preschool teacher student writes: If there is something a kindergarten should be filled up with, it should be play. Play is an authentic way of expression coming from the child itself. It is something different than everything else we adults can take control over. We can say that play is pleasurable, voluntary, and joyful.

Play is perceived as meaningful and motivating for the child, and play itself is the target (Sjøvik, 2007, p. 221). More students refer to Ole Fredrik Lillemyr when they justify the value of play, and his emphasis on the fact that play activity is important for the development of identity and meaning (Lillemyr, 2008). Play is intrinsic with the fact that the child itself governs the participation of the game and takes responsibility (see next section). A lot of the students are writing in their creeds that it is in the subject of play they have learned the most and gained greater insight and understanding. Some of the students also associate the overshadowing role of play in children's lives to their own childhood experience, where play was central. According to this, one of the student's is writing: «I think it is important to think back on how much play activities meant to us children, and try to understand children's need for play». The Norwegian researcher Ellen-Beate Sandseter (2002, 2007) is internationally known as a spokesperson for children's risky play. We can also look at this as an ethical stance; there is greater risk taken by preventing children to test their own limits through risky play. Damon (2003) and Edmiston (2008) claim that if children's moral formation and development are to be taken seriously, the parents and the staff must accept children's need for risky play and play fighting.

The framework plan (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006) says that play "is a fundamental lifestyle and way of learning through which children can express themselves" (ibid., p. 28). The framework plan is also evident in the child's bodily orientation toward the world, and further says the teaching staff shall understand and encourage children's senso-motoric and bodily play, and inspire all children to seek physical challenges and try out their physical potential (ibid., p. 35). Early childhood education shall further contribute to a more positive self-perception for children through physical mastery, give experiences with varied and versatile movements and challenges, and that children develop understanding and respect for their own and others' bodies. The plan says that "play has many forms of expression, and can lead to understanding and friendship across ages and linguistic and cultural barriers (...). By playing pretend, children enter their own imaginative worlds, see other people's perspectives and give shape to their thoughts and feelings" (ibid., p. 28). This national plan also clarifies the responsibilities for the teaching staff, such as to "treat children's believes, questions and wondering seriously and respectfully, provide space for experiences, wondering and reflection and good conversations" (ibid., p. 40).

4.1. Social-Ethical Significance of Play

The Swedish researcher Eva Johansson (2002) has given a number of interesting contributions to the link between children's interactions and ethics in kindergartens. She makes it clear that norms and values are created and upheld in the interaction between the child and the world: "A child is influenced by his personal history in the family and by association with others in the child's life world" (2002, p. 31). It is through children's overall social activity in the world, including play activities, understood as part of their inter-subjectivity, that their morale formation takes place, like Johansson (2002) and Damon (2003) are pointing to how children's ethics are expressed in the children's friendship relations, also including play activities. When it comes to the more specific connection between play and moral formation within international research, Edmiston (Edmiston, 2008) needs to be mentioned as a valuable contribution to the subject. He points out that play related activities are helping to develop our "humanity" and in that way play and moral formation is not limited to children, but applies human beings in general. In Norway Rannveig Aas Olsbu (2009) is working with children's play and ethic formation in early childhood education. The preschool teacher students have during their educational program had a glimpse of play's social meaning for the children. A female student tells from a play activity in her internship having meant a lot for her thinking of play and what it means to children's social formation and development: Within play I did see this child experience a sense of belonging to the kindergarten and the other children. The child was given positive attention when the others cheered her. And it was nice to see her in a situation where she socially worked on an equal level with the other children. She was moving in and out of the fiction, and adjusted herself to the fact that also the other children were in need of attention (Kvale, 2009). This event made evident that I got to see play as something more than "just play". More students are expressing the social qualities in play. A female student points to Lillemyr (2008, p. 56), referring to the social values in play. She says: "Play becomes a social platform where children meet, experience and investigate". She adds to this that play requires and develops the ability to take others perspective, a perspective including the ability for the adults to understand children's play from their own standpoint: " It is a prerequisite condition that also the adults manage to see the child's perspectives" (ibid., p. 176). Another student emphasizes friendship in play:

"To participate in play and make friends is the basis for children's wellbeing and meaning making in kindergarten. The foundation for learning and social skills lies in interactions with each other". We can see that the student points to friendship as fundamental for both the child's formation and enjoyment, and generally in terms of learning and social development. Another student is discussing the dilemma of social play where the teaching staff is helping children into play activities at the same time as the concept of free play requires that children themselves get to choose who they will play with: It is the liability of the adult to take responsibility for the children to have a playmate. This is a difficult dilemma as children also have a right to choose who they want to play with or not. If we should compare the situation with the adult world we choose who we want to socialize with and not. We would not tolerate a situation of being imposed social gathering with anyone (Bae, Eide, Winger, & Kristoffersen, 2006). Play activities have some ethical qualities attached to them. Through play, children will get the opportunity to learn the play rules and will be able to develop a moral readiness that enables them to consider more general ethical considerations that the rules fail to capture (Sæle, 2012). Some students show to Richard Haugen (2006) who argues that not all children understand the rules of play as well as the others, and this can lead to that they shut themselves off from playing or are being shut out by others. Then they will never get the opportunity to learn the rules in play.

Some of the students are mentioning Liv Torunn Eik (2003) who claims that children through mastery of play activities develop a greater ability to master and control the play rules. Children who however do not master play rules are often standing outside, getting low status in the group and miss valuable experiences, perceptions and learning. Some students also show to Kari Hoaas Moen (2004) as she is focusing on the negotiation and cooperation qualities in play. A student mentions the core importance of play in all education, also concerning moral formation: Through play I mean that children learn something about being together in a companionship. They learn to wait for their turn, empathy, understanding, they develop language, achieve joy and companionship in a social interaction. [...]. Through theory and experiences I have myself seen the importance of play and gained higher understanding of the importance of play. I did not know that play included as much as it does. It has probably been one of the areas I have learned most about and developed new attitudes in my educational program.

4.2. Adults as Observers and Supporters in Play Activities

Some students are also referring to Jahr & Øgaard (2006) and their thinking of how adults can support children in play activities both as mentors and playmates. There are more students telling that in their internships they noticed that some teachers were just standing in groups talking to each others, even with their backs to the children, and they were more concerned about the chat with other teachers than about the children. One student tells from her internship where she got the task to observe a boy who usually did not feel at ease unless the teachers joined in the play activities. If the teacher joined him and the others at the star of the play activity, and gradually withdrew, the boy felt safe playing with the other children. Another student writes: "I have experienced and seen during internships that the presence of the adult is very important. One must be able to sit down at their level, be interested in what they ask and wonder at". A male student tells how important it is that the teacher takes part in the youngest children's play: In the last internship I was in the toddlers department where I experienced how important adults are as active playmates for the youngest children's development. I sat mostly on the floor with the kids, so I got a closer look at what they said to each other and how they played together. This is an opportunity I'd never gotten if I had been sitting in an office and written forms about the children's development.

4.3. Play and Demands for Bureaucracy in Kindergartens

Some of the students are worried that play will get to be "too educational" when the adults enter into and manage play activities. A student writes: "I am sometimes a little afraid that the educational part should take over and that the impulsive, genuine play will disappear into the background. As I see it is this self-initiated playfulness that has the greatest importance for children's learning and development." Another student shows to the fact that adults can sometimes participate in playful activities by showing educational tact, but it does not mean they should intervene the play. Pedagogical tact and caution is required when an adult enters the children's play. "Pedagogical tact can be expressed in several ways: through sight, speech, silence or movements that are characterized by care and commitment" (Løkken, 1996, p. 128). The important thing is that the child will be taken seriously in play and that we show care and dedication, so the child's childish demeanor is appreciated. I look at play as kids "property", where we as adults must respect the child's intentions and we must adapt our actions in relation to the situation. Some students are pointing out that the teaching staff can be too focused on the elements of learning in play, and by that not see the child's need to spend time with free and self-initiated play.

A third year student is writing: In my previous creed I wrote that I think children's play today is overly organized by the adults, and that children got too little time for free play. I still mean this. The play activities that appeal the most to kids are the self-initiated, play that children control themselves. We adults must improve in leaning ourselves back, and let the kids get to organize play on their own terms. From what I've seen in my internships, it is often an adult who decides what the children should play, and initiate play processes. Some of the students perceive the fact that the kindergartens are increasingly bureaucratized and increasingly subjects for stringent documentation requirements, as a threat to children's need for spontaneously play. A male student expresses his reflections about requirements in early childhood "to meet the demands of society and the parents. I mean all these requirements are depriving the teachers the opportunity to play with the kids, because tests and reports take most of the time". Taylor's thinking about the bureaucratization of our time should clearly correspond with the constant demands in kindergartens for a targeted educational content, an extensive use of systematic documentation, and mapping of individual children (Davidsen, 2008; Løge et. al., 2006; Tholin et al., 2009). Such a bureaucratic, technical development will help to reinforce the role of the preschool teacher as "bureaucrat" rather than to take seriously the ethical challenges that the individual kindergarten faces, especially when it comes to take the children's play and their perspective seriously (Svenning, 2009). Synnøve Haugen (1998) argues that personal ethics will involve taking children seriously, watch them and be responsive to them. Then it is also important to take seriously and facilitate for children's spontaneous play.

4.4. From Spontaneous Play to an Adult-Controlled Play Culture

Several students also express scepticism to the adult controlled play-culture of today, because it can cause the play activities' function as a social ethical formation agent to deteriorate. A student is writing: I have seen in some kindergartens where I have had internships, that what they call spontaneous play does not quite match my thoughts around what spontaneous play is meant to be. The children had to stick to one activity for a certain time, and could choose between already chosen play material as cars, dolls, or puzzles and the like. My own thinking of spontaneous play is letting kids choose freely between the various toys in the kindergarten, and let the kids be in control of the play themselves. Some students also are commenting on how play has changed its character. Here is an example from a male student, who believes the autonomous loop activities he used to enjoy as a child, has been replaced by passive monitor activities: I grew up with the technology and have a thorough knowledge of what the children are concerned about. In my private life I am the stepfather to a girl who has embraced the new technology and can be defined "a modern child", for good or for bad. She has her own computer, Nintendo and Wii, and likes to watch TV when she will enjoy herself. I naturally try to limit her use of these modern "toys", and to ensure that she get to experience the old-fashioned play activities. With the old-fashioned way I mean for example things like building cottage, climb trees and play freely in the woods.

In a Norwegian context children's boisterous play will be a natural part of daily life. Children's boisterous play is also part of children's natural way of playing, but is also a kind of play the teaching staff often will try to limit or even ban. But by doing so, the staff can prevent children from learning moral aspects of play, and learn about cooperative behavior and strategies themselves, for instance by play fighting (Sæle & Akslen, 2014, pp. 176-177). Several researchers have studied this kind of play, and the qualities of boisterous and often risky play, for example Ellen Beate Sandseter (2010, 2015), Rune Storli (2013), and Thomas Moser (Moser & Martinsen, 2010). We can ask ourselves if the children are allowed, and in the future will be given possibilities, to be exploring the woods, playing in the fields, or climbing trees. Or do we prevent children from valuable play experiences of security reasons to protect the teaching staff? The framework plan underlines this form of play (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p. 28): "Outdoor play and activities are an important part of child culture that must be retained, regardless of the geographic and climatic conditions".

5. The Preschool Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner

With the example from Østrem we have seen that the professional ethics for the preschool teachers is all about taking the child's personality and life world seriously, and this can be substantiated on the basis of Taylors thinking of authenticity. We can talk about an ethic of authenticity where the individual must see beyond themselves and seek the good of others.

Transferred to a kindergarten context, it will be the duty of the teaching staff to meet the child where it is: "Ethical care will mean that the teaching staff in kindergartens has the starting point on the child's self-worth and try to meet the individual needs of the child, regardless of their feelings for the child" (Fagerli et. al., 2011, p. 102). Kristin Tholin (2008) writes that the teaching profession needs to have an ethical glance at the way of how to perform the profession, an arena where the professional adults have daily contact with children and youth, in myriad and sometimes difficult situations that require wise ethical judgments and choices. This will not least include ethical considerations and choices that must be made in specific play situations. Making so-called strong evaluations, as Taylor points out, would be to reflect on the important issues related to identity and existence. Children's play will be part of such important considerations for children, as part of their self-identity, not least connected to the social ethical area. In other words it is important that the teaching staff is able to be reflected practitioners, a term that Donald Schön (1995) has launched. Schön put a distinction between "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" to get the nuances in that we both can reflect in advance of, during and in the aftermath of, the children's action and our own. We may well call such strong evaluations for meta-reflections. Through meta-reflections on children's play and our own approaches to these, we can become more conscious of the children and their actions and habit patterns in relation to play. Then both the adults and the children can be more aware of why they think and act as one does in this area. This is important because play is part of children's identity and interaction with others (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, p. 27): "Staff shall guide children in their alternation between fulfilling social norms and requirements, and being themselves. Children must be helped to understand the boundaries for acceptable interaction with other people".

6. Conclusion

In our study we have found that Charles Taylor's concept of authenticity can be used in the field of early childhood education, especially linked to children's lived lives, as it appears in play on a daily basis. Play can be understood as just "time leisure", but for the children themselves this is also an expression of their social-ethical identity and formation. From our students' perspectives children's play in early childhood education, and especially their spontaneous play, is essential for instance for their social-ethical development. In a Norwegian context, we find that there is an increasing demand for documentation and mapping of children in different areas. This is a challenge combined with the fact that there is a bureaucratization in the kindergartens. It is an open question if the students' way of thinking on this subject will be fulfilled in early childhood education to come.

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