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Playful knowledge

an explorative study of educational gaming

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PLAYFUL KNOWLEDGE

An Explorative Study of Educational Gaming

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PhD Dissertation

Institute of Literature, Media and Cultural Studies

University of Southern Denmark

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Preface

Since this PhD project began in 2004, the present author has been affiliated with DREAM (Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials), which is located at the Institute of Literature, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. Research visits have taken place at the Centre for Learning, Knowledge, and Interactive Technologies (L-KIT), the Institute of Education at the University of Bristol and the institute formerly known as Learning Lab Denmark at the School of Education, University of Aarhus, where I currently work as an assistant professor. In order to carry out this study on educational gaming, I conducted fieldwork at two Danish upper secondary schools. Moreover, the design and re-design of the online resources for *The Power Game* (*Spillet om magten*) which formed the empirical starting point of this project also involved collaboration with DR Education at the National Danish Broadcasting Company. I would like to warmly thank everyone with whom I have had the joy and pleasure of working with and reflecting upon my project – my supervisors, fellow researchers, PhD student colleagues, designers, teachers and students. A special thanks to the colleagues who provided valuable feedback during the final stages of this project – you know who you are! This work is dedicated to my daughter, Luna, who also enjoys exploring the playful knowledge of games.

Thorkild Hanghøj, Copenhagen, 2008

Guide to the text

All quotes have been translated into English by me unless otherwise indicated. Some notes on the quotations from the game sessions:

[ ]	Indicates data source
[GS 3: #2]	Example: game session 3, video tape #2
( )	Indicates gesture, body language or other forms of physical activity
Italics	Indicate emphasis
…	Indicates a pause
***	Indicates noise/inaudible words

1. Introducing the study

This dissertation can be read as an attempt to explore the widespread assumption that games have educational value within the context of formal schooling. More specifically, this study tries to answer a number of questions related to this assumption: Why should games have a place in formal education? How should educational games support teaching and learning? And what characterises "good" educational game design? These questions are repeatedly being addressed by game designers, policy makers, educators, news media and researchers in an attempt to explore – and often promote – the assumed learning potential of games. To bring matters to a head, such questions are often driven by an attempt to *legitimise* the educational use of games instead of actually exploring whether this goal is desirable or how it can be achieved.

Even though much has been said and written about educational games, relatively few empirical studies exist of what actually happens *in situ* when a game designed for educational purposes is adapted by teachers and students. In this study, I address the whys, whats and hows of educational gaming by taking a closer look at how a particular debate game was *enacted* and *validated* within different classroom contexts. In order to describe and analyse the meaning-making processes of teaching and playing the game, this thesis draws upon the interdisciplinary perspectives of sociocultural theory. Thus, I assume that educational gaming can be understood as the dynamic interplay between learning, interaction and communication. Moreover, I assume that the educational use of games creates a tension between the institutionalised knowledge aspects of "schooling" and the emerging knowledge aspects of "gaming" – a tension that I have termed *playful knowledge*. By exploring this tension, this study aims to clarify what status educational games have – or could/should have – within the context of formal schooling. In this way, I also aim to promote a *contextual turn* within educational game research, which moves beyond celebration by critically examining the pros and cons of educational gaming through empirical studies.

1.1. Case: The Power Game

In order to explore the empirical problems and possibilities of educational gaming, this study is based on a series of design interventions with *The Power Game*, which is an ICT-supported debate game on parliamentary elections to be used in Danish upper secondary education.[1] The game has

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[1] Game instructions and other relevant resources for *The Power Game* (*Spillet om magten*) are located at The National Danish Broadcasting Company's website: www.dr.dk/gymnasium/emner/spillet_om_magten/forside.asp.

been designed, adapted, and re-designed as a part of my research project using the methodological approach of *design-based research*, which aims to refine theories and designs for learning through iterative design interventions in educational settings (Barab & Squire, 2004).

When trying to understand why and how I have designed and explored *The Power Game* as one particular game among many others, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of this project, which started as a part of the DREAM consortium, Centre for Media Studies, University of Southern Denmark, in August 2004.[2] From the outset, my research project had to meet a number of criteria based on the overall research agenda of the DREAM consortium. First of all, I was expected to explore the design and use of innovative types of learning resources with particular emphasis on educational games. Moreover, like other DREAM research projects, I had to conduct my empirical studies within the context of Danish upper secondary education. Third, the process of designing an educational game had to be conducted in collaboration with a professional Danish provider and distributor of learning resources.

Based on my personal interest in "opinion-based games" and an existing tradition for using educational games in social studies education, I tried to meet the criteria by designing a political game that could be used in combination with social studies and other upper secondary school subjects. More specifically, *The Power Game* was initially designed as a realistic role-playing game on parliamentary elections. Thus, the game instructions specify how students should play politicians, journalists and spin doctors to learn about political ideologies and political communication. Moreover, the students are divided into four or six groups that each represents real-life political ideologies – i.e. the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Liberalist Party and the National Party. By using the real-life political parties' websites, the students are expected to find three key political issues that they describe in their own words to present and debate in an attempt to persuade their classmates to vote for them (cf. illustration on the cover of this thesis). After the final voting procedure, the game session ends with a plenum discussion where teachers and students compare the election results with real-life elections as well as curricular aspects of the game. In addition to the real-life political parties' websites, the design of *The Power Game* also involves supporting the students' role-playing activities through the use of online video clips. In order to achieve this goal, I collaborated with DR Education, which was able to provide online clips

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[2] DREAM is an acronym for Danish Research Centre on Education and Advanced Media Materials, cf. www.dream.dk.

to be used in combination with the election scenario taken from a comprehensive database with several thousand digitised video clips.[3]

In order to explore whether or how *The Power Game* could actually be *played* within an educational context, I established contact with five social studies teachers from two Danish general upper secondary schools who agreed to collaborate with me by conducting five different game sessions and by participating in post-game interviews. A few days after each of the game sessions, I interviewed two selected groups of students about their experience of the educational game. In this way, the main empirical data in this project is based on roughly 30 hours of video recordings from the five game sessions combined with five post-game interviews with the teachers and five post-game group interviews with selected students.

1.2. Reconceptualising the study – a brief research narrative

This study, as mentioned, started out as a design-based research project because my objective was to explore the educational value of games by designing, using and re-designing a particular game scenario. This aim was based on a rather loosely formulated set of assumptions on creating a "realistic" role-playing game which could support students' inquiry into preparing, presenting and defending political issues. Since my collaboration with DR Education and the participating teachers was somewhat limited, I had to conduct my design experiments without a preliminary pilot study. Moreover, I had no prior experience with game design or with teaching in upper secondary schools. Based on these constraints, it was quite difficult to predict how the election scenario could or would be adapted by the five teachers and the approximately 90 students that took part in the five successive game sessions. Consequently, my actual design interventions became quite focused upon making the design "work" in a pragmatic sense to ensure that the teachers and students would be able to actually play *The Power Game*. Thus, it was only after finishing the design interventions that I was able to develop a theoretical framework and explore the empirical data in more detail by taking a discourse analytic approach to the social actions of the game participants (Gee & Green, 1998).

This gradual process of shifting from a pragmatic design perspective toward a more analytically oriented perspective on the social actors in the game encounters implied a *reconceptualisation* of my study. For example, having observed how the game scenario was enacted and validated by the teachers and students, I decided to modify my initial assumptions about

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[3] DR Education is the educational unit at the Danish National Broadcasting Company, cf. www.dr.dk/undervisning.

creating a "realistic" game and focus more on the relevance of the design elements. Furthermore, the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews resulted in a significantly high degree of responses about the students' *debate practices* – especially in relation to the students that performed as politicians. This focus was consistent with my own observations and the analytical themes that emerged when transcribing and coding the video data from the game session. Moreover, some of the social studies teachers in this study were slightly negative toward the label "role-playing" as it had obvious drama pedagogical connotations. Based on these findings, I decided to reconceptualise the game label from a realistic role-playing game to a *debate game*. During the process of re-labelling the game, I learned that debate games and debate education are fairly well-known phenomena in the English speaking world and have a long history that can be traced back to ancient Greece, where Protagoras and other Sophists taught and debated on the premise that there are always "many sides" to any subject (Billig, 1996; Snider & Schnurer, 2006). At the same time, the formalised and staged aspects of debate games represent a relatively unknown phenomenon in the German-Nordic countries, which have a stronger tradition for more deliberative models of democratic debate (cf. Habermas, 1981). Hopefully, English speaking readers will bear such difference between various national debate cultures in mind when reading this thesis.

Similarly, another initial aim was to explore how the game scenario could be related to the social studies curriculum of Danish upper secondary education. However, based on my observations and post-game interviews with the teachers, it was quite clear that the aims and subject-related content of *The Power Game* extended far beyond the disciplinary boundaries of social studies. Thus, the aims of the election scenario can be compared with the overall aims of *citizenship education*, which is a cross-curricular topic within the Danish educational system (Jerome & Algarra, 2005). Debate games can thus be used to educate students for democracy through active experimentation and reflection on ideological issues that make sense to their own lifeworld. Thus, participation in debate games represents a valuable opportunity for students to become *competent* citizens.[4]

As these examples show, my transcription, coding and analysis of the empirical data from the game sessions involved a series of reconceptualisations. Thus, by following the methodological approach of James Paul Gee and Judith L. Green's discourse analytic framework, I have formulated a *logic-of-inquiry* in order explore a combination of different theoretical and analytical perspectives on the game sessions – i.e. on how the social actors experienced, interacted

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[4] My definition and spelling of the term "competence" and the plural form "competencies" refers to DeSeCo's holistic framework, which assumes that a competence is ability beyond *skills* (Rychen & Salganik, 2003; cf. chapter 3).

and communicated within the context of the educational game encounters (Gee & Green, 1998). However, before going into more detail with the theoretical assumptions and empirical focus of this study, I will first locate my research project within the field of educational game research and describe my research object, which is the meaning-making processes of educational gaming.

1.3. Mapping the landscape of educational game research

Over the last five years, there has been a boom within educational game research that can largely be explained by the growing presence and proliferation of different game formats – both inside and outside school contexts. A key factor in this surge of interest has been the huge commercial success of video games, which has led many researchers to tacitly assume that these games "work" and then tried to identify in what way video games are "engaging" or "motivating" (Sefton-Green, 2006: 290). Based on this assumption, a number of influential works have been published, which describe and analyse the "learning potential" of video games from different perspectives (Prensky, 2001; Gee, 2003; Squire, 2004; Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005; Shaffer, 2006). These authors all argue that video games can be used as engaging and valuable learning resources to fulfil a wide range of educational goals.

In addition to video games, the last five years have also seen the rise of many other game formats that have been designed for educational purposes – i.e. simulations, board games, role-playing games (online and offline), mobile location-based learning games, exertainment and various forms of ICT-supported games, which mix computer activities and classroom activities (cf. *The Power Game*). Similar to video games, each of these educational game formats is linked to their own "research ghetto" as game researchers often use a particular *game design* as their starting point. This tendency toward design bias in educational game research can partly be explained by the fact that many researchers – including me – have been directly involved in the design process or have an idiosyncratic preference for the game they are studying. In this way, game researchers tend to create a new sub-field of research whenever a new game format emerges. Consequently, it is difficult to view educational game research as a single or coherent field of research as it represents an interdisciplinary collection of many different sub-fields, each centred on a particular game format (cf. Klabbers, 2006).

So far, the field of educational game research offers rather few empirical descriptions of how games are enacted within actual classroom settings (cf. Magnussen, 2008; Sefton-Green, 2006: 283f). Instead, educational game researchers, designers and practitioners alike often tend to

view educational games as *black boxes* (Latour, 1987). According to Latour, blackboxing is the social process whereby technological facts are made invisible by their own success, which means that potential users only focus on input or outputs and not on the internal complexity. Similarly, educational game research is characterised by two forms of blackboxing, which I have termed *essentialism* and *determinism*. At the risk of over-simplification, I will briefly present these two perspectives to explain my own *contextualised* approach to educational game research.

The *essentialist* perspective is based on the assumption that games can be understood as self-confined entities or ontologies. There has been several attempts to define the essence of games as, i.e. a magic circle (Huizinga, 1950), as universal types (Caillois, 1961), as rule-based systems (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003; Juul, 2003; Klabbers, 2006), as multimodal texts (Burn et al., 2006), as aesthetic phenomena (Aarseth, 2003) and as rhetorical expressions (Frasca, 2007). These researchers all try to define the universal "gameness" or the core essense of games. Obviously, there are many legitimate reasons to try and define the key aspects of game phenomena as they represent fascinating alternatives to more mundane forms of everyday experience. However, these essentialist approaches becomes problematic in relation to educational gaming, where games are overtly *adapted* by teachers and students as learning resources in order to fulfil specific educational goals that may be more or less congruent with in-game goals. Thus, trying to identify the essence of educational games easily ends up foregrounding particular aspects of a game design, which removes attention from the actual *doings* of the participants who become involved in the *meaning-making processes* of playing games within an educational context. Instead of trying to crystallise the essence of educational games, I define them pragmatically as *any game design with explicit educational goals that are intended to support processes of teaching and learning*.[5] Since the gaming landscape is constantly mutating, this thesis does not attempt to offer a final definition or taxonomy of games. Instead, my aim is to identify and analyse a series of *game elements* – scenarios, rules, outcomes, goals, roles, resources and dialogue – which are relevant when trying to describe the emerging *knowledge aspects* of games being enacted in educational contexts (Barth, 2002). By using these game elements as a theoretical starting point, it becomes possible to describe the playful tension between the knowledge forms of the educational context and the knowledge forms embedded in the game scenario.

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[5] I use the term *educational games* throughout the dissertation instead of the broad term "learning games", which relates to both formal and informal learning settings. On the other hand, I prefer the broadness of educational games compared to similar terms such as "serious games" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005) and "epistemic games" (Shaffer, 2006) as these labels refer to specific assumptions about what constitute a game and what a game can be used for.

In contrast to the essentialist perspective, the *determinist* perspective assumes that educational games can be blackboxed as rational "techniques" or "learning machines" that are able to transmit or transport clearly deliminated forms of knowledge to the players. This approach to educational games is commonly found among game designers and researchers working within psychological learning paradigms such as behaviourism, cognitivism and constructionism (Koschmann, 1996; cf. overview in Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006). By focusing upon the effects of game-based learning, this approach – directly or indirectly – views educational games as *transparent* devices for learning that assumedly can be made "teacher proof" and "deployed" to accomplish well-defined goals within the curriculum. Correspondingly, the aim is not to define the qualities or essence of games (what is a game?), but rather to be able to document specific *outcomes* of gaming (how much learning does the game generate?). This approach is often linked with specific political or commercial agendas that seek to provide evidence that can document the value of educational gaming (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005; Shaffer, 2008). Thus, from a determinist point of view, it is widely assumed that the adequate design and use of specific game formats can ensure that students meet expected and well-defined learning goals. In this way, the influence of teachers' pedagogical approaches or students' game interpretations are often absent from this form of educational game research.

In contrast to the essentialist and determinist approaches, this study represents a *contextualised* approach to educational gaming. Obviously, it is important to understand how educational games are able to create interactive worlds that can be used as designs for teaching and learning. As potential players, educators, researchers, designers, and policy-makers, it *is* crucial to analyse what stuff games are made of and be able to verify assumptions on why it is recommendable to teach with games. Still, the essentialist and determinist approaches are problematic as they tend to neglect or fail to analyse the highly complex processes involved in enacting and validating educational games in social settings. In this respect, this dissertation should be viewed as an attempt to promote a *contextual turn* in educational game research and focus on how social actors, in this case, teachers and students, adapt and transform the intentions of particular game designs in relation to their existing practices and knowledge criteria.[6] As the sociologist Erving Goffman noted nearly fifty years ago, game research needs to avoid rationalistic conceptions of *players* and move toward a more complex understanding of how *participants* make meaning from "gaming encounters" (Goffman, 1961a: 33). Thus, when teachers and students enact

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[6] Arguing along similar lines, several video game researchers have started to contextualise gaming by focusing more on *interaction* than the actual game *representations* (Linderoth, 2004; Thorhauge, 2007).

The Power Game, this activity cannot be fully understood through simplistic notions of merely "playing the game". Instead, close attention should be paid to the ways in which teachers and students engage in the social encounter of the parliamentary election scenario, how the participants communicate in the dialogic game space, and how they reflect upon their inquiry-based game experiences. Simply put, one of the declared aims of this study is to open the black boxes of educational game research by providing a more context-sensitive perspective on the somewhat unpredictable outcomes and playful knowledge of educational gaming.

1.4. Educational gaming as a research object

As mentioned, the research object of this dissertation is the meaning-making processes of *educational gaming* within the context of formal schooling. Any attempt to define and explore this object of research is complicated by the fact that the social phenomena of education and games have numerous connotations as both terms refer to an *object* and a *process*. Thus, "education" refers to both the process and the knowledge that may result from being educated. Similarly, the word "game" refers to both a game design (a noun) and gaming (verb). The latter distinction often becomes blurred in everyday talk when we speak of games, as we both refer to *games as representations* (game design) and the actual *game interaction* (participation), which includes, for example, preparing key political issues, performing roles and debating ideological positions in *The Power Game*. Due to the complex and contingent outcomes of games, it is far simpler to describe a particular game in terms of its design features compared to describing how it is or can be played. For example, when interviewed a few days after the game sessions conducted in this study, many students would be content to characterise their experience of *The Power Game* as "fun" and – unless further questioned – only offer few, if any, detailed descriptions of the actual process of participating in the game scenario. The point being that not only game researchers but also game participants tend to describe the social phenomenon of gaming encounters through blanket statements that blackbox them as self-contained phenomena.

In order to "open the box" and explore the meaning-making processes of educational gaming, this thesis introduces the term *scenario* as a key theoretical and analytical concept. Like education and games, a scenario can be defined as both an object and as a process. On the one hand, a scenario refers to a noun: a plot, a screen play or the parliamentary election scenario of *The Power Game*. On the other hand, the term scenario also denotes a process such as imagining a sequence of

events through an active "playing through" of possible and actual events.[7] In this way, an educational game may be viewed as a *designed* scenario, which contains pre-given elements (i.e. roles, rules, conflicts, goals and game resources) that can be used by teachers and students for various purposes. Correspondingly, the meaning-making processes of educational gaming refer to the *realised* scenario, where teachers and students enact the resources and intentions of the game design in relation to the local practices of their educational setting.

The main reason for introducing the term scenario is that it describes both key features of education *and* games. In this way, it becomes possible to compare educational games with other forms of *scenario-based learning resources*. Thus, mind maps, interactive texts, educational computer games, simulations, and a debate game such as *The Power Game* each represent scenario-based learning resources, as they are each able to support students' imaginative construction and actual realisation of possible outcomes in relation to domain-specific scenarios. Similarly, it is also possible to compare educational gaming with other *scenario-based forms of teaching* such as project-based work forms, drama pedagogy, storytelling, creative writing, scenario planning and contrafactual history teaching. The point here is to challenge the commonsensical notion that educational gaming represents an isolated activity in an educational context, i.e. that it is a "fun event" or a "break" from everyday schooling. Thus, I will argue that educational gaming *is* a form of teaching and, as such, shares many similarities with other forms of teaching. This also explains why some of the teachers and students in this study described *The Power Game* as a staged and focused form of doing problem-based project work.

As mentioned, the combination of games and education may be quite tension-filled as these social phenomena often involve different knowledge criteria. Following Fredrik Barth's anthropology of knowledge, this tension can be analysed by viewing educational practices and game practices as two distinct *traditions of knowledge* that also generate distinct criteria for *validating* knowledge (Barth, 2002). Simply put, education and games represent different assumptions about what forms of knowledge "count", i.e. trying to win *The Power Game* through persuasive rhetoric and writing a social studies assignment clearly represent different ways of enacting and validating knowledge within a school context. Moreover, it may be argued that any design for learning involves a possible divergence between the *intentions* of the design and the contingency of the learner's situated actions through actual *design-in-use*, both of which involve change and continuity in relation to *the local practices of the educational context*. Thus, in order to

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[7] Cf. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scenario.

explore educational gaming, this thesis explores consistencies and discrepancies between the intended goals of the game design, the actions teachers and student take, and their everyday school practices. This complex relationship between game scenario, adaptation and educational context is illustrated below:

Game scenario → ← **Educational gaming** → ← **Educational context**

(design intentions)   (design-in-use)   (local practices)
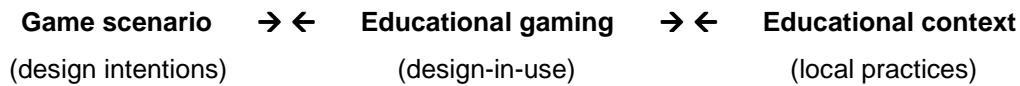
Figure 1.1: Educational gaming as an interplay between game scenario and educational context

As the figure suggests, this thesis assumes that the realisation of an educational game scenario cannot be understood in isolation from the local practices of the social actors within a given educational setting. Following Barth, these practices may be analysed as different aspects of knowledge that are both related to *assertions* about the world (e.g. norms, values), *modes of representation* (e.g. speaking, writing) and *social forms of organisation* (e.g. classroom instruction, project work) (Barth, 2002). In this way, educational gaming represents a dynamic tension between the design goals of a given game scenario and the existing pedagogical practices which is continually negotiated between the social participants of the gaming encounter. Thus, educational gaming can be defined as *the enactment and validation of game scenarios in relation to the domain-specific practices and knowledge forms of an educational context.* This means that the teachers and students who participated in *The Power Game* oriented themselves not only toward the intended practices and epistemologies of the game scenario, e.g. by performing as professional politicians and adapting relevant forms of knowledge, but also toward the existing criteria for knowledge production within the formal school setting of Danish upper secondary education.

1.5. Research question and hypothesis

Having introduced my empirical case, the landscape of educational game research and the object of my research, I will now present my research question. Thus, in the most general sense, the aim of this dissertation is to answer the following question:

> *How are game scenarios enacted and validated by teachers and students in relation to particular practices and knowledge forms?*

This question could be re-phrased and expanded in relation to the theoretical, methodological, and

empirical aspects of this project. So, based on a research interest in the design, use and understanding of educational games, how is it possible to teach and learn with a particular game scenario on parliamentary elections entitled *The Power Game* within the context of Danish general upper secondary education? The question posed here is interdisciplinary as it addresses several different areas of research, including design-based research, game research and educational research. These different research areas are united in an attempt to re-think the meaning-making processes of educational gaming in relation to different theoretical and analytical perspectives.

Moreover, the research question rests on the *hypothesis* that educational gaming involves a tension between the different knowledge traditions of schools and the knowledge traditions of games which I have termed *playful knowledge*. So far, several claims have been made on the assumed learning potential of games, but only a few studies exist that aim to contextualise educational gaming (Linderoth, 2004; Magnussen, 2008). However, as these studies indicate – as well as the findings presented in this thesis – there are good reasons to be sceptical of any claims that educational gaming is about to revolutionise schooling, teaching and learning as we know it. At the same time, there are also substantial reasons to believe that game scenarios can be used as a relevant, meaningful and engaging design for teaching and learning. In summary, there is a growing demand to *empirically* explore the educational use of games in order to generate knowledge on what actually happens when teachers and students enact and validate particular game designs. In this way, this thesis is based on the hypothesis that game scenarios may have educational value *if* the knowledge production of education is reconciled with the knowledge production of games. To explore this hypothesis, this study focuses on how a particular game design on parliamentary election is taught through different pedagogical approaches in order to enact domain-specific game competencies. Consequently, my goal is also to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What is the relationship between the intentions of *The Power Game* and its actual use?
2. How do teachers facilitate the game scenario through various pedagogical approaches?
3. How are students' game-based competencies enacted and validated?

1.6. Theoretical and analytical perspectives

In addition to Barth's anthropology of knowledge, this thesis draws upon the three theoretical perspectives of *pragmatism*, *interactionism* and *dialogism* to further explore the social phenomenon of educational gaming. These theories all belong under the broad umbrella of sociocultural theories

as they emphasise how social actors of educational gaming make meaning through playing, teaching, thinking and learning by *actively engaging* with the world, e.g. through inquiry, social interaction and dialogue (Dysthe, 2003). Moreover, these theories also assume a *relational ontology*, which implies that the meanings and knowledge aspects of educational gaming are not located within the individual's head, but are distributed through particular patterns of relationships between the social actors of a gaming encounter (Emirbayer, 1997). Furthermore, a sociocultural perspective assumes that there is no fundamental ontological difference between schooling and gaming. Rather, the relationship between educational activities and game activities represents a *continuum* of practices and knowledge forms mediated by the communicative use of symbols and language through social interaction. By taking this view, it becomes possible to document and analyse how teachers' adopt and adapt particular educational game scenarios as well as understand how the realisation of these game scenarios may constrain or support students' active and critical pursuit of specific learning goals. Instead of assuming that educational games "possess" a learning potential *per se*, this study argues that game-based learning always implies learning about *something* through domain-specific forms of knowledge production.

The reason for introducing the theoretical perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism and dialogism is to describe and analyse three complimentary aspects of educational gaming. Thus, in order to understand the playful knowledge of *The Power Game*, this thesis explores the interplay between the game scenario and the educational context in relation to the assertions, modes of representation and social organisation that emerged in the five game sessions documented in this study. More specifically, John Dewey's pragmatist philosophy is used to explore the assertions of the game scenario and the social actors by focusing on key notions such as *experience*, *inquiry*, *play* and *dramatic rehearsal* (Dewey, 1916, 1922, 1938a). Similarly, I have adapted George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman's interactionist perspectives to analyse the social organisation of the game sessions by focusing on the processes of *role-taking* and *performing* in relation to the emerging *rules* and interpretive *framing* (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974). Finally, this study also analyses the modes of representation of the debate game through the dialogical philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin by addressing the teachers and students' *dialogue* and their discursive *positionings* through various forms of *authority* and *ideological voices* (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a, 1986). By combining these theoretical perspectives it is possible to foreground (and background) various aspects of the teachers and students' *social actions* within and across the five game sessions documented in this study.

In addition to the theoretical perspectives, this thesis also explores the game sessions in relation to three different *analytical perspectives* – a design perspective, a teacher perspective, and a student perspective, each of which address one of the three sub-questions posed above. Obviously, the design, the teaching and the playing of *The Power Game* were inextricably linked and mutually dependent. Nevertheless, I made this analytical choice in order to describe three key aspects of the game sessions that relate to the design principles used in designing and re-designing the debate game, the teachers' pedagogical approaches and the students' game competencies. By approaching the game sessions from these analytical perspectives, this study identifies a series of *analytical themes* that are related to both the game sessions documented here and to broader discussions on the educational value of game scenarios.

The first analytical perspective describes the design, use and re-design of *The Power Game* by analysing the discrepancy between the design intentions of creating a "realistic" election scenario, the actual enactment of the game design and the response from the participating teachers and students. As my findings indicate, the attempt to create a realistic educational game should ultimately be evaluated in relation to the relevance of particular game elements. This attempt to balance the relationship between realistic game elements and the relevance criteria of the educational context is described as a question of *relevant realism*. Similarly, the design perspective is used to explore the hypothesis that the role-playing activities of *The Power Game* could be combined with online media such as websites and video clips. However, as my analysis shows, this attempt to integrate different modes of representation easily results in interpretive *frame clashes*.

The second analytical perspective describes the game sessions as seen from a teacher perspective. In order to enact and validate the election scenario, the five teachers had to re-define their everyday roles as teachers and become game *facilitators*. Moreover, the teachers attempted to *authorise* the students' participation and the outcome of the game sessions. Finally, when interviewed after the game sessions, the teachers were asked to *evaluate* the subject-related content and value of the educational game. By comparing the different teachers' adaptations of the same game scenario, this chapter argues that the five teachers illustrate three different pedagogical approaches for teaching with games. In summary, these three pedagogical approaches imply different ways of interpreting the game scenario, different configurations of discursive authority and different criteria for validating the students' game-based knowledge.

The third and final analytical perspective explores the game sessions as seen from a student perspective. More specifically, I focus on the students who played politicians as this role

was by far the most significant and demanding role of the election scenario. In order to persuade their classmates, the politicians had to adopt the *debate practices* of real-life politicians during an election campaign. Thus, they had to perform their roles in a convincing manner by keeping their "face" and, in their own words, avoided "being butchered" by their political opponents. In this way, they had to have *social competence* in order to understand the "knowledge game" of professional politics. Similarly, the politicians also positioned themselves in relation to the ideological voices available in the dialogical game space. Put differently, the students were expected to enact *communicative competence* in order to convince and persuade their classmates. Moreover, the students also had to imagine and create hypotheses on the possible consequences of presenting and defending different key political issues within the context of the election scenario. The students' creative ability to relate real and imagined knowledge forms of the parliamentary election is described as their *scenario competence*. Finally, these game competencies also point to important aspects of what it means to be a competent *citizen*.

In summary, these three analytical perspectives explore how the teachers and the students *transformed* the intentions of *The Power Game* within the context of the educational setting. In the words of Bakhtin: "There can be no such thing as an absolutely neutral utterance" (Bakhtin, 1986: 84). In the same way, this study believes that there is no such thing as a neutral design for learning and no neutral way of teaching or learning through educational gaming, which always involves the making of meaning at the local level of a particular context.

1.7. The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation comprises nine chapters. Following the introduction to the overall aims and research question of the study, chapter 2 describes the relationship between games, education and knowledge, which are three key terms in this study. Drawing upon Barth's anthropology of knowledge, I argue that educational gaming can be studied as the interplay between different traditions of knowledge. Moreover, I identify a range of different game elements, which are related to both the knowledge aspects of schooling and gaming. Next, a tentative attempt is made to categorise different types of educational games. This is followed by a discussion of how game labels influence the way in which game phenomena are perceived by teachers. The remainder of the chapter discusses various aspects of how and why games may have educational value.

Chapter 3 introduces different aims and approaches to debate games, which is the game format studied in this thesis. Based upon the work of Bakhtin and educational researchers

working within the area of dialogical pedagogy, I outline key features of dialogical game pedagogy. Moreover, I describe how the educational aims of debate games correspond with the overall aims of citizenship education in relation to Danish and international perspectives. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the notion of competence as an important analytical term for understanding how students enact particular forms of knowledge in relation to domain-specific demands when playing games.

Chapter 4 further extends my theoretical perspectives on the educational use of games by presenting an analytical framework that can be used to understand the meaning-making processes of educational gaming as a dynamic interplay between inquiry, interaction and discourse. Drawing upon the work of Dewey, Mead, Goffman and Bakhtin, I introduce and discuss a series of analytical concepts, which can be used to analyse the knowledge aspects of educational gaming, which refer to both the knowledge forms of particular game scenarios and the knowledge forms embedded in an educational context.

Chapter 5 introduces my combined methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis. These two approaches appear to be incompatible as they represent two different models of research. Thus, design-based research can be seen as an engineering model of research, while discourse analysis represents an enlightenment model of research. However, both approaches can be reconciled through the pragmatist notion of abductive reasoning. After discussing the methodological assumptions of design-based research and discourse analysis, the chapter then moves on to the actual methods used in generating and analysing the project's empirical data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of different criteria for attaining validity – or trustworthiness – of my analytical findings.

In the next three chapters, I present the analytical findings of my study (cf. summary in section 1.6). Thus, chapter 6 describes the pragmatic processes involved in designing, using and re-designing *The Power Game* with particular emphasis on the realism and frame clashes of the game scenario. In chapter 7, I present my empirical findings as seen from a teacher perspective by focusing on the teachers' pedagogical approaches. Correspondingly, the aim of chapter 8 is to describe the game sessions from a student perspective by addressing their debate practices and game competencies. Each of the analytical chapters ends with a summary and a series of recommendations, which can be seen as a form of "next-best practice" that requires further exploration.

Finally, the thesis closes with chapter 9, where I discuss the validity and conclusions of my analytical findings and describe the limitations of my research design. Moreover, I attempt to generalise my findings in relation to the broader scope of educational game research and outline possibilities for future studies.

1.8. Beyond celebration

In general, educational game research has been characterised by a strong tendency to celebrate or hype the untapped learning potential of games. Thus, it is widely believed that educational games often represent "good" design and valuable learning principles, while educational systems are often based on "bad" design and useless theories for learning (Gee, 2003). In my opinion, such dichotomies are doing more harm than good for the field of educational game research as they simply reproduce the opinions that exist among the already converted. As Julian Sefton-Green argues, there is a growing need for educational game research to start empirically exploring the complex and messy realities of using games within an educational context (Sefton-Green, 2006). More to the point, *if* the aim of educational game research is to have any real influence on the agendas of policy makers, educators and game designers – i.e. by legitimising and qualifying the educational use of games – it is time to stop being speculative and start exploring the actual possibilities and barriers for learning when teaching and playing games in school settings. Hopefully, this study can be read as an important step in that direction. Thus, the overall aim of this study is to explore and clarify the educational value of game scenarios by contributing in the following areas:

- The development of a *theoretical* framework for conceptualising educational gaming as a dynamic tension between different traditions of knowledge. Moreover, the playful knowledge aspects of educational gaming can be analysed as a complex interplay between inquiry, interaction and communication.

- A discussion of how to combine *methodological* approaches for studying the educational use of games which explore the relationship between the design intentions, design-in-use and the local practices of a given educational context.

- The generation of knowledge on the educational use of games through *empirical* studies of the actual process of enacting and validating a particular debate game within a formal school context. More specifically, this study explores knowledge aspects of "realistic" game design, teachers' pedagogical approaches and students' game competencies.

2. Games, knowledge and education

This chapter introduces the main object of research in this study, which is the process of enacting and validating educational games. The chapter starts out by describing game phenomena as pragmatic entities, which make meaning in relation to how they are enacted. The second section then presents educational gaming as an interplay between different traditions of knowledge, which relate to both the educational context and particular game phenomena. In the third section, I further conceptualise educational gaming by using the three theoretical perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism, and dialogism to identify different game elements. The fourth section discusses how educational games can be categorised in relation to different configurations of game environments and game modalities. This is exemplified in the next section, which discusses the labelling of *The Power Game,* the parliamentary elections game that forms the main empirical focus of this study. The sixth section discusses how Dewey viewed games as meaningful activities of educational value. In the next two sections, I present contemporary attempts to further develop Dewey's assumptions. The ninth section addresses the lack of contextualised descriptions within educational game research. Finally, in the last three sections, I discuss some of the reasons for teaching with games, and how the knowledge generated from educational gaming represents a form of *playful knowledge*.

2.1. What is a game?

As the game-savvy reader will know, numerous definitions of games exist, all of which attempt to pin down the meaning of games. Thus, defining games alone represents a form of "definition game". Without examining the various game definitions in detail, I will argue that many attempts to define games are *essentialist* since the definitions often assume that game phenomena *as such* represent particular ontologies, i.e. the "gameness" of games (Juul, 2003), games as systems (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003; Klabbers, 2006), the universal categories of game types (Caillois, 1961), games as multimodal texts (Burn et al., 2006), games as aesthetic phenomena (Aarseth, 2003), games as rhetorical expressions (Frasca, 2007) or games as "magic circles" (Huizinga, 1950). Instead of playing the definition game and trying to come up with yet another essential quality of games, this thesis fundamentally agrees with Wittgenstein, who argues that the representational limits of *language* makes it impossible to arrive at an universal definition of games:

§ 66

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"– but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! – Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. – Are they all 'amusing'? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear.

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

§ 67

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. – And I shall say: 'games' form a family.

(Wittgenstein, 1958; §66-67)

By using games as an example, Wittgenstein brilliantly illustrates how language consists of relationships between various "family resemblances". Based upon their prior experience, human beings are able to recognise particular games as well as the difference between various types of games. However, even though individuals are able to *recognise* the meanings of words, faces in a crowd and the characteristics of chess, solitaire, soccer etc., *this does not imply the ability to accurately describe or define these particular phenomena*. In this way, Wittgenstein uses the problem of defining games as an illustration of the representational limits of language. A further illustration is the overlap between "play" and "game" phenomena. Thus, in English and Scandinavian languages, separate words exist to describe play (*leg*) and games (*spil*), but in other languages such as German and French, the words *Spiel* and *jeu* both refer to play *and* game

phenomena (Caillois, 1961).[8] Consequently, this thesis makes no fundamental distinction between the terms playing and gaming as they clearly represent overlapping phenomena.

Even though it is futile to create a universal game definition, Wittgenstein's point is not that we should stop trying to define or understand games. Hence in this thesis, educational game scenarios are defined as pragmatic "means", which are intended to be *used* for educational "ends" (Dewey, 1916). Moreover, educational games are also conceptualised as "world-building activities" and "dialogical spaces" which imply that game scenarios should be analysed and interpreted in relation to how they are actually *enacted* by game participants within particular educational contexts (Goffman, 1961a; Wegerif, 2007).

2.2. Games and knowledge

One of the core assumptions of this thesis is that *knowledge* plays a key role when trying to understand the objectives, processes and outcomes of educational gaming – both as a theoretical and an empirical-analytical concept. Thus, learning through games always implies learning about *something* (Gee, 2003). The knowledge aspects of educational gaming are multidimensional as they simultaneously refer to the intended knowledge goals of a particular game scenario, the prior knowledge of the involved teacher and game participants, the actual process of producing knowledge within the educational game context, the institutionalised knowledge criteria of the school curricula etc. Drawing upon the work of Frederick Barth, the knowledge dimensions of educational gaming can be understood through an "anthropology of knowledge" (Barth, 2002).[9]

According to Barth, all cultures and societies are constituted by a wide range of different *knowledge traditions*, which can be analysed in relation to three "faces" or "aspects" of knowledge. Thus, any tradition of knowledge involves *a substantive corpus of assertions and ideas about aspects of the world*, *modes of representation*, and *a social organisation* (Barth, 2002: 3f). Barth uses this generic framework to describe the knowledge traditions of the Baktamans in New Guinea, people living in North Bali and the academic environment of British universities. Similarly, the world of social studies classrooms in Danish general upper secondary education which forms the empirical context of this study also represents a tradition of knowledge. Thus, social studies

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[8] Similar to games, play phenomena are also notoriously difficult to define. Thus, Johnson et al. argues that the *Oxford English Dictionary* contains 116 [*sic*] different definitions of play (Johnson et al., 1999).
[9] Barth defines *knowledge* as "what a person employs to interpret and act upon the world", which both involves feelings (attitudes), information, embodied skills as well as verbal taxonomies and concepts (Barth, 2002: 1). This holistic definition is quite similar to Dewey's pragmatist conception of knowledge, which is also based upon the individual's active experience of the world and the social relationship to others (Dewey, 1916; Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

education is based on a series of *assertions* on the content, goals and social value of teaching and learning defined by a national curriculum as well as the social actors within the field. In order to accomplish these goals, upper secondary teachers and students have access to a broad repertoire of different symbolically mediated *resources* for learning, i.e. spoken and written forms of communication, tables, blackboards, textbooks, computers, overhead projectors, pens and paper etc. Moreover, the same teachers and students are mutually responsible for the *social organisation* of different pedagogical practices such as classroom instruction, project-based work forms, group presentations, exams etc. Following Barth, these three "faces of knowledge" are interconnected as they *mutually determine* each other in "the particulars of action, in every event of the application of knowledge, in every transaction in knowledge, in every performance" (Barth, 2002: 3). Finally, each tradition of knowledge generates specific "criteria of validity for knowledge about the world" (Barth, 2002: 1). In this sense, the upper secondary teachers and students in this study related the knowledge aspects of educational gaming to more or less explicit criteria for determining which forms of knowledge *counted* and which ones did *not count* within the educational context.

Following Barth, the game researcher Jan Klabbers argues that individual *games* also represent particular traditions of knowledge (Klabbers, 2006: 8f). Thus, games are based upon a series of assertions, which implies different forms of causality, taxonomies, concepts and rules on how to interpret and act within a particular game world. Like upper secondary education, games also require a series of different modes of representation available to the game participants, i.e. pieces in a board game, written hand-outs for a role-playing game, the multimodal interfaces of computer games etc. Moreover, games are played through particular forms of social organisation as when participants gather around a board game or interact with each other through online media. Finally, games also generate specific criteria for validating the generated knowledge – often in relation to assessable outcomes such as winning/losing or more differentiated point systems.

Even though educational institutions and game phenomena both can be described as knowledge traditions, they are often perceived as two worlds apart. Formal education as we know it today is widely regarded as a "serious" activity, whereas games are often categorised as a "fun" pastime (Shaffer, 2006). In this way, educational environments and game phenomena represent quite different criteria for validating knowledge. The potential tension between these different validity criteria is particularly relevant when studying the educational use of game scenarios. Thus, an important aim of this thesis is *to explore the interplay of validity criteria between educational contexts and game scenarios, i.e. how they overlap, become integrated and/or mutually exclude*

each other. More specifically, this study explores how a particular debate game on parliamentary elections was enacted within the context of social studies in Danish upper secondary education. On the one hand, the election scenario of *The Power Game* enabled teachers and students to playfully engage with political ideologies and particular debate practices in order to acquire knowledge intended to be "valid" in relation to the social studies curriculum. On the other hand, the knowledge tradition and pedagogical practices of upper secondary education did not offer specific criteria for *validating* the generated knowledge of the election scenario and educational games as such. In this sense, the enactment of *The Power Game* represented an ambivalent form of *playful knowledge*, which, quoting the teachers and students in this study, was simultaneously "serious" and "entertaining" as well as "relevant" and "superficial". Thus, by drawing upon Barth's anthropology of knowledge, it is possible *to explore educational gaming as an interplay between different knowledge traditions:* the everyday lifeworld of educational settings and the world-building activities of game encounters (Schütz, 1964; Goffman, 1961a).

2.3. Conceptualising educational gaming

According to Klabbers, Barth's analytical framework can be used to study how "meaning is constructed, transmitted and applied in social transaction" when playing games (Klabbers, 2006: 71). However, Klabbers' own framework for understanding games is primarily based upon social systems theory. Thus, he claims that "games are social systems" and also "models of social systems" (Klabbers, 2006: 81-82). I agree with Klabbers that games both represent *real* and *imagined* activities and that there is a crucial difference between being a participant *in* and a facilitator *of* game scenarios. Still, Klabbers' use of social systems theory offers no detailed analyses of how actual game scenarios are enacted *in situ*.

In order to map, describe and analyse the meaning-making processes of educational gaming, this study is based upon the interdisciplinary approach of sociocultural theory (Dysthe, 2003).[10] More specifically, this thesis combines the three theoretical and analytical perspectives of *pragmatism* (Dewey, 1916), *interactionism* (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974), and *dialogism* (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). These perspectives are all described in more detail in chapter 4, which presents a theoretical and analytical model for understanding the practices and meaning-making processes of educational gaming as *a dynamic interplay between inquiry, interaction, and*

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[10] I am well aware that the term sociocultural theory involves several different connotations and research traditions. In this study, it mainly refers to a relational and context-sensitive understanding of the meaning-making processes and practices of educational gaming, cf. chapter 4.

communication. For now, I will briefly introduce how the three perspectives can be used to conceptualise the different *knowledge aspects* of educational gaming presented above. Thus, I assume that the perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism and dialogism are congruent with Barth's three faces of knowledge (assertions, social organisation, and modes of representation).

According to the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey, the meaning-making processes of learning, thinking, deliberating, and playing games all involve *inquiry* as social actors must be able question and explore situated problems in order to construct and reconstruct different aspects of knowledge (Dewey, 1916). For Dewey, the outcomes or "warranted assertions" of an inquiry are *contingent* as they – in principle – are constantly open to new inquiries (Dewey, 1938a: 9). In this way, no final criteria exist for validating knowledge. Moreover, the process of inquiry is holistic as it both involves logical thinking and creative imagination as well as individual and social dimensions. Dewey also describes the process of inquiry as a "dramatic rehearsal" of "various competing possible lines of action", which refers to the tension between acts "tried out in imagination" and actual events (Dewey, 1922: 132-3). This means that educational games represent *problem-based scenarios* as they allow participants to actively imagine, explore and project the problems, knowledge aspects and contingent outcomes of a particular game world in relation to real-world phenomena. By combining Barth and Dewey's perspectives, the assertions of educational game scenarios can also be described as *epistemological models* intended (designed) to be realised through meaningful interaction – both in relation to a teacher perspective (facilitation) and a student perspective (participation).

Arguing along similar lines, the interactionist perspectives offered by Erving Goffman and George Herbert Mead describe and illuminate the *social organisation* of educational games. Mead assumes that the self is developed socially by adopting and playing with roles in relation to a "generalized other" (Mead, 1934: 154). Thus, in order to learn from educational games, students must be able to relate their roles to a more generalised perspective, i.e. that of a politician. Partly building upon Mead, Goffman's dramaturgical sociology assumes that individuals "perform" and present themselves through different forms of "impression management", i.e. in order to avoid losing "face" as a professional politician (Goffman, 1959). Moreover, Goffman analyses games as "focused gatherings" where game participants are expected to mutually sustain the rules and validate the on-going social interaction in relation to the interpretive "frames" of a particular game encounter (Goffman, 1961a, 1974). In this way, the process of playing games – and educational gaming in particular – cannot be reduced to an end in itself since game encounters are always open

to the possibility that exterior issues may transform the meaning of the game. Seen from this interactionist perspective, the social organisation of educational gaming represents an on-going negotiation between *everyday teacher-student roles* and the *assigned roles* of a particular game scenario.

Finally, Barth's focus on communicative knowledge can be further developed through the dialogical philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, human communication is *dialogical* in the sense that it presupposes mutual understanding and responsiveness (Bakhtin, 1981). Furthermore, Bakhtin assumes that we always communicate through various *speech genres* where speakers and listeners *position* themselves in relation to different aspects of referentiality, expressivity and addressivity, i.e. the semantic "content" of political ideologies, the expressive language of political discourse, and modes of addressing an audience in a parliamentary debate (Bakhtin, 1986). Thus, educational games challenge the *speaker-hearer relationships* of an educational setting as teachers and students are expected to position themselves in relation to the particular speech genres, ideological voices and semiotic resources of a given game scenario. In this way, educational games are able to create *dialogical spaces* (Wegerif, 2007) involving both ideological tensions and discursive criteria for validating the knowledge communicated between the game participants.

As this brief introduction suggests, the three perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism, and dialogism provide a series of analytical concepts that can be used to describe and understand how educational games are *enacted* and *validated* within particular educational contexts. Instead of defining what games *are* (the "essence" of games), these perspectives can be used to describe the *process* of gaming as a complex interplay between different game elements. Based upon the perspectives presented above, game phenomena first of all represent *problem-based scenarios* (or epistemological models) which are realised in relation to particular *goals, rules, contingent outcomes, roles, resources, and dialogical spaces.* These different game elements are summarised in Figure 2.1 below in relation to Barth's three aspects of knowledge:

Knowledge aspect: Assertions

- **Problem-based scenarios:** Game scenarios require exploration of a specific problem, where something is "at stake" – i.e. through as-if narratives or conflicts between opposing interests.
- **Goals:** Game participants must pursue goals, which may be narrowly defined (i.e. winning a game of chess) or more broadly defined (i.e. performing in a role-playing game).
- **Rules:** The pursuit of game goals is defined by rules (causality), which may be more or less fixed.
- **Contingent outcomes:** The outcomes of games are neither fully predictable nor completely random, but must be validated according to game-specific criteria such as winning/losing or scoring points.

Knowledge aspect: Social organisation

- **Roles:** The social organisation of a game encounter is staged by assigning roles to participants, which frame the norms and expectations of the game-based interaction – both in relation to the participants' everyday roles and the generalised perspective of the assigned roles.

Knowledge aspect: Modes of representation

- **Resources:** Game designs involve different resources such as particular media (i.e. computer screen, board, paper), artefacts (i.e. game pieces, props), and modalities (i.e. speaking, writing, listening).
- **Dialogue:** When playing a game, participants engage in mutually responsive communication and position themselves in relation to the available speech genres of the dialogical game space.

Figure 2.1: Summary of game elements in relation to different aspects of knowledge.

This working definition of game elements can be fleshed out with the classic example of chess. In chess, the *problem-based scenario* represents an abstract battle between two opponents ("black" and "white"), who must fulfil the *goal* of winning the game by defeating each other. This is done by moving the different pieces on the board (*resources*) according to the specific *rules* of the game. Thus, the two players are given *roles* as abstract enemies who must try to predict and control the *contingent outcomes* of a given game session. The spoken communication is often restricted to brief utterances. However, the *dialogical space* of chess various tremendously depending on whether it is played among friends, in a professional competition, or in an online environment, where game participants are unable to see each other, but can communicate through a chat feature. Similarly, my description of game elements is intended to include all of the ever-mutating variety of game formats – including card games, table-top role-playing games, multi-player online computer games, single-player transportable games, debate games etc. Furthermore, this working definition makes no sharp distinction between "play" and "game" elements, but assumes that games involve playful activities, just as play activities involve game elements (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003). Thus, games represent pragmatic entities that only become meaningful in relation to how they are actually *enacted* and *validated*.

2.4. Educational game configurations

Several studies have addressed how game phenomena are viewed quite differently when played for "fun" and when played within a formal school setting (Sefton-Green, 2006). This means that educational gaming involves a potential "frame clash" between the informal expectations of leisure culture and the formal norms and expectations of school culture. Thus, I will make an important distinction between *leisure games* and *educational games*, as this study only focuses on the latter. One of the crucial differences is that the *goals* of leisure games differ markedly from educational games as the latter addresses formal learning objectives within an educational context. In this way, an educational game can be defined pragmatically as any *game design with explicit educational goals that are intended to support processes of teaching and learning* (see also Hanghøj, 2007).

Due to the plethora of game phenomena (i.e. board games, online role-playing games, debate games etc.), it is difficult to provide a *general* description of educational games. The problems involved with establishing a common vocabulary or taxonomy may explain why game research and educational game research suffers from a tendency to create research "ghettoes" in relation to particular games types (Harr et al., 2008). A number of attempts exist to define, classify and promote particular *game types* in relation to their assumed learning potentials, i.e. "good" video games (Gee, 2003), simulations (Klabbers, 2006), "serious" computer games (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005), epistemic games (Shaffer, 2006) etc. However, seen from a sociocultural perspective, any type of learning resource – including different types of educational games – will both *constrain* and *afford* opportunities for teaching and learning in relation to particular goals and situated activities (Wertsch, 1991). This means that it is impossible to determine in advance whether a particular game type is able to fulfil an intended "learning potential".

In contrast to textbooks, which represent the dominant learning resource in Danish upper secondary education (Olsen, 2005), I argue that the most important characteristic of educational games is that they represent interactive *scenarios*, which allow participants to actively explore different aspects of knowledge in relation to a particular problem (cf. section 2.3). Obviously, educational game scenarios may be designed in a number of different ways with respect to different game formats, genres, media, and modalities (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003; Klabbers, 2006; Burn et al., 2006; Apperly, 2006). Thus, a game scenario on parliamentary elections may be designed as a strategy board game (*Election*), an online single-player strategy game (*Power Politics*), an online multi-player debate game (*Global Island*), a dramaturgical role-playing game (*In the Service of the State*) or as an ICT-supported debate game (*The Power Game*). Without going

into detail, these five game titles all share a common attempt to simulate the knowledge aspects of an election scenario. At the same time, they represent quite different *configurations* of game formats (board game, computer game, live role-play), game genres (strategy, role-playing, parliamentary debate), game media (board, computer screen, paper) and game modalities (audio-visual game interaction, written/spoken forms of language, dramaturgical performances etc.).

One of the hypotheses that guided the design interventions of study was to explore how computer media could be used to support a game on parliamentary elections (cf. chapters 5 and 6). By *blending* analogue game formats (role-playing/debate activities) with various forms of online resources, I assumed it was possible to create a game environment that afforded a broad range of relevant game modalities (i.e. reading, speaking, writing, performing etc.). Thus, when designing *The Power Game*, I analysed how different game formats could be blended with computer media in order to create different configurations in terms of *embodied* versus *interface* modalities and *classroom-based* versus *pervasive* game environments (Hanghøj, 2007). A tentative map of these different game configurations is presented in the matrix below – see figure 2.2.

Classroom-based environment

"serious games" edutainment simulations board games	ICT-supported games role-playing games debate games

Interface modalities   **Embodied modalities**

mobile games online games	playwear exertainment

Pervasive environment
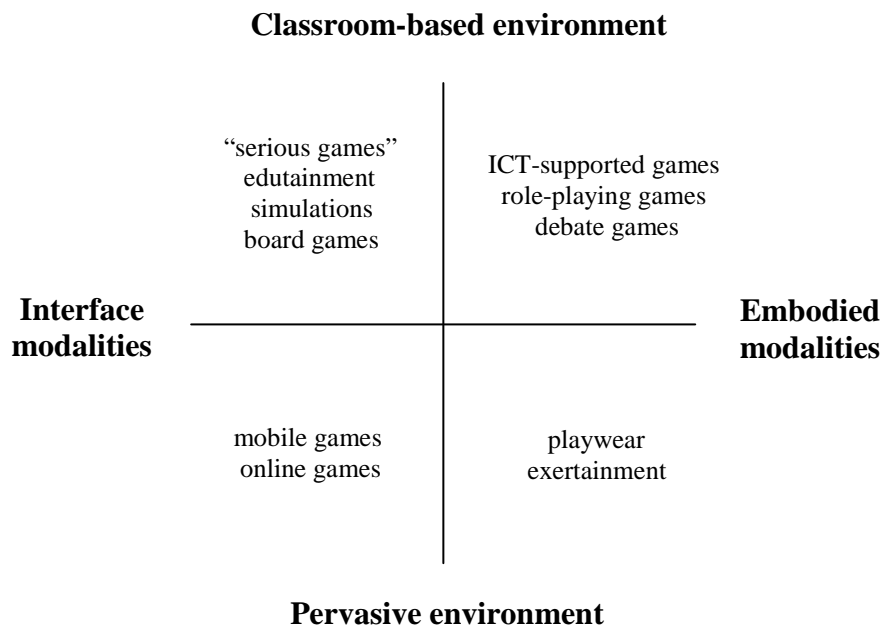
Figure 2.2: Map of different game configurations. Adapted from Hanghøj, 2007: 154.

Obviously, this map only represents an idealised overview of how the different game configurations are *intended* to be played, and not how they are actually realised. Fur the purpose of this study, I was mainly interested in classroom-based games that involved embodied modalities and only used

ICTs to *support* game activities – cf. upper right quadrant in the map above. Thus, in contrast to educational computer games (i.e. "serious" games and edutainment) where the computer interface is intended to form the main locus of game interaction, ICT-supported games only use computer media to afford *some* aspects of the game activities.

This focus can be illustrated with the ICT-supported educational role-playing game *Homicide* (*Drabssag/Melved*), where secondary school students play crime investigators and use science to solve a murder committed in the fictive village Melved (Magnussen, 2008). The activities of the week-long game session take place in classroom settings where students conduct hands-on experiments and problem-solving within the narrative frame of the role-play scenario. From time to time the students must consult the game website, which is designed as a "desktop" for a crime investigator that includes a map, glossary of terms, and video recordings of interrogated suspects that can be played upon request by the students. The point here is that the computer is only used for the meaningful *support* of tasks that are relevant for exploring the game scenario. Similarly, this study is based on a series of design interventions with a classroom-based election scenario where the students were mainly intended to use the computer for analysing video clips in relation to their roles and for finding relevant and updated information on the political parties (cf. chapter 6).

2.5. Labelling *The Power Game*

After defining and categorising educational games, I will now describe *The Power Game* as a particular game *type*, since this particular game scenario forms the empirical focal point of this study. The main design hypotheses behind the game design was based on an attempt to create a "realistic" election scenario (cf. chapter 6). In this way, *The Power Game* scenario tries to imitate important aspects of a real-life Danish parliamentary election. Roughly speaking, the game scenario is divided into ten phases: 1) teacher introduction, 2) exit poll, 3) distribution of roles, 4) preparation phase and web research on political parties, 5) presentations and questions, 6) negotiation phase, 7) debate, 8) voting, 9) constitution of new government, and 10) discussion of game outcome. This attempt to create a "realistic" design resulted in a rather complex game scenario with many different game phases and activities. Consequently, it was difficult to label *The Power Game*, and I alternately described the election scenario as a "mock election", a "simulation", and a "role-play", before eventually settling on the term "debate game".

The challenge of labelling the games is not merely a matter of playing a "language game" in relation to the idiosyncratic preferences of game designers and game researchers (cf.

section 2.1.). Thus, the *act* of labelling a game reflects the particular intentions and knowledge aspects that are communicated to potential users, i.e. teachers and students. Often games – including educational games – are categorised according to their *representational* qualities, i.e. on the basis of their aesthetic appeal, instead of how they are actually enacted and experienced by game participants (Apperly, 2006). However, since the "realistic" game design of *The Power Game* was rather complex, and I was unable to actually play the game prior to undertaking my empirical studies, it was rather difficult to find an appropriate label for communicating the election scenario to the participating teachers and students in this study (cf. chapters 5 and 6).

Obviously, the election scenario could have been presented as a *mock election*, which is a rather familiar activity in upper secondary schools, particularly prior to upcoming municipal or parliamentary elections (Holck, 2005; Børhaug, 2008). However, these mock elections are often based on teacher initiatives, and they are largely viewed as "events" arranged at a local level rather than actual learning resources. In this way, it would be difficult to use this label for *The Power Game*, which was supposed to be distributed as a learning resource through my collaboration with DR Education – cf. chapter 6. Another possibility was to label the election scenario as a *simulation*, which is a relatively common type of learning resource within social studies in Danish upper secondary education – cf. the financial simulation *The Economic Advisory Game* (*Vismandsspillet*), which is frequently used to teach financial policy-making. However, the term simulation often denotes a "system" with quantifiable outcomes, and these rationalistic and "scientific" connotations could over-emphasise the voting procedures of the election scenario.[11] Thus, even though this label might appeal to a lot of social studies teachers, it would also make it difficult to recognise the ideological, rhetorical and communicative aspects of the election scenario.

As a compromise, *The Power Game* was termed a *role-play* since the election scenario required the students to adopt and perform different roles. Still, this label was also problematic as "role-playing" often evokes drama pedagogical connotations (Braanaas, 1998). One teacher Poul, for example, initially abstained from participating in this study as he was "too shy" to teach through role-playing [GS 5, field notes]. However, after learning about the election scenario from his colleagues, Poul contacted me to arrange a game session. During the game session and in the post-game interviews, it was clear that Poul was primarily interested in the "simulation" aspects of the

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[11] For more than thirty-five years, the design and use of simulations have been widely discussed in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Simulation & Gaming*, which mainly focuses on organisational learning, i.e. the use of simulations in relation to business schools, urban planning, military training etc. Currently, little dialogue exists between this research community and researchers describing the use of educational game formats in a formal school setting (Klabbers, 2006).

election scenario such as the negotiation and voting phases. Furthermore, he claimed that many social studies teachers would associate the term "role-play" with a rather "superficial" form of teaching and learning [GS 5, teacher interview]. Similarly, other teachers emphasised how role-playing was supposed to be "entertaining" in relation to the more "serious" or "academic" activities of everyday teaching and learning (cf. chapter 7).

As this brief example shows, the act of labelling educational games is important in relation to teachers' genre-specific norms and expectations. Teachers act as competent *gate keepers*, when deciding whether a particular educational game – or any other form of learning resource – should be adopted and adapted for classroom contexts (Squire et al., 2003). In this way, a game label may either invite or prevent teachers from using a particular game scenario. Second, and more importantly in relation to the aim of this study, the actual *use* of a given game also reflects genre-specific preferences and expectations in relation to teachers and students' existing pedagogical practices. Following Bakhtin's dialogical perspective, any form of teaching represents particular speech genres that are related to subject-specific goals and teaching traditions (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 2004). Thus, this genre theoretical perspective claims that "you cannot not use genres" (Herlitz et al., 2007: 126). Similarly, upper secondary social studies is a school subject consisting of a range of subject-specific genres such as "sociology", "politics", "economy" and "international politics", and more general speech genres such as "argumentation" and "empirical investigations" (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005a). In this way, the label of a particular educational game inevitably addresses different speech genres across different subjects and curricula, which again will appeal to different teachers' individual preferences and pedagogical practices.

Based on my observations of how *The Power Game* was enacted as well as my post-game interviews with teachers and students, it was obvious that the most significant activities of the election scenario were the students' *debate practices*, i.e. the ways in which the students had to prepare key political issues and ideological positions to be presented, questioned, debated and defended in front of their classmates (cf. chapters 6 and 8). Thus, after analysing the empirical data from five successive game sessions, I have re-conceptualised and re-labelled the game scenario as a *debate game* (*debatspil*). Obviously, this does not mean that *The Power Game* can no longer be described, used or interpreted as a mock election, a simulation, or a role-play. In fact, it makes good sense to understand *The Power Game* via all of these labels as they all emphasise important aspects of the election scenario, i.e. the simulation of voting procedures, the realistic intentions of the election scenario and dramaturgical aspects of the students' creative performances. However, for

the purpose of this study, I focus mainly on the debate phases and debate activities of the game scenario.[12] The term "debate game" thus emphasises two aspects of *The Power Game*. First of all, the primary activity of the election scenario turned out to be the students' *debate* practices, which often centred on the role of the politicians. Second, the debate scenario was staged as a *game*, as it involved particular goals, rules, contingent outcomes, roles, resources within the dialogical space of parliamentary debate.

Within the context of Danish upper secondary education, the neologism "debate game" is rarely used.[13] However, various sources indicate that there exist a number of educational games, some of which are based on how debate activities – cf. links on the EMU[14], articles and advertisements in the magazine for upper secondary school teachers (*Gymnasieskolen*) as well as the social studies teachers' journal (*Samfundsfagsnyt*). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that various debate games *are* being used in Danish schools according to individual teachers' specific preferences, goals and interests. This claim can be supported by the fact that role-playing and simulations are recommended in the official teacher guidelines for the social studies curriculum (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005b). Still, there is very limited documentation on how debate games are enacted within a Danish educational context (cf. Brund & Christensen, 2008).

When using the term debate game, I am fully aware that a number of different debate game formats exist outside a Danish school context, especially in relation to Anglo-American debate cultures. On a global scale, the most widespread debate game format is probably "adversarial debate" (often synonymous with "policy debate" or simply "debate"/"debating"), where opposing teams debate the pros and cons of a particular case to be resolved (Fine, 2001; Snider & Schnurer, 2006). However, as a pedagogical method and a distinct form of communication, debate games can be traced as far back as the debate cultures of ancient Greece, China and India. The Greek sophist Protagoras (ca. 490-420 BC), who is often characterised as "the father of debate", was the first to arrange debate contests and use debate formats as a teaching method. Furthermore, Protagoras famously claimed that there are always "two sides to every question", which implies a critical method for exploring uncertainties in relation to different sides of an argument (Laertius Diogenes, 2000: 463). Protagoras' "two sided" approach to debate represents a contrast to Plato's universalist

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[12] Throughout the dissertation, I mostly refer to *The Power Game* as a debate game, but from time to time, I will emphasise other aspects of the election scenario, i.e. role-playing, negotiating or voting.

[13] A notable exception is the debate game *Confrontation* (*Konfrontation*), which has been specifically designed for Danish upper secondary education (www.konfrontation.nu).

[14] The EMU is a government-sponsored online resource for teaching materials (www.emu.dk).

assumption of reason as something that can be attained through dialectical reasoning (Billig, 1996; Tindale, 2004).

A number of other debate formats and genres exist besides adversarial debate. *The Power Game*, for example, does not facilitate adversarial debate but rather *parliamentary debate* because it builds upon the shared ground rules and speech genres of professional political discourse in relation to a Danish election campaign (Mercer, 1995; cf. chapter 6). Thus, instead of limiting debate games to a particular debate format, I define debate games broadly as *staged debates where participants have to represent, present and debate various ideological positions according to knowledge-specific criteria for validation within the dialogical game space.*

2.6. Meaningful play

In order to explore how educational games (including debate games) are enacted, I will now discuss some of the assumptions about *why* to teach with games. It is a commonsensical notion that games – and educational games – are or should be "fun". However, according to Dewey's pragmatist perspective, play and games primarily represent *meaningful* activities. Thus, play has

> …an end in the sense of a directing idea which gives point to the successive acts. Persons who play are not just doing something (pure physical movement); they are *trying* to do or effect something, an attitude that involves anticipatory forecasts which stimulate their present responses. The anticipated result, however, is rather a subsequent action than the production of a specific change in things. Consequently play is free, plastic (Dewey, 1916: 211).

From this perspective, the educational value of play and games is based on a meaningful exploration of particular scenarios, both of which involve creative imagination and real-world experiences. In this way, play activities (as well as occupational activities) represent an antidote to "passive" forms of teaching and learning:

> Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by a passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice? That <u>education is not an affair of "telling" and being told, but an active and constructive process</u>, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory. Is not this deplorable situation due to the fact that the doctrine is itself merely told? It is preached; it is lectured; it is written about. But its <u>enactment into practice requires that the school environment be equipped with agencies for doing, with tools and physical materials, to an extent rarely attained</u> (Dewey, 1916: 43-44; my emphasis).

Consequently, educational institutions should be able to support students' *active* construction of knowledge, which involves both the design of particular learning environments and the use of relevant learning resources – such as the educational use of play and game activities.

Much has been said and written about the educational use of games since Dewey published *Democracy and Education* more than ninety years ago. Still, I would argue that Dewey's central assumption is still valid, namely that game scenarios can be used *to create meaningful contexts for the exploration of particular problems and knowledge aspects in contrast to passive forms of teaching and learning.* Thus, educational game research is often directly or indirectly indebted to Dewey's pragmatist theory of inquiry-based and experience-based learning (cf. Gee, 2003; Barab & Squire, 2004; Shaffer, 2006). At the same time, these researchers also represent valuable attempts to develop new analytical frameworks that can provide more specific descriptions of educational gaming in a contemporary educational context.

2.7. Semiotic domains

As his title suggests, Gee's influential book, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, is both a praise of the learning principles of video games and a critique of contemporary schooling. Video games require a re-thinking of what Gee terms the "bad" dominant theories of learning and knowledge production in schools and school subjects. Instead, Gee argues that "good video games" are able to facilitate the essentials of future education, namely "producer-like learning and knowledge, but in a reflective and critical way" (Gee, 2003: 16). Similar to Barth, Gee is interested in the way knowledge is produced and validated (Barth, 2002; cf. section 2.2). Thus, he introduces the concept *semiotic domain*s, which is defined as "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artefacts, and so forth) to communicate distinct types of meaning" (Gee, 2003:18). Semiotic domains exist on many different discursive levels, such as in playing games or "doing" social studies. Furthermore, Gee claims that schooling tends to institutionalise various forms of knowledge as "intellectual domains". Thus, there is a fundamental dichotomy between the learning processes that takes place in a formal school setting and informal learning activities outside school, i.e. playing video games. He characterises this dichotomy between semiotic domains and intellectual domains as *the problem of content:*

The problem of content is, I believe, based on common attitudes towards school, schooling, learning, and knowledge. These attitudes are compelling, in part because they are so deeply rooted in the history of Western thought, but nonetheless, I think they are wrong. The idea is this: Important knowledge (now usually gained in school) is content in the sense of information rooted in, or, at least, rooted to, intellectual domains of academic disciplines like physics, history, art, or literature. Work that does not involve such learning is 'meaningless.' Activities that are entertaining but that themselves do not involve such learning are just 'meaningless play.' Of course, video games fall into this category (Gee, 2003: 20-21).

The core argument of Gee's critique is that certain intellectual domains rooted in academic life at universities gain the power to define what knowledge is, and this process marginalises valuable meaning-making practices found in other semiotic domains. However, academic disciplines are not founded on "content" in terms of facts and principles, but on knowledge production through "a lived and historical changing set of distinctive social practices" (Gee, 2003: 21).

Gee's theory of semiotic domains is somewhat similar to Barth's "tradition of knowledge" (Barth, 2002). However, in contrast to Barth's anthropological perspective, Gee's theoretical framework is inspired more by sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis and social semiotics which emphasise the ways in which knowledge is created and communicated through various *discursive practices* (Gee, 2005a). Thus, the parliamentary election scenario of *The Power Game* can be analysed as a semiotic domain that refers to the semiotic domains of both professional politics and social studies education. Hence, the parliamentary election in *The Power Game* addresses both the discursive practices carried out by real-life politicians and the discursive practices of teaching and learning within an educational context. However, educational games only play a marginal role within "the intellectual domain" of academic studies in and of social studies, and they do not play an important role in the teaching practice of social studies. In this way, teaching with games may easily be dismissed as mere "fun" belonging to a semiotic domain outside the "serious" school context. Consequently, educational gaming is highly dependent on the ways in which particular game designs gain recognition from students, teachers and educational policy-makers as *legitimate* learning resources.

2.8. Epistemic frames

Writing from a slightly different perspective, David Williamson Shaffer makes similar points about how educational games allow students to adopt meaningful social practices (Shaffer, 2004, 2006). Like Gee, Shaffer also echoes Dewey's criticism of "passive" education. But where Gee uses his

sociolinguistic background to identify the thirty-six [*sic*] learning principles of video games, Shaffer is more inspired by the work of Donald Schön, who describes how "reflective practioners" learn to think in action and learn to do so through their professional experiences (Schön, 1987). Thus, professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses, designers) are seen as people who make links between knowing and doing through specialised forms of reflective practice. Schön further describes how professionals develop the ability to reflect-in-action in the professional *practicum*, i.e. through internships or training to become a nurse. This allows learners to act as professionals in a supervised setting and then reflect on the results of their actions with peers and mentors.

For Shaffer, it is not only professionals who benefit from participating in a practicum; students can also benefit from learning through the distinctive *epistemologies* of professional practices, which represent "ways of knowing and ways of deciding what is worth knowing" (Shaffer, 2004: 1403). In this way, Shaffer assumes that Schön's theory is "essential to all complex learning: cognitive, practical, and civic" (Shaffer, 2004: 1403). Here, Shaffer is not only referring to Schön but also to Dewey, who believed that the traditional organisation of knowledge was misaligned with the social and cultural realities of the industrial era (Dewey, 1916). Thus, Shaffer views the epistemologies of professional practitioners as a "powerful model" for changing education in the post-industrial era by developing technology-based learning environments for middle and high school students (Shaffer, 2004: 1403). Shaffer exemplifies this claim by referring to his own on-going design and research projects: *Escher's World*, *The Pandora Project*, and *Science.net*. In all these projects, students are supposedly able to learn by participating in learning environments modelled on the practices and epistemologies of professional practitioners. Thus, students are able to learn about basic concepts in transformational geometry through graphic design activities in a computer-aided design studio (*Escher's World*), human immunobiology and biomedical ethics through computer-supported negotiation modelled on exercises similar to the training professional mediators receive (*The Pandora Project*), and emerging technologies such as the Internet, wireless communications, and weapons of mass destruction by writing online stories about the impact of such technologies on the community (*Science.net*). According to Shaffer, all these projects "illustrate the effectiveness of pedagogical praxis as a method for developing compelling learning environments" (Shaffer, 2004: 1403).[15]

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[15] The Danish ICT-supported role-playing game *Homicide* (*Drabssag/Melved*) represents a similar attempt to use professional practices as a model for creating explorative learning environments. Students who participate in *Homicide* have to use mathematical, scientific and juridical forms of knowledge in their attempt to solve a murder mystery by imitating the professional practices of police investigators and forensic scientists (Magnussen, 2008).

Shaffer further develops the role of epistemologies in profession-based learning environments by introducing the term *epistemic frame*, which he defines as an "organising principle" that "orchestrates (and is orchestrated by) participation in a community of practice by linking practice, identity, values, and knowledge within a particular way of thinking – within the epistemology of a practice" (Shaffer, 2005: 3). Based upon this definition, Shaffer describes each of the profession-based learning environments mentioned above as an *epistemic game*. Thus, an epistemic game "deliberately creates the epistemic frame of a socially valued community by re-creating the process by which the individuals develop the skills, knowledge, identities, values, and epistemology of that community" (Shaffer, 2006: 164). Even though *The Power Game* is not based on a professional practice model of learning, the election scenario shares important similarities with Shaffer's epistemic games. Thus, the participating students are expected to adopt important aspects of the epistemological models of professional journalists, politicians and spin doctors in a parliamentary election scenario. This means that in order to play a politician in *The Power Game*, the students must be able to identify with the knowledge forms and practices of real-life politicians which involves finding and analysing information in relation to different ideological positions, preparing ideologically key issues, and giving "performances" in front of a public audience, which in this case is made up of their classmates (cf chapters 6 and 8).

2.9. The game and the context

Both Gee and Shaffer's theoretical frameworks are valuable when trying to understand how students make meaning through particular game environments. Gee's notion of semiotic domains is particularly useful for analysing the discursive interplay between game practices and educational practices. Similarly, Shaffer convincingly argues how students may learn through game environments that attempt to re-create the practices of real-life professionals. However, Gee and Shaffer's approaches also differ from the aim of this study as they do not provide detailed empirical *descriptions* of how educational games are enacted and validated within particular educational contexts. Gee makes several bold claims about how the "bad" learning that takes place in schools could be replaced with the learning principles of "good" games (Gee, 2003). As Julian Sefton-Green argues, this black and white dichotomy is somewhat speculative, since Gee provides no empirical examples of how the literacy of games can do "anything other than support the playing of more games" (Sefton-Green, 2006: 291). It is also questionable whether Gee's attempt to identify the learning principles of video games is able to affect the changes at the policy-level his critique

aims to achieve. Hence, Gee mostly presents video games as an idealised *symbol* of how educational systems could and should be designed differently.

In comparison to Gee, Shaffer's work is clearly more focused on the actual practices of designing and enacting game environments, i.e. his example with middle school students that play a debate game in a history class clearly shares some similarities with my analysis of how students enact the election scenario of *The Power Game* (Shaffer, 2006: 17-40; cf. chapter 8). Still, Shaffer only offer limited descriptions of how this debate game and a number of other game examples are actually *enacted* within particular educational contexts such as classroom settings or after-school programs. Consequently, it is difficult to determine to what extent Shaffer's examples of particular games are able to "fit in" with everyday school practices, and how the generated knowledge is or can be *validated* by participating teachers and students in relation to their existing knowledge traditions (Barth, 2002).

My second objection to Shaffer's otherwise inspiring work regards his theory of epistemic frames (Shaffer, 2005, 2006). Shaffer defines the term by drawing on a wide range of different theoretical sources, especially Goffman's frame analysis and Schön's notion of epistemologies (Goffman, 1974; Schön, 1983, 1987). In doing so, Shaffer creates a theoretical framework, which may explain how games can be used to organise particular forms of knowledge, skills, values and identities. However, when combining the work of Goffman and Schön, Shaffer is clearly closer to the aims of Schön than Goffman. For Goffman, a frame is defined as an "organising principle" that govern everyday, face-to-face interaction through social actors' mutual interplay of meaning (Goffman, 1974: 10). Schön, on the other hand, explores how professionals learn to act and reflect in relation to the particular epistemologies of their professions, i.e. design, architecture, engineering, medicine etc. (Schön, 1983, 1987). According to Shaffer, these two analytical perspectives are congruent since "learning happens along a continuum of time scales" (Shaffer, 2005: 3). However, these theories are based on quite different *ontological* assumptions of social agency and meaning-making, which cannot be reduced only to a matter of time scales. Unlike Schön, Goffman's frame analysis does not describe how learning and reflection are related to particular professions. Instead, Goffman's theory address the minutiae communicative processes of establishing and negotiating "the interaction order" of social encounters – including gaming encounters (Goffman, 1961a, 1983; cf. chapter 4). By evening out these theoretical and analytical differences, Shaffer's conception of epistemic frames *limits* the context of interpretive framing to the epistemologies of the professional practices that his epistemic games are trying to re-create.

Put differently, Shaffer's notion of epistemic frames implicitly assumes that social actors more or less accept their assigned roles as professional practitioners by taking on a particular "pair of glasses" (Shaffer, 2006: 160). However, from a Goffmanian perspective it is questionable whether students playing an educational game readily "embrace" their assigned roles as if they were merely taking on a pair of glasses. Individuals often disassociate themselves from particular roles for various reasons through different forms of "role distance" (Goffman, 1961b). Furthermore, as Gary Alan Fine argues, Goffman's frame analysis implies a dynamic "oscillation" between different interpretive frames within particular social contexts, i.e. by continually stepping in and out of character in a role-playing game (Fine, 1983: 182-3; cf. chapter 4). Taken at a glance, the students that performed as politicians in *The Power Game* generally accepted and adopted the norms and expectations of their assigned roles as professional politicians. However, as my analysis indicates, they clearly also distanced themselves from various ideological and performative aspects of their roles, which elicited different responses from their teachers and classmates (cf. chapter 8). Moreover, the game participants also interpreted their assigned roles in relation to their everyday roles as "social studies students", and the educational goals set by the teachers and the social studies curriculum. In this way, the students explored a wide range of different *knowledge aspects* that were not necessarily related to the epistemologies of real-life politicians (Barth, 2002). The point here is that even though the upper secondary students were assigned roles as professional politicians, the game participants still defined themselves as *students* in a school setting. Thus, when discussing and reflecting upon their game experiences, the students primarily validated their game knowledge and performance in relation to the existing knowledge criteria of the everyday context of upper secondary education.

In summary, this study differs from Gee and Shaffer's otherwise important research as it aims to *describe* and *understand* how the meaning-making processes of playing educational games are related to the complex reality of formal schooling. Gee and Shaffer present valuable attempts to legitimise certain game designs (e.g. video games and epistemic games) and particular pedagogical models, i.e. the "learning principles" of video games or learning through the epistemologies of professional practices. However, Gee and Shaffer only offer limited empirical descriptions of how games are actually enacted and validated within particular educational contexts. As an example, neither Gee nor Shaffer provides any analysis or discussion of the teacher's role in educational gaming. As mentioned, teachers are crucial gate-keepers for bringing games into schools (cf. section 2.5). In keeping with Schön, they are, in fact, *also* professional practitioners

with particular epistemologies involving planning, conducting, and evaluating educational game activities (Schön, 1983; Dale, 1998). In this way, teachers are quite influential as to how game scenarios are actually enacted and interpreted within a classroom setting. So instead of repeatedly focusing on the learning potential of games, educational game research should also explore the *teaching potential* of games.

2.10. Why teach with games?

One of Gee and Shaffer's main arguments for teaching with games is that this form of education represents a valuable alternative to the political and empirical reality of an American educational context. Thus, Gee and Shaffer's work is strongly driven by a critique of educational policies that demand that the organisation and assessment of student learning rely on standardised testing. In a joint article, Gee and Shaffer argue that political discussions on educational goals suffer from a dichotomy between the discourse of "liberals" and "conservatives" (Gee & Shaffer, 2005). Thus, liberals advocate "pedagogies that immerse children in rich activities and focus on the learners' own goals and backgrounds" (Gee & Shaffer, 2005: 11). Even though these pedagogies are "empowering", they are also difficult to master for children who lack resources and are unable to "pick up the rules of the game at home and use liberal schooling as fruitful and empowering practice ground". In contrast to the liberals, conservatives tend to advocate "back to the basics" and "standardized testing", which fails to build "expertise and innovation" (Gee & Shaffer, 2005: 11). Gee and Shaffer then argue that educational games can be used to overcome both the liberalists' "progressive reform" and the conservatives' "back to the basics". Epistemic frameworks provide meaningful goals and structures that can be used to develop "post-progressive pedagogies of practice". In this way, they assume that students are able to become "innovators" and meet the demands of the post-industrial knowledge society:

> Epistemic games of all kinds make it possible for students of all ages to learn by working as innovators. In playing epistemic games, students learn basic skills, to be sure. They learn the "facts" and "content" that we currently reward. But in epistemic games students learn facts and content in the context of innovative ways of thinking and working. They learn in a way that sticks, because they learn in the process of doing things that matter (Gee & Shaffer, 2005: 24).

As this quote shows, Gee and Shaffer's view of educational games is remarkably close to Dewey's assumption that play and games can be used to create meaningful and valuable learning

environments. Furthermore, their attempt to overcome the dichotomy between "liberalists" and "conservatives" echoes Dewey's attempts to reconcile the debate between *progressive* education, which is focused on "development from within", and *traditional* forms of education, which is guided by "formation from without" (Dewey, 1938b: 5).

However, Dewey's pragmatism differs markedly from Gee and Shaffer in relation to the *aims* of education. For Gee and Shaffer, teaching with games enables students to become "innovators", which may help solve the American economic crisis (Gee & Shaffer, 2005). But for Dewey, the aims of education cannot be narrowed down to solving a specific political problem: "education as such has no aims. Only persons, parents, and teachers, etc. have aims, not an abstract idea like education" (Dewey, 1916: 114). Instead, the overall aim of education is defined as "growth":

> Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself. The criterion of the value of school education is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth and supplies means for making the desire effective in fact (Dewey, 1916: 58).

Following Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, it is meaningless to stake out universal political goals for education and educational gaming as these phenomena are highly variable in relation to particular teachers, games, students and educational contexts. Similarly, this study does not attempt to answer the overall question of *why* we should teach with games as it requires not one but a multitude of different answers. Instead, the aim is a critical investigation of the mutual relationship between the "ends" and "means" of educational gaming; between what is *desirable* and what is *achievable* by focusing empirically on a particular game in a particular school context (Biesta & Burbules, 2003: 76-81).

2.11. Assessing educational games

As mentioned, educational gaming involves both validation criteria created by particular game scenarios *and* validation criteria set by the educational context in which the game is used. The open-ended, playful and contingent knowledge forms of educational games tend to clash with the "serious" or "intellectual" domains of everyday schooling, which makes it more difficult to evaluate and assess the knowledge generated. In spite of (or rather because of) the lack of legitimacy of educational gaming, there has been considerable interest in trying to find "evidence" that games have particular learning potential that can be used to produce a particular "effect" or "learning

outcome". These attempts represent a *determinist* approach to educational games as they more or less explicitly assume that games are learning machines that can be used to determine specific learning outcomes (cf. Prensky, 2001).

The determinist perspectives are often founded on particular educational design paradigms and psychological learning theories such as behaviourism, cognitivism and constructionism (Koschmann, 1996). Using a Latourian metaphor, these approaches tend to *blackbox* educational games as transparent learning resources that assumedly can be made "teacher proof" and "deployed" to fulfil well-defined curricular goals (Latour, 1987). So far, the determinist approaches have not been able to produce convincing results on the educational value of playing games. As stated in a review article on the assessment of educational video games, "It can certainly be said that video games facilitate learning, but the evidence for saying any more than this is weak" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006: 191). Similar points have been made in relation to other game types. More than thirty [*sic*] years ago, educational researcher Jacquetta Megarry criticised attempts to measure the learning outcomes of simulations and games:

> …the limitations [of the classical, experimental method] as applied to evaluating classroom simulation and games are obvious: not only are the inputs multiple, complex, and only partly known, but the outputs are disputed, difficult to isolate, detect or measure and the interaction among the participants is considerable. Interacting forms, in some views, a major part of what simulation and gaming is about; it is *not* merely a source of 'noise' or experimental error (Megarry, 1978; quoted in Cohen et al., 2000: 379).

As Megarry's criticism suggests, it is rather difficult – if at all possible – to meaningfully measure the learning potential of educational games due to their dynamic variables and contingent outcomes.[16] Furthermore, the experimentalist approach often fails to recognise the social, creative, dialogical and inquiry-based aspects of educational gaming, which are crucial for understanding how game scenarios are *enacted*. In the face of Egenfeldt-Nielsen and Megarry's findings, it is interesting to note that standard experimentalist methods for doing pre- and post tests of students' game-based learning are still being regarded as the most relevant approach within some areas of educational game research (for recent examples cf. Ferdig, 2008). The obvious and rather mundane explanation for the persistency of this approach is that many researchers, educators, policy-makers,

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[16] Arguably, it is easier to measure the outcome of simple game designs, which are designed for "training" isolated skills through drill and practice – i..e. in relation to simple grammar or math problems (cf. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006).

news media and commercial game developers are continually searching for "facts" that can "prove" the educational potential of games through "evidence-based" research (Hammersley, 2002).

According to Shaffer, assessment drives instruction (Shaffer, 2008). Thus, it makes good sense to evaluate and asses the outcomes of educational games in order to *legitimise* this form of teaching and learning. However, there are many other approaches to assessment than standard forms of experimentalist testing, i.e. asking players to give narrative reports of a game session, encouraging them to relate ideas and concepts learned in games to other aspects of their life, posing clinical interview questions in relation to particular concepts etc. (Megarry, 1978; Shaffer, 2008). In relation to the sociocultural approach of this project, the educational use of games can be assessed in relation to how participants actually *experience* and actively *explore* the knowledge aspects of a particular game scenario. Kurt Squire's study on the educational use of the computer strategy game *Civilization III* represents a good illustration of this approach to educational game assessment:

> The most important point in understanding how games engage players in educational environments may be that good games engage players in multiple ways and the interplay between these different forms creates dynamic learning opportunities. Different play styles and tastes enriched classroom conversations, often leading to discussions that produce important 'taken-as-shared' meanings. (...) Discussions between different player types drove them to articulate and defend different strategies, even rethinking their orientation to the game (Squire, 2004: 241).

Similarly, the students' participation in *The Power Game* were also evaluated using a sociocultural approach. First of all, the students evaluated each other by voting for the "best" performances as a part of the election scenario (cf. chapter 6). Thus, the final voting procedure and the students' use of rhetorical forms of appeal (logos, ethos, and pathos) formed the overall validation criteria of the actual game design. Second, the students were expected to evaluate the overall experience of the game session through a teacher guided end-of-game discussion, a process which can be also be described as "debriefing" (Klabbers, 2006). Third, my semi-structured interviews with teachers and group interviews with a selected students conducted after each of the game sessions represented a more in-depth evaluation of their experience of and reflections upon the election scenario.

By focusing on the teachers and students' spoken communication during and after the game sessions, this study conceptualises educational gaming as a *dialogical space* aimed at generating discussion and "shared inquiry" in relation to the assertions of *The Power Game* (Wegerif, 2007). The students' experience of the game scenario is not reduced to fixed categories of

knowledge, but rather is seen as a dialogical "interanimination" of different ideological voices and knowledge aspects (Bakhtin, 1981). In this way, this thesis does not attempt to assess the students' learning outcomes, but rather explores how the social actors of the game encounters validated the knowledge aspects of the game sessions as seen from a participants' perspective (Barth, 2002; Gee & Green, 1998). More specifically, I will argue and describe how the knowledge forms of educational gaming can be validated in relation to particular *competencies*. This competence perspective implies that the game participants had to enact particular ways of using knowledge in relation to particular *demands* within the context of the game encounters (DeSeCo, 2003; cf. chapter 3). By exploring various aspects of the participants' scenario competence, communicative competence and social competence, I will describe how the students were able to build hypotheses on the possible outcomes of the election, speak through different ideological voices and perform as professional politicians within the educational context of *The Power Game*.

2.12. Playful knowledge

In this chapter, I have argued for a pragmatic and empirical turn within educational game research. Thus, I am sceptical toward any attempts to locate the "essence" of educational games or proving how particular game types may "determine" particular learning outcomes. Drawing upon the work of Barth, this thesis views educational game scenarios as *epistemological models* that can be designed and enacted to serve many different educational objectives. Furthermore, I have argued that one of the main challenges of educational game research is to *explore the validity of the playful knowledge that is generated through educational gaming*. As the term suggests, playful knowledge refers to the dynamic tension between play and knowledge. Thus, on the one hand, educational games allow teachers and students to playfully *experience* the knowledge aspects and game elements of a particular game scenario. On the other hand, the knowledge generated through educational games also tends to have a playful or ambivalent social status as *it creates and requires a different set of validity criteria than the existing validity criteria of an everyday educational context.* The subsequent chapters describe and analyse how a particular debate game on parliamentary education, was designed, used and validated within the context of social studies in a Danish upper secondary education setting.

3. Debate games – aims and approaches

This chapter locates the role of debate games within an educational context. Thus, the aim is to present a broad educational perspective on the empirical studies carried out in this project before moving on to the subsequent theoretical, methodological, and analytical chapters. The two first sections present two different approaches, which I have termed a rationalist and a dialogical approach, to debate games. The third section, based on the dialogical approach, discusses different pedagogical principles for teaching using debate games. The fourth section describes the relationship between debate games and citizenship education, which both focus on international perspectives and the specific context of social studies in Danish upper secondary education. This chapter concludes by presenting the notion of competence as a central theoretical and analytical term for understanding how students produce and validate knowledge when enacting game scenarios.

3.1. A rationalist approach to debate games

So far, I have mainly described general features of educational gaming. For now, I wish to focus more explicitly on *debate games* as a particular game format that involves certain assertions, modes of representation and social organisations (Barth, 2002). As mentioned earlier, a debate game represents a *staged debate where participants have to represent, present and debate various ideological positions according to knowledge-specific criteria for validation* (cf. section 2.5). Given the long history of debate games, which includes a wide array of culturally embedded debate formats, it is difficult to generalise on how this game format is or should be taught. Thus, there are significant differences between online text-based debate games (e.g. *Global Island*), standardised forms of adversarial debate (e.g. policy debate) and simulations of parliamentary elections (e.g. *The Power Game*). In spite of this variation, I believe it is possible to identify two different approaches, which I have termed a *rationalist* and a *dialogical* approach, to debating in debate games.

Seen from a rationalist approach, debate can be defined as a "contention by words or arguments".[17] Thus, a rationalist approach views debating as a formalised exchange of *arguments*, where each argument can be analysed and evaluated according to specific criteria such as causality, logic or dialectical reasoning (Antaki, 1994). This rationalist or analytical approach to debate is quite common within the English speaking world, where different debate formats are used to teach

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[17] Cf. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/debate.

critical thinking skills and presentation skills in school subjects such as public speaking, social studies, and citizenship education (Snider & Schnurer, 2006). As mentioned, the most widespread debate format is *adversarial debate*, i.e. where two opposing teams must follow specific procedures and time frames when they argue the pros and cons of a specific case to be resolved. Case examples include everything from "Should the death penalty be abolished?" and "Does God exist?" to "Should home schooling be allowed?" In order to argue for or against such cases, the participants must conduct thorough research on their topic and be able to defend their assigned position convincingly in a public forum. In this way, the adversarial debate format represents a rationalist approach to debating as it assumes that a neutral jury is able to determine who has presented the right or best arguments. Since the end of the nineteenth century, different forms of adversarial debate have gradually become standardised in order to arrange rule-based competitions among high schools students and university students, where participating teams are able to win recognition and money for scholarships (Fine, 2001) According to the National Forensic League, which arranges a number of different debate competitions, more than 90,000 American high school students regularly practise debating as members of various debate clubs.[18] Even though such debate activities are partially related to school subjects, the debate competitions often take place outside school as extra-curricular activities.

The goals, techniques and principles of adversarial debate are well-documented in various handbooks and research journals such as *Argumentation*, *Argumentation & Advocacy, Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*, *Journal of the American Forensic Association,* and *Controversia*. However, adversarial debate is not simply a matter of acquiring argumentation skills as the participants actively engage in the debating for a number of different reasons. Based on a comprehensive study entitled *Gifted Tongues* of high school debaters, the sociologist Gary Alan Fine has explored why and how young people participate in debate clubs and debate competitions (Fine, 2001). According to Fine, many debate club members come from upper-middle class backgrounds and see debate activities as a way to improve their CVs and their general performance level in relation to future jobs and higher education such as social science and law. Fine also describes how the participants in debate competitions often end up speaking extremely fast in an almost absurd machine gun-like fashion in order to present as many arguments as possible within the strictly limited time frames. This observation is shared by other researchers working with rhetoric and communication, who also criticise the adversarial form of debate for promoting an

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[18] Cf. The National Forensic League's website: www.nflonline.org.

instrumentalist view of argumentation (Gehrke, 2002; Greene & Hicks, 2005). All too easily, adversarial debate "becomes a spectator sport of unchecked facts and equivocating logic" (Frank, 2003: 39). Other researchers speak of a "crisis" as the highly competitive debate climate results in incomprehensible argumentation and speaking (Rowland & Deatherage, 1988). Furthermore, adversarial debate is also criticised for promoting an aggressive and male-oriented debate culture where "argument" equals "war" (Tannen, 1998; Billig, 1996; Lakoff, 2004).

Apart from Fine's microsociological study of high school debaters, hardly any "thick descriptions" of the actual process of *debate gaming* – inside or outside of the formal school setting exist. This lack of detailed description can be explained by the fact that adversarial debate has been standardised and widely accepted as a part of Anglo-American debate culture. To use Latour's powerful metaphor: adversarial debate has become a "black box", a self-assuming phenomenon that demands no further questioning (Latour, 1987). However, many other ways of conducting debates for educational purposes exist and are promoted by other organisations. The non-profit organisation called the International Debate Education Association (IDEA), for example, supports the establishment of debate cultures and active citizenship in new democracies such as Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Albania, and China. IDEA's approach to debate carries a more idealistic and less competitive message than the contests arranged by The National Forensic League. On their website, IDEA offers a wide range of teaching resources, a "debatabase" with several hundred debate examples, debate handbooks and research literature on debate education.[19] In spite of these resources and publications, IDEA offers no contextualised accounts of how young people are actually *taught* to debate or how debate is *practised* within various cultural settings.

As noted earlier, this lack of detailed description is a general problem within educational game research, which offers plenty of theories on game-based learning as well as praise for particular game designs, but only *few accounts of actual game sessions*. Admittedly, a large body of research on debate games does exist, especially in relation to adversarial debate formats (cf. Snider & Schnurer, 2006). However, almost all of this research is based on a rationalist approach to debate as it mainly focuses on rules, procedures, techniques and criteria for argumentation. Hardly any research exists on the *enactment* of debate games, which is the empirical focus of this study.

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[19] For more information on IDEA, cf. www.idebate.org.

3.2. A dialogical approach to debate games

In contrast to the rationalist approach, this dissertation views debate games from a *dialogical* approach inspired by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a, 1986). In everyday use, the term "dialogic" often means "pertaining to dialogue" (Wegerif, 2007: 14). But this connotation reduces dialogue to "physical" aspects of communication (i.e. turn-taking, eye contact, recurring patterns of initiation-response-feedback between teachers and students) and leaves out the "conceptual and epistemological" dynamics of communication, which are central to Bakhtin's philosophy (Marková, 1990: 131). Bakhtin's notion of "dialogic" hence refers to relations where "two or more perspectives are held together in tension at the same time", which "always opens up an unbounded space of potential perspectives" (Wegerif, 2007: 8). Seen from this dialogical perspective, debating and arguing cannot be understood only by focusing on the *argument* and the *arguer*. Instead, it is necessary to explore the active role of the *audience* and the influence of the sociocultural *context* in shaping particular dialogues (Tindale, 2004: 89). Similarly, the debate activities of *The Power Game* do not only imply spoken dialogue since the election scenario also creates a *dialogical space* for meaning-making, inquiry and learning. As Wegerif argues:

> Dialogic teaching should not aim only at the appropriation of particular voices in a debate but also the 'appropriation' of the dialogical space of the debate. Such teaching combines the construction of knowledge with what could reasonably be called the 'de-construction' of knowledge (Wegerif, 2007: 51).

Thus, debate games should not be reduced to prescribed procedures and rationalist assumptions of "right" and "wrong" arguments. Instead, this thesis aims to describe and analyse how teachers and students enact the parliamentary election scenario of *The Power Game* as a dialogical space for learning, which involves the "interanimation and struggle between one's own and another's word" (Bakhtin, 1981: 269).

To my knowledge, no studies exist of debate games that are based on a dialogical approach. However, there is a growing field of research that explores dialogical aspects of teaching and learning within a classroom context. More specifically, I am referring to research on "dialogical instruction" (Nystrand, 1997), "dialogic inquiry" (Wells, 1999), "dialogical pedagogy" (Dysthe, 2006; Skidmore, 2006; Matusov, 2007), "dialogic teaching" (Alexander, 2008), and "dialogic education" (Wegerif, 2007). These authors are inspired in a variety of ways by Bakhtin, but they all stress the educative potential of teacher-student interaction that "enables students to play an active

part in shaping the agenda of classroom discourse" (Skidmore, 2006: 503). Thus, one of the main points of Bakhtin's philosophy is that speakers and listeners are *mutually responsive* as they both take *active* part in forming dialogical relationships:

> Thus an active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a new conceptual system, that of the one striving to understand, establishes a series of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. It is precisely such an understanding that the speaker counts on. Therefore his orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social "languages" come to interact with one another. The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's, apperceptive background (Bakhtin, 1981: 282).

According to Olga Dysthe, this quote offers a theoretical explanation of how understanding and learning can grow out of dialogical interchange (Dysthe, 1996: 390). In relation to this study, the different roles and positions of *The Power Game* created a "polyphony" of classroom discourses where students spoke and listened through ideological voices, which challenged their conceptual horizons. In this way, the debate game changed the dialogical context of a classroom, which also meant changing the conditions for learning by affording different opportunities for students to participate in the construction of knowledge. As Nystrand argues:

> Specific modes or genres of discourse engender particular epistemic roles for the conversants, and these roles, in turn, engender, constrain, and empower their thinking. The bottom line for instruction is that the quality of student learning is closely linked to the quality of classroom talk (Nystrand, 1997: 29).

Obviously, there is no guarantee that the dialogical interplay between teachers, students and debate scenarios necessarily results in *valuable* learning processes. However, several empirical studies of classroom dialogue indicate that students are able to acquire in-depth understanding of particular subjects if they are able to connect their own conceptual horizons with the epistemic perspectives of other voices in ways which are meaningful and relevant. Two such examples include "role writing", where students are asked to write on a controversial issue from the perspective of a particular role

(Dysthe, 1996: 402), or when students "retell stories" in their own words by "using paraphrase, speculation and counter-fictional utterances" (Skidmore, 2006: 503).

In summary, a dialogical perspective assumes that *the educational value of debate games, or any other form of educational game, depends not only upon the quality of the actual game design but, more importantly, on the quality of the classroom talk produced in relation to the game design.* This point has been documented in Wegerif, Mercer and Dawes' ground-breaking qualitative and quantitative study of how teachers' pedagogical instruction on reflective talk is able to develop students' critical thinking in relation to the use of educational software (Wegerif, Mercer & Dawes, 1999). Based on their empirical findings, Mercer and Wegerif have developed a heuristic model with three "types of talk" that can be used to interpret the quality of classroom dialogue. The three types of talk represent three "intersubjective orientations":

- *Cumulative talk* reflects an orientation towards a group identity with sharing and a desire to understand each other but without any critical challenges;
- *Disputational talk* reflects an orientation towards individualised identity so that argument is seen as a competition that each party seeks to win; and
- *Exploratory talk* which is oriented beyond group or individual identity towards the process of shared inquiry so it allows critical challenges and explicit reasoning within a co-operative framework (Wegerif, 2005: 226; my emphasis in bold).

As Mercer and Wegerif's categories suggest, the shared inquiry of *exploratory talk* is seen as the most valuable way to support students' thinking capacities – an ideal which is clearly related to Dewey's theory of inquiry-based learning (Dewey, 1916, 1933; cf. chapter 4). Following this rough categorisation of classroom talk, it is tempting to label specific debate formats (i.e. "adversarial debate") as *disputational* due to a high degree of competitiveness among the opposing parties. However, seen from a pragmatist perspective specific debate types cannot be classified *a priori* as disputational, even though adversarial debate may easily end up being an instrumental exercise (Fine, 2001). Moreover, one of Mercer and Wegerif's points is that the shared inquiry of exploratory talk involves both cumulative (cooperative) and disputational (challenging) forms of talk. Thus, *assessing the educational value of particular debate scenarios requires a careful analysis of students' actual dialogue in relation to the domain-specific dialogical space.*

The three types of talk identified above have received recognition among other classroom researchers (Alexander, 2008). Still, Wegerif has turned to a self-criticism of the

assumptions of language and reasoning underlying the categorisation (Wegerif, 2005, 2007). The theoretical foundation of exploratory talk is mainly indebted to Vygotsky's theory of language, development and learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and Habermas' theory of "communicative reason" (Habermas, 1981). However, Wegerif criticises this foundation for being too rationalistic as it mostly concerns talk as the abstract development of *ideas*. Instead, Wegerif proposes a dialogical and Bakhtin-inspired understanding of exploratory talk that recognises how participants in interactions do not merely "respond to what other participants do, they respond in a way that takes into account how they think other people are going to respond to them" (Wegerif, 2005: 224). Wegerif further criticises the rationalistic framework for neglecting the *creative* aspects of everyday language, which arguably should be seen as the norm instead of exceptions to the norm (Carter, 2004). In order to expand the original notion of exploratory talk into a broader model of reasoning, Wegerif introduces a fourth type of classroom talk, which he terms *playful talk*. Even though much of students' playful talk (i.e. puns, jokes, parodies) should be considered as irrelevant "off-task activity", some forms of playful talk directly or indirectly support students' explorative reasoning, i.e. by using the imagination to create metaphors that illustrate and communicate complex problems (Wegerif, 2005, 2007). If we accept these claims on the creative aspects of shared inquiry, as I do, debate games cannot merely be dismissed as being disputational in a negative sense or blindly encouraged for being able to promote "critical thinking skills" in a rationalistic sense. Thus, this study aims to explore *how a debate scenario on parliamentary election may support students' inquiry-based learning through the meaningful, creative and playful use of language within this particular dialogical space.*

3.3. Outline of a dialogical game pedagogy

Based on a dialogical approach, it is possible to identify *pedagogical* aims and approaches that are highly relevant for the educational use of debate games. At this point, Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy has enjoyed relatively limited attention within the fields of game research and educational game research (cf. Silseth, 2008 for an exception).[20] However, as I will argue below, Bakhtin's work may serve as the basis for outlining a *dialogical game pedagogy*. Thus, dialogical pedagogy offers analytical concepts for reflecting on the dialogical tensions between "teaching" and

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[20] In his book on the Renaissance author Rabelais, *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin has written about the cultural-historical role of games (Bakhtin, 1984b). Renaissance games represented philosophical issues that "drew the players out of the bounds of everyday life, liberated them from usual laws and regulations, and replaced established conventions by other lighter conventionalities" (Bakhtin, 1984b: 235).

"gaming", the reconfiguration of teacher authority, and the facilitation of ideological voices that emerge during game sessions. Even though I believe that these pedagogical aspects have general relevance for understanding the field of educational gaming, I will mainly explore their implications in relation to the educational use of debate scenarios.

3.3.1. Balancing teaching and gaming

Debate games are often based on pre-designed scenarios that include descriptions of issues to be debated, educational goals, game goals, roles, rules, time frames etc. In this way, debate games differ from textbooks and everyday classroom instruction as debate scenarios allow teachers and students to *actively* imagine, interact and communicate within a domain-specific game space. However, instead of mystifying debate games as a "magic circle" (Huizinga, 1950), I will try to overcome the epistemological dichotomy between "gaming" and "teaching" that tends to dominate discussions of educational games. In short, educational gaming *is* a form of teaching.

As mentioned, education and games represent two different semiotic domains that both embody the three faces of knowledge: assertions, modes of representation and social forms of organisation (Gee, 2003; Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). In order to understand the *interplay* between these different domains and their interrelated knowledge forms, I will draw attention to a central assumption in Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy. According to Bakhtin, all forms of communication and culture are subject to *centripetal* and *centrifugal* forces (Bakhtin, 1981). A centripetal force is the drive to impose one version of the truth, while a centrifugal force involves a range of possible truths and interpretations. This means that any form of expression involves a *duality* of centripetal and centrifugal forces: "Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear" (Bakhtin, 1981: 272). If we take teaching as an example, it is always affected by centripetal and centrifugal forces in the on-going negotiation of "truths" between teachers and students. In the words of Bakhtin: "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin, 1984a: 110).

Similarly, the dialogical space of debate games also embodies centrifugal and centripetal forces. Thus, the election scenario of *The Power Game* involves centripetal elements that are mainly determined by the *rules* and *outcomes* of the game, i.e. the election is based on a limited time frame and a fixed voting procedure. Similarly, the open-ended *goals, roles* and *resources* represent centrifugal elements and create virtually endless possibilities for researching, preparing,

presenting, debating and evaluating a variety of key political issues. Consequently, the actual process of *enacting* a game scenario involves a complex negotiation between these centrifugal/centripetal forces that are inextricably linked with the teachers and students' game activities. In this way, the enactment of *The Power Game* is a form of teaching that combines different pedagogical practices (i.e. group work, web quests, student presentations) and learning resources (i.e. websites, handouts, spoken language) within the interpretive frame of the election scenario. Obviously, tensions may arise if there is too much divergence between educational goals and game goals. This means that game facilitation requires a *balance* between focusing too narrowly on the rules or "facts" of a game (centripetal orientation) and a focusing too broadly on the contingent possibilities and interpretations of the game scenario (centrifugal orientation).

For Bakhtin, the duality of centripetal/centrifugal forces often manifests itself as a dynamic between "monological" and "dialogical" forms of *discourse*. Bakhtin illustrates this point with the monological discourse of the Socrates/Plato dialogues in which the teacher never learns anything new from the students, despite Socrates' ideological claims to the contrary (Bakhtin, 1984a). Thus, discourse becomes monologised when "someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error", where "a thought is either affirmed or repudiated" by the authority of the teacher (Bakhtin, 1984a: 81). In contrast to this, dialogical pedagogy fosters inclusive learning environments that are able to expand upon students' existing knowledge and collaborative construction of "truths" (Dysthe, 1996). At this point, I should clarify that Bakhtin's term "dialogic" is both a *descriptive* term (all utterances are per definition dialogic as they address other utterances as parts of a chain of communication) and a *normative* term as dialogue is an ideal to be worked for against the forces of "monologism" (Lillis, 2003: 197-8). In this project, I am mainly interested in *describing* the dialogical space of debate games. At the same time, I agree with Wegerif that "one of the goals of education, perhaps the most important goal, should be dialogue as an end in itself" (Wegerif, 2006: 61).

3.3.2. Reconfiguring teacher authority

One of the key elements of dialogical pedagogy, and consequently a dialogical *game* pedagogy, is based upon the Bakhtinian notion of "authority". In his writings, Bakhtin often distinguishes between "authoritative discourse" and "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a). *Authoritative discourse* refers to those forms of language use which present themselves as unchallengeable orthodoxy by formulating positions that are not open to debate. Bakhtin

exemplifies this with political dogma that "demands our unconditional allegiance" (Bakhtin, 1981: 343). According to Eugene Matusov, classroom examples of authoritative discourse also include "intolerance, speaking for others, an unwillingness to listen to and genuinely question others, the failure to test one's own ideas and assumptions, and the desire to impose one's own views on others" (Matusov, 2007: 231). *Internally persuasive discourse*, in contrast, refers to language use directed towards mutual communication and the mutual construction of knowledge: "In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone-else's" (Bakhtin, 1981: 345). In this way, internally persuasive discourse marks a creative border zone based on the impossibility of any word ever being final, and for this reason it is "able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*" (Bakhtin, 1981: 346). But internally persuasive discourse cannot be reduced to the mere "appropriation" of the ideas and words of others, as it requires the ability to be involved in and embody how "diverse voices collide with each other in a dialogue that tests these ideas" (Matusov, 2007: 230). Thus, internally persuasive discourse always requires some form of dialogical and critical exposure that can be supported by the interplay of different voices in a classroom setting.

The application of Bakhtin's terms to classroom contexts can be quite problematic as the two terms easily end up as an unproductive dichotomy between authoritative ("bad") and persuasive ("good") discourse. Bakhtin scholar Gary Saul Morson has tried to further elaborate the two concepts and argues that internally persuasive discourse cannot be sustained in a classroom *without* authority (Morson, 2004).[21] Quite simply, it is impossible to create shared classroom attention solely on the basis of internally persuasive discourse. Based on Morson's work, Matusov expands Bakhtin's typology to *three* types of discourse:

- ***Authoritarian discourse***, which is based on the authority of power, imposition, tradition, and ignorance (what Bakhtin previously called authoritative discourse);
- ***Authoritative dialogical discourse***, which is based on the authority of trust and respect; and
- ***Internally persuasive discourse*** (similar to Bakhtin), which is a discourse without authority that is based on dialogical questioning, testing, and the evaluation of statements (Matusov, 2007: 233; my emphasis in bold).

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[21] As Matusov notes, Bakhtin's concept of "authority" is *not* based on a sociological or structural (a)symmetry of power, but refers to the discursive process of legitimisation of power between teachers and students (Matusov, 2007: 233). This interpretation of dialogical authority within a pedagogical context resonates well with a recently translated article in which Bakhtin theorises on and describes the teaching of stylistics to his students (Bakhtin, 2004). Thus, Bakhtin advocates a relatively stable teacher authority, subject-related knowledge production, and overt classroom instruction that reflect a constant interpretive tension between the voices of the teacher, the text, and the students (cf. Dysthe, 2006: 464).

Adding the term "authoritative dialogical discourse" makes it possible to provide nuanced descriptions of how educational discourse spans a wide *continuum* between more or less authoritative positions when teachers seek to address students. Thus, teacher-student dialogue is always facilitated through some form of authority that may (or may not) allow the student to be critically exposed to alternative discourses. In Matusov's words:

> …dialogic pedagogy is <u>based on colliding and testing diverse ideas presented by different voices, by different members of a community</u>. It involves genuine interest in each other. In dialogic pedagogy, the teacher does not look for a student's errors but rather learns from the student how the student sees the world and him/herself. Disagreements between the student and the teacher are valued, respected, and expected (Matusov, 2004: 7; my emphasis).

Matusov's description of dialogical pedagogy is similar to Wegerif's claim that shared inquiry and dialogue represent an educational aim *in itself* (Wegerif, 2007). David Skidmore argues along similar lines when he promotes a dialogical pedagogy that "signals the co-presence of the teacher as a concerned other, available to guide and coach the learner" (Skidmore, 2006: 513). Thus, the important but difficult goal of dialogical pedagogy is to *challenge* and *acknowledge* dialogical aspects of students' internally persuasive discourse. However, there is no pre-defined recipe for striking the right balance between "traditional" lecturing styles and "progressive" methods for supporting students' critical thinking (Dewey, 1938b; cf. section 2.10).

The pedagogical and dialogical question of teacher authority is highly important in relation to the educational use of debate games. Without disclosing aspects of the analytical chapters to follow, it should come as no surprise that a debate game such as *The Power Game* challenges the discursive authority held by teachers who are mostly familiar with everyday classroom instruction. This struggle of authority can partly be explained by the fact that the election scenario to some extent *re-delegates* the teacher's authority to the election scenario and the students' own interpretation of the game goals. The question is not whether the game scenario challenges a teachers' authoritative discourse, which it obviously did, but *in what way* the individual teachers responded to this challenge by "authorising" the students' emerging discourse of a game session. Thus, this study aims to explore how debate gaming *reconfigures* discursive authority in classroom contexts.

3.3.3. The multiple voices of debate games

I will now turn to a third aspect of a dialogical game pedagogy encompassed by the notion of *voice*. According to Bakhtin, an utterance is always produced through a certain voice that involves particular ideological values and intentions, which reflects the "speaking personality" (Bakhtin, 1981: 293-4, 434). In this way, the term voice does not represent a tool or deliminated object, but an answer to "who is speaking?" (Wegerif, 2007: 44). Furthermore, any form of communication carries the potential for invoking a polyphonic range of different voices, i.e. when speaking through different speech genres, dialects, intonations, values etc. Building upon Bakhtin's concept of voice, Dysthe has analysed the "multivoicedness" of classroom contexts by focusing on the coexistence and juxtapositions of different voices among students, teachers and texts (Dysthe, 1996). The aim of a dialogical pedagogy, then, is not to seek consensus or agreement between teachers, students and texts, but to recognise how the "mutuality of differences" in a classroom setting may support or restrict opportunities for learning and understanding (Holquist, 2002: 41).

Seen as a dialogical space, debate games enable a wide range of familiar and foreign voices to emerge within a classroom context, which also refer to semiotic domains that exist *outside* the school setting (Gee, 2003). Thus, this study describes how the students that participated in *The Power Game* expressed themselves through a range of different ideological voices that addressed both the available ideological positions of the election scenario (i.e. socialism, liberalism, nationalism etc.) and their assigned roles as professional politicians. In this way, *The Power Game* represents a *discourse initiator* as it requires students to actively engage in ideological conflicts and to research, position and express themselves in relation to the social language of professional politics and domain-specific forms of knowledge of political ideologies. The emerging voices of debate games address two pedagogical aims that can be described as *facilitation* and *evaluation*. On the one hand, the teachers in this study allowed the students to freely explore and enact their assigned ideological positions in relation to a real-life Danish parliamentary election. On the other hand, the election scenario also generated specific validation criteria, which meant that the students' ideological voices would be evaluated in relation to educational goals and game goals (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). Consequently, the teachers tried to orchestrate the "polyphony" of ideological voices that emerged within the dialogical space of the election scenario, which then generated a complex and tension-filled dynamic between voices that would sometimes clash, be mutually supportive and/or simply co-exist as parallel points of view (Bakhtin, 1984a).

Obviously, it is difficult to generalise on how and why teachers should facilitate and validate students' ideological voices as they may vary tremendously in relation to different debate scenarios and educational contexts, i.e. orchestrating a policy debate at an American high school represents a substantially different dialogical space than a Danish upper secondary students' debate in a parliamentary election scenario (Fine, 2001). To illustrate some of the differences, it is worth noting that the social studies students who participated in *The Power Game* received no prior "coaching", which is quite common within Anglo-American debate clubs. The students did not have the opportunity to elaborate and organise their political arguments several days, weeks or even months prior to the actual debate sessions either, which is sometimes the case with American high school debate competitions. Instead, the students in this study only had a few hours to prepare their key political issues within their respective political groups before taking part in the actual debate of the election scenario.

Arguably, these examples also reflect a general difference between Anglo-American and Nordic-German *debate cultures*, where the former is often more oriented toward the formalised rules and procedures of adversarial debate, which often involves clashing points of view. As an example, Cornelia Ilie's comparative study of insults among Swedish and British Members of Parliament indicates that Scandinavian politicians tend to base their insults on *ethos* arguments and few direct confrontations, while British politicians prefer stronger, emotionally loaded insults by using *pathos* arguments (Ilie, 2004: 78-81). In addition to this variation among parliamentary debate cultures, it is also necessary to consider *pedagogical variation* across different cultural and national traditions. In a comprehensive ethnographic study, Robin Alexander has mapped the dialogic relationship between culture and pedagogy in American, French, Russian, English, and Indian primary classrooms (Alexander, 2001). The findings in Alexander's study indicate that there are major historical and contextual differences between the ways in which teacher-student dialogues are conducted within various school cultures. To make things even more complicated, there may also be considerable *variation in the debate climate of different classrooms* at the individual school level. Thus, Skidmore argues that the structuring of classroom discourse is fundamentally a situated activity that can only be understood by accepting that "the devil lies in the detail" (Skidmore, 2006: 505).

3.3.4. Ideological becoming

The previous sections sketched the outline of a dialogical game pedagogy. Thus, debate games require teachers to balance the centripetal/centrifugal forces of gaming and teaching, to be able to reconfigure their discursive authority, and to orchestrate the multiple voices of a dialogical game space in relation to particular goals. These Bakhtinian perspectives provide a valuable analytical framework for describing *the discursive interplay between different practices and knowledge aspects when enacting (debate) game scenarios*. In addition to this, Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy also offers an explanation of why debate games (and other game types) may be valuable within an educational context. One of the central features of multi-player games is that players are expected to experience a simultaneously real and imagined scenario both in relation to an *insider's* (participant) perspective and to an *outsider's* (co-participant) perspective. According to Bakhtin, the outsider's perspective reflects a fundamental aspect of human understanding:

> In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are *others* (Bakhtin, 1986: 7).

As the quote suggests, every person is influenced by others in an inescapably intertwined way, and consequently no voice can be said to be isolated. Thus, *it is in the interaction with other voices that individuals are able to reach understanding and find their own voice.* Bakhtin also refers to the ontological process of finding a voice as "ideological becoming", which represents "the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981: 341). Thus, by teaching and playing debate scenarios, it is possible to support students in their process of becoming not only themselves, but also in becoming articulate and responsive *citizens* in a democratic society.

3.4. Debate games and citizenship education

Debate games can be and are used across a wide range of different school subjects such as mother tongue education, philosophy, religion, social studies, history, public speaking, science etc. The empirical study presented in this thesis was conducted within the context of social studies in Danish upper secondary schools. However, in order to understand the educational implications of my analytical findings, this study discusses the educational use of debate games from a broader

curricular perspective. More specifically, I will relate my analytical findings to the aims and goals of *citizenship education*, which is a cross-curricular theme in the Danish educational system.

As several educational thinkers have argued, one of the primary goals of education is to prepare citizens to maintain and develop democratic societies (Dewey, 1916; Hahn, 1998; Gutmann, 1999). This aim is based on the assumption that "specified, purposeful education is required to develop citizens who can participate as informed, responsible, effective members of democratic political systems" (Print et al., 2002: 195). In recent years, there has been an increasing international focus among researchers and policy makers on the role of citizenship education in schools (QCA, 1998; Olster & Starkey, 2006). This can be seen as a response to a growing need for re-defining what it *means to be* and what it *requires to be* a citizen in the twenty-first century that goes beyond the legal rights and duties prescribed by national states. Thus, there are many different ways of defining citizenship, and citizenship education is by no means a homogenic term.

The EU agency Eurydice, which has reviewed the status of citizenship education in thirty European countries, defines citizenship education as "school education for young people, which seeks to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live" (Eurydice, 2005: 10). Furthermore, Eurydice identifies three overlapping aims in the European school curricula for citizenship education: 1) the development of *political literacy*, 2) the development of *critical thinking* in relation to certain *attitudes and values*, and 3) the stimulation of students as *active participants*. This division is directly inspired by "The Crick Report", which put education for democratic citizenship (EDC) high on the political agenda in the United Kingdom, and eventually led to the establishment of citizenship education as an independent school subject in 2002 (QCA, 1998). This new "invention" in the curriculum has inspired a number of research projects on the aims, practices and outcomes and of citizenship education – both in the UK and elsewhere (cf. Olster & Starkey, 2006). Still, there are considerable differences in the ways in which citizenship education is integrated into the different national curricula across the world.

In a Danish context, citizenship education is a cross-curricular theme that forms an integrated part of school subjects and activities across primary, secondary, and upper secondary school (Print et al., 2002; Korsgaard, 2004, 2007). Since World War II, the Danish educational system has reflected Hal Koch's dictum that democracy should not only be seen as form of government, but more philosophically as "a way of life" (Koch, 1945). Thus, one of the most important aims of schooling is to promote students' *democratic Bildung*, which can be seen as a

Nordic-German equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon term "education" (Schnack, 1994; Kolstrup, 2002; Gleerup, 2004; Korsgaard, 2004b; Henriksen, 2005). This holistic approach to citizenship education is promoted throughout the national school curriculum in the dialogue between teacher and students, and through efforts at creating democratic school cultures by establishing student councils where pupils can actively make decisions that influence their everyday life at school. These factors have all been praised in international comparisons that relate Danish "classroom climates" and students' knowledge of citizenship to other European countries (Hahn, 1998; Bruhn et al., 2003).

In spite of the apparent success of "the Danish model" for citizenship education, the cross-curricular approach should also be criticised for taking the subject-related content, practices and goals of citizenship education for granted. As Stefan Hermann argues, the increased "compartmentalization" of the Danish school curricula makes it more difficult to identify the role of citizenship education (Hermann, 2007). Thus, in a Danish context, citizenship education has been somewhat neglected following the historical changes in the requirements for schools and individuals in the age of late modernity (Kolstrup, 2002). As a response to this neglect, there has recently been a growing interest among Danish educational researchers and policy makers in the term *medborgerskab*, which is the widely used Danish term for citizenship. "Citizenship" as a subject has been integrated as a crossdisciplinary subject in the 2007 reform of the Danish teacher education and is taught alongside "Christianity" and "philosophy of life".[22] The status of this new subject has sparked an on-going debate on what role citizenship education should play in formal education (Korsgaard 2007; Sløk & Willesen, 2007). However, in spite of the fact that citizenship has emerged as a hot topic for policy makers and educational researchers, the discussion has not yet included the domain of Danish upper secondary education, which represents a fundamentally different educational setting than the one found in Danish primary and lower secondary schools (Hahn, 1998).

Even though the terms "citizen" and "citizenship education" are not directly mentioned in the legislation or the curriculum, one of the declared aims of general upper secondary education is to promote "active co-participation in a democratic society" (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005c: §1, 5). Thus, education for democratic citizenship is at the core of Danish upper secondary education. The same emphasis is expressed in the curricular aims of social studies as an upper secondary school subject:

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[22] The lengthy name of the subject, which is difficult to translate, is *Kristendomskundskab, livsoplysning og medborgerskab*, also known as *KLM*.

> Social studies must promote students' willingness and ability to relate to and participate in democratic debate and engage them in important matters for the development of a democratic society through the educational content and working methods. Moreover, social studies education must further the students' self-reliance and confidence in discussing and taking a stand on societal problems at a subject-related and qualified level (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005a: 1; my translation).

In spite of these ambitious aims, the teachers' guidelines for social studies do not provide detailed explanations about how teachers should promote students' "ability to relate to and engage in the democratic debate". The curriculum and the supplementary guidelines mostly focus on students' argumentative *skills*, which are viewed from the rationalistic and content-oriented approach (cf. section 3.1). Thus, students must be able to argue theoretically on the basis of their "subject-specific knowledge" and learn progressively to "describe, analyse, and evaluate" arguments in accordance with Bloom's cognitivist taxonomy, which has been quite influential in shaping school curricula (Bloom, 1984; Wegerif 2007). In this way, the social studies curriculum represents a rather narrow view of democratic debate that predominantly emphasises *political and structural* dimensions. However, as argued by Olster and Starkey, citizenship education should also include a *cultural and personal* dimension, if it is "to effectively engage learners" (Olster & Starkey, 2006: 441).

Even though education for democratic citizenship is an official objective of Danish general upper secondary schooling, and particularly the social studies curriculum, this aim can be interpreted and achieved in many different ways. In this respect, the role of the teacher becomes crucial as upper secondary teachers have a high degree of freedom in choosing particular examples, learning resources and teaching methods. Thus, teachers should be able to create positive and conducive democratic cultures in the classroom, which is "a significant factor in promoting education for democratic citizenship because, within a specific context, students experience an atmosphere of security and trust where they can experience and practise their democratic skills" (Print et al., 2002: 204). This points to a classical *dilemma* of citizenship education: How can one educate for democracy when democratic citizenship is dependent on independent and active participation? The crucial key for solving this dilemma is to promote *dialogue* between teachers and students:

> Teaching must be organised in a dialogue where students and teachers respect each other's views and attitudes. This demands that the teacher's role be transformed from a traditional didactic, authoritarian one to a facilitating, personal role. To some critics this might mean a decline in professional authority in the classroom. But if we maintain an authoritarian teacher's role, where the ends are transferring objective knowledge,

students are left without experience in formulating opinions or taking part in discussions and debates – experiences that are at the very core of a democratic society (Print et al., 2002: 205).

This description corresponds well with Bakhtin's dialogical perspective on authority as both a *pre-requisite* and a potential *barrier* to dialogic discourse and understanding (cf. section 3.3.2). Moreover, it is also consistent with Dewey's view on education for democracy, which he defined in terms of opportunities for maximising *communication* between individuals and groups. Thus, for Dewey, democratic education entails "equable opportunity to receive and to take from others" (Dewey, 1916: 69). This implies "a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves".

3.5. Debating debating

After this brief introduction to the aims and status of citizenship education, I return to two questions specifically relevant to this dissertation: *Why* and *how* should citizenship education be taught through debate games? These questions are directly addressed in an interesting article by Lee Jerome and Bhavini Algarra, which is aptly titled "Debating debating" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005). Based on theoretical discussions as well as observations and interviews with a number of secondary students that participated in the London Debate Challenge (LDC), Jerome and Algarra try to clarify the role of debate within a pedagogy for democracy.[23] Jerome and Algarra start off by summarising the case for promoting debate ("the why"). Thus, debating aids students in the development of:

- Skills for argumentation
- Selection of relevant information through inclusion and exclusion
- Self-confidence in relation to verbal presentations
- Critical understanding of selected topics (adapted from Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 495-497).

These aims clearly overlap with the general aims of citizenship education. Thus, according to the Eurydice report mentioned earlier, the development of critical thinking through citizenship education includes:

- Acquiring the skills needed to participate actively in public life;

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[23] The LDC is an annual competition supported by the English-Speaking Union and is based on an adversarial debate format. Students from each of London's 32 different boroughs are grouped in debate teams and coached to defend and oppose various issues. Cf. the English-Speaking Union's website: www.esu.org.

- Developing recognition of and respect for oneself and others with a view to achieving greater mutual understanding;
- Acquiring social and moral responsibility, including self-confidence, and learning to behave responsibly towards others;
- The construction of values with due regard for differing social perspectives and points of view;
- Learning to listen and resolve conflicts peacefully (Eurydice, 2005: 10).

Jerome and Algarra find further evidence of the learning potential of debate in The International Association for Educational Achievement (IEA) Citizenship Education Study, which compared standards across a diverse range of countries and "concluded that schools which encourage student discussion of political issues in the classroom are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 496; cf. also Bruhn et al., 2003). Finally, Jerome and Algarra also believe that debating should be promoted on the basis of their own observations of the LDC, which indicated that:

> …young people enjoyed the process of participation in formal adversarial debate and saw great value in it. The value they placed upon the process ranged from seeing participation as a preparation for a variety of roles in the future to viewing it as a means of boosting their confidence. They thought it led them to find out more about contemporary issues and to examine them from different perspectives (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 505).

However, instead of simply campaigning for the adversarial debate format of the LDC, Jerome and Algarra step back for critical reflection and present a discussion of the *general* role of debate in education. In order to make this analytical shift, the authors introduce a useful distinction between "deliberative debate" and "adversarial debate". A *deliberative debate* describes:

> …exchanges and dialogue between students in which participants are encouraged to explore a range of opinions on a common theme and, if possible, to consider how to reach a compromise of some sort. In deliberative debate there are no predetermined positions, and the tone of the discussion is open and exploratory. One of the main features of this type of debate is the emphasis on providing all participants with the freedom to explore the issue under discussion and to develop and express their own opinions. (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 497).

This is in contrast to *adversarial debate*, in which:

> …students are invited to respond to a motion or proposal and to argue for or against it. While it is possible, and beneficial, to explore a range of different types of argument and a number of perspectives, the outcome is narrower in that participants are grouped together by the final vote, for or against the motion. The tone of adversarial debates is likely to be less open, less exploratory and more tightly focused on promoting and defending a particular argument. During an adversarial debate participants will be unlikely to change their public position on the motion (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 497).

Furthermore, Jerome and Algarra introduce a fruitful distinction between "debate" and "discussion", where *debate* denotes "any formal learning situation in which the students are encouraged to express and respond orally to opinions on a specific issue" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 497). Debates can be adversarial or deliberative, but they always "convey a degree of formality". In contrast, a *discussion* signifies "the informal, open-ended exchange of views and ideas, in particular in relation to the public discussion of policy issues" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 497). To exemplify, some phases of *The Power Game* unfold as debates between the politicians represented in the panel and the rest of the class, whereas the last phase of the game session is a clarifying discussion of the game outcome chaired by the teacher.

As these definitions show, Jerome and Algarra try to identify the potential and drawbacks of different forms of classroom debate. Paraphrasing the political philosopher Will Kymlicka, they conclude that adversarial debate might teach young people how to participate in discussions of public policy, train their minds to consider issues from a variety of perspectives, develop their ability to construct arguments and respond to them, and generally induct them into a non-violent method of dealing with conflicting viewpoints (Kymlicka, 2002: 288-289). Moreover, adversarial debate may also encourage young people to participate in coalition building to achieve political outcomes that favour (at least in part) the individuals and the groups with which they identify. On the other hand, there is a real danger that:

> …adversarial debate may limit young people in their understanding if they are introduced to controversial public issues through a process of debate which requires them to pick or be assigned to one of two positions and to argue for or against a motion. In this respect the approach can be criticized for limiting young people's understanding of the issue under consideration as well as their understanding of the process of debate in a democratic society (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 499).

Similarly, the parliamentary debate scenario of *The Power Game* may also constrain students' understanding of the relationship between ideologies and rhetoric in a formal election. As Kjetil

Børhaug has argued, mock elections in upper secondary schools can be criticised for promoting "*voter education* for competitive élite democracy" as social studies teachers rarely problematise the democratic principles of voting and majority rule (Børhaug, 2008: 596). In order to avoid such limitations of debate education, Jerome and Algarra suggest that adversarial models should be supplemented by theories and pedagogies of *deliberative democracy*, which focuses on creating mechanisms that ensure all citizens are heard and participate in decision-making (Gutmann, 1999). In a deliberative democracy, "voice rather than votes is the vehicle of empowerment" (Chambers, 2001: 99, cited by Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 499). Thus, democracy is viewed as a collaborative process of exploration and decision making. This deliberative view of democracy also echoes Dewey's philosophy that "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated life or conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey, 1916: 101).

The main point here is that *a pedagogy for democracy should adopt a variety of approaches to fostering debate and discussion within school*. Since democracy is "neither absolutely adversarial nor deliberative, it would be inappropriate for schools to adopt one or other method to the exclusion of others" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 503). Furthermore,

> …young people need experience of different forms of debate and discussion because one of the functions of active citizens is to help define and shape the nature of their participation, and young citizens would be at a disadvantage if they did not understand the range of approaches available. If young people in schools experience formal adversarial debate, they should also experience deliberative discussions. If they experience the thrill or disappointment of an outright victory or defeat in the formal vote that follows an adversarial debate, they should also experience the satisfaction or frustration that accompanies the process of trying to reach a resolution that accommodates, or at least values, the range of opinions in the class on a public issue (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 503).

Consequently, the objective of using debate games for citizenship education is not merely learning "how to win a debate". Drawing upon the work of Judith Baxter, Jerome and Algarra argue that citizenship education should help young people build a *public voice*, where they can "utilize a spectrum of discursive positions according to context, which can draw on multiple and perhaps competing ways of talking" (Baxter, 1999: 95). Thus, Jerome and Algarra conclude their article with the following important question for further exploration: "Given the variety of forums and approaches to debate and discussion of public issues in democracies, what balance of approaches are adopted in schools to develop young people's public voice?" (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 505). Obviously, there is no simple answer to this complex question, which I will return to after

describing how the teachers responded to the public voices of students that participated in *The Power Game* (cf. chapters 8 and 9).

3.6. Games and competencies

One of the key characteristics of debate games – and any other form of games – is that they require participants to *actively* unfold scenario-specific aspects of knowledge. In order to describe and analyse how the knowledge production of *The Power Game* is actively enacted and validated within an educational context, I will now turn to the often used and often disputed concept of *competence*. As Hermann argues, the term competence has become a "floating signifier" with rather diffuse and politicised meanings in the discourses surrounding educational policy making – both in a Danish and in a global context (Hermann, 2003). Even though it may be risky to turn a policy word into an analytical concept, I still believe it is fruitful to conceptualise educational gaming from a competence perspective. In this regard, this study has a shared focus with other recent Danish dissertations that also explore how different competencies are enacted within school contexts – i.e. "communicative competence" (Bundsgaard, 2005), "text competence" (Slot, 2008), "multimodal media competence" (Elf, 2008), and "representational inquiry competence" (Magnussen, 2008). Broadly speaking, the concept of competence implies three different modalities as it both refers to a *potential* (competencies to be realised), a *result* (of competence development), and the *process* (of enacting particular competencies). In this study, I mainly focus on *the actual processes of enacting and validating game competencies in relation to a particular educational game scenario*. In order to clarify what I mean by game competencies, I will discuss different ways of defining competence first.

3.6.1. DeSeCo's definition of competence

In a series of publications, the OECD research initiative DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies) has identified "key competencies for a successful life in a well-functioning society" (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 1). In order to accomplish this ambitious goal, DeSeCo takes a functional and *demand-oriented* approach to the notion of competence that includes two dimensions: *Internal structure* and *context dependency*. This leads to the following definition: "A competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilization of psychosocial prerequisites (including both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects)" (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 43). As this definition implies, the personal development of competence goes way beyond schooling and curriculum thinking; it is a notion and a concept for

living a *holistic* life in society. This broad theoretical and philosophical scope is similar to Dewey's claim that there exists a fundamental relationship between citizen, curriculum, and society (Dewey, 1916).

The term competence has often been criticised for linking educational discourses to the market-oriented discourses of New Public Management and Human Resource Management (Hermann, 2003). However, Rychen and Salganik emphasise that the primary focus of competence should be on "the results the individual achieves through an action, choice, or way of behaving, with respect to the demands, for instance, related to a particular professional position, social role, or personal project" (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 43). This broad goal seems quite different than merely instrumentalising citizens for "the market". Furthermore, Rychen and Salganik's definition presupposes that the personal, social, and professional development of competencies is always *contextual*, and contexts are *never the same*. This implies that innovative and transformative thinking is in fact presupposed as a prerequisite of any teaching and learning situation. DeSeCo illustrates the complexity of any potential competence-developing situation in relation to the two dimensions of complex demands and internal structures – cf. Figure 3.1 below.
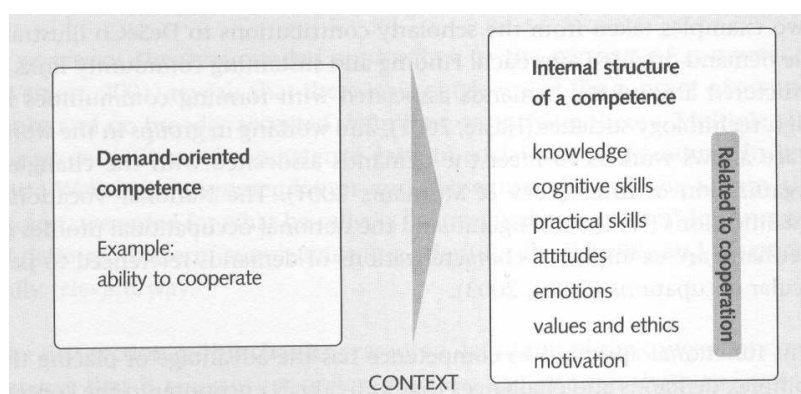
Figure 3.1: DeSeCo's model for a demand-oriented competence concept.

As shown, the competence-developing context involves a complex demand and the internal structure of a competence encompassing a wide range of cognitive, intellectual, and psychological attributes. These attributes are neither static nor "stored in the brain", but are resources that depend on cooperation with other persons in a particular time-space situation. The underlying assumption of the model is that the relationship between the individual and society is dialectical and dynamic: "Competencies do not exist independently of action and context", but are "conceptualised in relation to demands and actualised by actions (which implies intentions, reasons, and goals) taken by individuals in a particular situation" (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 47).

Based upon this definition and an extensive review of policy documents, Rychen and Salganik then identify three categories of key competencies: 1) using tools interactively – including language and technology, 2) interacting in heterogeneous groups, and 3) acting autonomously. DeSeCo does not include citizenship education in their framework, but presupposes that an increased understanding of citizenship should be developed across a wide range of different competencies. The DeSeCo framework has been used as a theoretical foundation for international surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Danish Ministry of Education's continual mapping of competencies that are believed to have "impact" on "wealth and growth" through The National Competency Account (*Det Nationale Kompetenceregnskab*) (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005d). However, there is a considerable epistemological gap between DeSeCo's context-sensitive definition of competence and the way these quantitative surveys attempt to assess isolated aspects of particular competencies (Bundsgaard, 2005). Thus, while DeSeCo has provided a valuable definition of competence, their definition is *generic* and does not offer any detailed guidance on how student competencies can or should be developed within the context of formal schooling.

3.6.2. Dewey's definition of competence

As other researchers have pointed out, Dewey is an important reference point when attempting to trace the historical origins of the notion of competence within educational research (Stevenson, 1996; Elf, 2008). This may sound surprising as competence is clearly not the single most important term in Dewey's educational theory; better candidates include "inquiry", "knowledge" and "experience". Nevertheless, Dewey uses the terms "competent" and "competency" several times in *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1916). For Dewey, competence is the ability to use knowledge in particular contexts: "The knowledge of a farmer is systematized in the degree in which he is competent. It is organised on the basis of relation of means to ends – practically organized" (Dewey, 1916: 198). As this quote suggests, Dewey describes competence as a characteristic of particular professions, a focus which is expanded in Schön's and Shaffer's analysis of how professional practioners work (cf. chapter 2). But the quote should also be read in relation to the broader scope of Dewey's educational philosophy, which assumes that knowledge, also for a student, should be related to *use*. Or, in DeSeCo's view, a demand in a context that requires more than intellectual, scientific knowledge in order to be met.

Just as DeSeCo, Dewey also describes the pragmatic requirements for "successful living" in a "well-functioning society". In contrast to DeSeCo's diagnosis, however, which primarily addresses the sociological discourse of educational policy makers, Dewey's vision is clearly more philosophical. Being competent is not only a matter of acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge of a profession; it also involves the ability to make *normative* decisions. Thus,

> …there is a great difference between a proficiency limited to immediate work, and a competency extended to insight into social bearings; between efficiency in carrying out the plans of others and in forming one's own (Dewey, 1916: 327).

Thus, Dewey views competence as *the capacity to determine rightly what is for the best and to take action to achieve these ends; not only the proficiency to achieve the goals set by others* (cf. Stevenson, 1996). The "good" that is taken to be the normative end of competent practices is more than technical efficiency, and applies to occupational pursuits as much as any others. A competence is always related to the *value* attached to the *ends* for which a competence is needed. For example, when students debate in *The Power Game*, they must be able to find and use relevant forms of knowledge that relate to the epistemologies of professional politicians. But in order to accomplish this task, the students are also required to make individual decisions on moral values concerning a variety of different ideological issues, which they must represent, present and debate through their *own* public voice.

In order to achieve competence, Dewey presupposes *democracy* as a normative value in its own right. Thus, democracy enables the opportunity for "intellectual and moral growth", which is "the dominant vocation of all human beings at all times" (Dewey, 1916: 320). This means that democracy is also a necessary prerequisite for developing competence: "A democratic criterion requires us to develop capacity to the point of competency to choose and make its own career" (Dewey, 1916: 97). In sum: Dewey's concept of competence is similar to DeSeCo's as he also stresses *the ability to use knowledge in particular contexts*. However, in contrast to DeSeCo, whose macro-sociological aims for achieving competencies on a global scale are somewhat general and abstract, Dewey's concept of competence is explicitly normative as it presupposes that *individuals should be able to determine rightly what is for the best and to take action to achieve these ends within the context of a democratic society.*

3.6.3. Subject-related competencies

One of the defining aspects of the recently implemented reform of Danish upper secondary schools is the aim of competence-based teaching (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005c). This involves the development of students' subject-related competencies as well as general, social and personal competencies.[24] In spite of this broad ambition, the overall focus in the reform is primarily on subject-related competencies defined in a report from The Danish Ministry of Education entitled *Educations for the Future* (Busch et al., 2003). According to this report, subject-related competence can and should be developed by "working with subject-related matter and knowledge in relevant situations and activities in order to inform actions" (Busch et al., 2003: 18; my translation). Thus, subject-related competencies acquired in social studies can be defined as "a knowledge-based preparedness to act purposefully in situations, which contain a certain kind of [social studies]-related challenge" (Busch et al., 2003: 18; my translation).

This way of defining competencies in relation to school subjects has been criticised by Jeppe Bundsgaard for being too traditionalistic, as the approach easily narrows competencies down to a matter of learning the content of an existing curriculum (Bundsgaard, 2005). Instead, Bundsgaard suggests that we should take DeSeCo's overall ambition seriously and revise the educational system in order to develop the necessary key competencies, which students actually *need* in order to live as citizens in a modern, post-industrial society. Partially as a response to Bundsgaard's critique, Elf has since broadened the definition from "knowledge-based preparedness" to "insightful preparedness" in order to avoid focusing too narrowly on knowledge as a "thing" that is pre-given in the curriculum (Elf, 2008: 131-3). Inspired by Dewey, Elf stresses that knowledge should primarily be understood in relation to students' continual *processes* of "knowing". Thus, development of competencies is always related to the possibility of creating *new* knowledge within the subject-related context of a given classroom. According to Elf, the difference between his own bottom-up approach, which focuses on competence development in local classroom cultures, and Bundsgaard's top-down approach, which focuses on the power of educational reform and broader societal concerns, represents a dilemma because "if one strategy is chosen, the other is immediately ruled out" (Elf, 2008: 133). However, from my point of view, there is no real opposition between these two "micro" and "macro" perspectives on competencies, as they are – or at least as they *could* or *should* be – inextricably linked. Simply put, student competencies

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[24] Sometimes abbreviated as FAPS (faglige, almene, personlige og sociale kompetencer).

can be developed in relation to both subject-related knowledge in local classroom contexts *and* in relation to broader societal demands.

This on-going discussion of how and for what purposes students should develop subject-related competencies is far from settled. However, in this project, I am mainly interested in exploring *how debate games can be used to enact and validate competencies that relates to the cross-curricular theme of citizenship education*. As mentioned in chapter 1, citizenship education was not the initial focus of my project. Instead, I assumed that *The Power Game* could be used to enact and develop a number of student competencies, which would be relevant for social studies and Danish as a subject. In the original game instructions sent to the participating teachers, the election scenario claimed to support the following student competencies:

- Arguing and debate through description and evaluation of political argumentation
- Understanding political ideologies, political decision making and political communication
- Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy
- Group work and negotiation through dialogue and debate

These aims addressed the general aims of upper secondary education (general, social, and personal competencies) and the academic aims of social studies and Danish as a subject in upper secondary education. I assumed that the election scenario of *The Power Game* would primarily match the social studies curriculum, which emphasises evaluation of political arguments, political ideologies, negotiation, and decision-making processes as "key areas" (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005a; cf. section 3.4). However, I also assumed that other aspects such as political communication, the rhetorical forms of appeal (ethos, logos, pathos), and oracy were more closely related to the curriculum of Danish as a subject. Thus, I aimed to conduct the game sessions in collaboration with the social science teachers and Danish teachers.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find schools, teachers and schedules that would allow me to explore this subject combination in my empirical studies, which took place during the somewhat chaotic implementation of the 2005 reform (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005c). Eventually, my empirical studies ended up being based solely on collaboration with social studies teachers. Thus, according to Elf's definition of subject-related competencies, social studies formed *the subject-related context* for my study (Elf, 2008). Following the definition of competencies in *Educations for the Future*, one of the declared aims of the 2005 reform was to introduce "competence-based teaching". However, out of the five participating teachers in this study, only

Marianne had experience with this "new" competence approach. Consequently, it was rather difficult to compare the teachers' adaptation of *The Power Game* with the competence aims described by the new reform.

After observing and interviewing the participating social studies teachers, it became clear that the teachers represented quite different *epistemological views* when evaluating student participation and subject-related aspects of the game sessions (cf. chapter 8). Thus, Karen guided the end-of-game discussion by emphasising precedents in the history of Danish politics. Marianne took on the role of "Danish teacher" and highlighted the importance of rhetoric and the students' ability to deliver verbal presentations. Thomas emphasised similar rhetorical aspects of the game, but from a more ironic perspective. For Poul, the core subject matter of the election scenario was represented in the power relations that emerged in the negotiation phase. Finally, Joan saw the debate game as a way to teach her students important aspects of democratic *Bildung*. Based on the high degree of variation in the teachers' interpretations of the game election scenario, I decided to *reconceptualise* my analysis of the game sessions in relation and focus on what game competencies that emerged as seen in a broader, cross-curricular perspective. Thus, this thesis should not be read as an attempt to expand the academic study of "social studies didactics" for Danish upper secondary education (Henriksen & Knudsen, 2004). Instead, this dissertation aims to describe the *competent practices* of the participating teachers and students – both in relation to the game goals and the educational goals of *The Power Game*.

3.6.4. Competent practices

Even though competence has become an important concept in educational discourse, it is most commonly used as way of describing educational *aims*. Relatively few examples exist of classroom research that provides detailed descriptions of how students *enact* particular competencies as seen from a holistic perspective (Elf, 2008; Slot, 2008; Magnussen, 2008). Thus, there is an important analytical gap between the way a competence is defined (i.e. at a theoretical level or in a policy document), and competence as an *analytical concept* which describes how teachers and students try to meet specific demands in contextualised settings.

In order to close this gap, I will introduce Etienne Wenger's *practice-oriented* concept of competence (Wenger, 1998). In contrast to DeSeCo, Dewey and Elf, Wenger's competence definition is not based on societal demands, normative criteria for making the right choices or knowledge production in school subjects. For Wenger, learning should be seen as a two-way

interplay of competence and experience, where they can each drive the other (Wenger, 1998: 138-9). In a personal e-mail correspondence, Wenger has further defined competence as "the relationships of accountability to the practice by which a community defines forms of membership and by which engagement in the practice is experienced as legitimate membership".[25] A person, then, is competent to the degree in which his or her practices are "accountable" and "legitimate" in relation to a given "community". Thus, competence is first and last *socially defined* because it presupposes that social recognition is the most important prerequisite for being competent.

Wenger's practice-oriented definition of competence is both highly inspiring and problematic. On the one hand, the definition is valuable as it allows an outsider's view on the everyday ways in which teachers and students recognise certain practices as "being competent" in the socially defined *context* of a classroom. Thus, teachers and students readily accept certain practices such as students raising their hands to answer a question as an indication of subject-related competence even though the student may actually have little to add to the discussion if chosen by the teacher. Obviously, teachers' situated recognition of student actions does not ensure that the individual student *is* competent. Nevertheless, every day teachers all over the world are expected to legitimise certain pedagogical practices in millions of classrooms. This is simply an integrated part of how school is "done". Thus, when introducing a somewhat unfamiliar learning resource such as *The Power Game* into an educational context, *the participants in this study clearly felt challenged by the accompanying set of knowledge aspects and validation criteria of the election scenario.* More specifically, the debate game required the teachers to become *facilitators* and the students to become *performers* (cf. chapters 7 and 8). In this way, Wenger's practice-oriented notion of competence makes it possible to describe how the introduction of new learning resources (i.e. debate games) challenges social patterns of recognition and legitimisation in relation to existing pedagogical practices.

On the other hand, Wenger's definition of competence is also problematic as it reduces the curricular *knowledge* embedded in the student's competencies to a matter of "legitimate participation". As DeSeCo argues, competence development also implies individual aspects that are cognitive and emotional as well as linked to attitudes and values. DeSeCo briefly notes that their definition is limited as it only describes competence as seen from the individual's perspective (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 50). Wenger's definition, in contrast, may be criticised for being too dependent of the social identity of the local *community*, which he defines rather vaguely as "a way

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[25] From personal e-mail correspondence with Etienne Wenger, 10 May 2006.

of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence" (Wenger, 1998: 5). As Gee has argued, Wenger's conception of "community" and "communities of practice" are problematic as they tend to reduce communities, and thus also competencies, to harmonising entities (Gee, 2005b). Thus, Wenger's definition of a community makes it difficult to determine what *differentiates* one community and/or competence from another. Similarly, Wegerif notes that Wenger's notion of community lacks the dialogical possibility of an *outsider's* perspective, which is necessary in order to construct an identity as an *insider* (Wegerif, 2007: 283-4, Bakhtin, 1986: 7).

In spite of these criticisms, which I believe are fair, Wenger's definition of competence as socially recognised *practices* still provides a valuable analytical starting point when trying to analyse and contextualise how teachers and students interpreted the election scenario of *The Power Game*. Thus, by taking a practice-oriented approach, this thesis aims to overcome the analytical gap between competence as an abstract *aim* (defined by theories, policies and/or teachers), and the everyday practices of *enacting* and *validating* particular competencies within a school context.

3.7. Contextualising competencies

DeSeCo, Dewey, Elf and Wenger's definitions of competence are all valuable when trying to define the educational aims of modern society. However, like all definitions, these assumptions are difficult to apply to the complex reality of a classroom setting where teachers and students enact educational games through a complex interplay of different goals and knowledge forms. Thus, opening the door to a classroom in order to describe students' competent practices involve numerous theoretical, methodological and analytical translations. In order to be able to tackle these translation problems, it is necessary to clarify the *context* of the students' competencies.

This chapter has tried to demonstrate that "competence" is a complex concept that is defined in relation to different *foci*, views of competent *actors* and overall *aims*. The focus refers to the key content or aspect of a competence – including models of knowledge production on a global (DeSeCo/OECD), national (curriculum-based) or local (practice-oriented) scale. Furthermore, the varying definitions of competence represent different ways of conceptualising the competent actor, which is both related to *social* and *individual* dimensions of learning and knowledge production. Finally, competencies are defined in relation to different *aims*. Below, I have summarised the four different definitions discussed in the previous pages:

Definition	Focus	Actor	Aim
Functional (DeSeCo, 2003)	Holistic, functional and demand-oriented	The individual in a modern, globalised society	Successful life in a well-functioning society
Pragmatist (Dewey, 1916)	Integration of knowledge, action and personal growth	Relationship between individual and society	Education for democratic citizenship
Subject-related (Elf, 2008)	Subject-specific forms of knowledge production	Institutionalised (teachers and students)	Education for the knowledge society
Practice-oriented (Wenger, 1998)	Social recognition of competent practices	Socially defined by relationships of accountability	Legitimate membership of local communities

Table 3.1: Overview of different competence definitions.

As the table indicates, competence is a multi-dimensional term that carries many different, even conflicting, meanings – both on a theoretical and an analytical level.

In this thesis, I am primarily interested in exploring students' *game competencies* in relation to their *game practices*. However, this practice-oriented perspective does not necessarily exclude functional, pragmatist and subject-related aspects of the students' competencies. Moreover, this study does not analyse students' competencies as either potentials or results, but how they emerged when playing a game (cf. section 3.6). Thus, my aim is to describe what and how particular game competencies are enacted and validated as particular social actions and practices within the context of particular educational game scenario. In order to accomplish this goal, I draw upon Barth's analytical framework that identifies three "faces" of knowledge (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). More specifically, game competencies can be defined as the *knowledge-based abilities to enact and validate particular assertions, modes of representation and social forms of organisation in relation to particular game practices.* Following Barth, this definition assumes that the students' game competencies are or can be validated by specific criteria, which are both generated by the different knowledge forms of a particular game scenario and the educational context. Translated to this study of *The Power Game*, this raises the following analytical questions:

- **Assertions:** How did the students engage with and validate the ideological assertions, goals, rules and contingent outcomes embedded in the election scenario and the curriculum?
- **Modes of representation:** How did the students interpret the game resources (i.e. role descriptions and political discourse) in order to communicate and validate distinct types of meaning?

- **Social organisation:** How did the students enact and validate their assigned roles in relation to their existing roles within the formal learning context of upper secondary school?

These analytical questions both address the knowledge forms of the game scenario and the wider educational context. Thus, when students took on the roles of politicians within the semiotic domain of *The Power Game*, they had to be able to engage in the *game goals* – i.e. by assuming particular ideologies, taking on roles and trying to win the election through various debate practices. At the same time, the students were also expected to identify with the *educational goals* of the game scenario – i.e. by learning about the phenomenon of political ideologies, parliamentary elections and rhetorical forms of appeal in relation to the curriculum. Consequently, the social processes of enacting *The Power Game* refer to both the professional practices of real-world politicians and the everyday pedagogical practices of teaching and learning. As I have argued previously, educational gaming involves situated tensions and mutual negotiation between game goals and educational goals, as they refer to different criteria for what "counts" as knowledge within different traditions of knowledge (cf. chapter 2). In this way, this study explores how students' game competencies represent a *playful form of knowledge* related to both the creative and unpredictable outcomes of the election scenario and the everyday validation criteria of upper secondary education.

The students' game competencies can thus be mapped and analysed as a dynamic interplay between Barth's three aspects of knowledge, which are related to both the game scenario and the educational context. Correspondingly, the students' competent practices can be described through three different *theoretical and analytical perspectives*, which are highly interrelated and mutually constitutive. In order to analyse the three knowledge aspects of the students' game competencies, I draw upon the three perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism and dialogism. Thus, by taking these different perspectives it is possible to identify different aspects of their *scenario competence*, *social competence*, and *communicative competence*, which involve the students' overall ability to inquire into a game scenario and adapt knowledge across real and imagined contexts; the ability to adopt roles and perform in relation to different perspectives; and the ability to understand and master the available speech genres and semiotic resources of the dialogical game space (cf. chapter 4). Below, Table 3.2 illustrates how the knowledge aspects of *The Power Game* scenario are related to the educational context and to particular competencies

Knowledge aspects	Game scenario	Educational context	Competencies
Assertions	Parliamentary election	Curricular goals	Scenario competence
Modes of representation	Ideological voices	Teacher-student dialogue	Communicative competence
Social organisation	Strategic interaction	Everyday interaction	Social competence

Table 3.2: The knowledge aspects, contexts and competencies of *The Power Game*.

The point here is that this study does not attempt to identify one *particular* game competence as being more important or essential than others. Rather, *the aim is to explore how a particular game scenario enables a wide range of different competencies, which may both be validated in relation to game knowledge and educational knowledge.* As mentioned in chapter 2, this study does not involve any formal assessment of learning outcomes. Instead, I aim to describe and analyse the students' game competencies by comparing and triangulating different analytical perspectives on the five game sessions (cf. discussion of my methodological approaches in chapter 5). In this respect, I agree with DeSeCo's claim that "competence cannot be directly measured or observed, but must be inferred from observing performance to meet a demand in a number of settings" (Rychen & Salganik, 2003: 55).

In the next chapter, I examine more closely the different theoretical perspectives of pragmatism, interactionism and dialogism, and how these perspectives can be used to *foreground* and *background* different aspects of the students' inquiry (experience), social interaction (roles) and discourse (positioning). Thus, by combining these three perspectives, I am able to present a theoretical-analytical model for understanding the meaning-making processes, practices and competencies of educational gaming.

4. Theoretical perspectives

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical and analytical model for understanding the meaning-making processes, practices and competencies of educational gaming. The chapter starts out by presenting a sociocultural approach to educational gaming, which implies a dynamic interplay between *inquiry*, *interaction* and *discourse*. In the next three sections, these theoretical perspectives are expanded by drawing upon the work of Dewey, Mead, Goffman, and Bakhtin. Each of the three sections concludes by defining a particular competence, which is relevant for understanding the enactment and validation of educational gaming: scenario competence, social competence and communicative competence. The final section summarises the different theoretical and analytical aspects in relation to the empirical focus of this study.

4.1. A sociocultural approach to educational gaming

As mentioned, this dissertation is based on a *sociocultural approach* to educational gaming, which focuses on the *processual* aspects of playing, knowing, thinking, learning and meaning-making (cf. chapter 2). The term "sociocultural" assumes a close connection between meanings that are *culturally* embedded and meanings that arise through *social interaction*. This means that "we cannot study learning as an isolated phenomenon as merely mental activities in the individual, but we have to look at the whole context in order to understand what inhibits and promotes learning" (Dysthe, 2003: 16; my translation). Thus, a sociocultural approach implies a *contextualised* view of learning. Furthermore, this implies a reaction against the narrow-mindedness of behaviourist and cognitive learning theories, which have been two of the most dominating paradigms within educational research and policy-making in the twentieth century (Greeno et al., 1996). Sociocultural approaches attempt to re-think traditional dualisms such as "the inner and the outer, between individual and community, between cognition and culture, between thought and language, communication and content" (Dysthe, 2003: 16; my translation). Consequently, a sociocultural perspective on educational gaming focuses on the complex *interplay* between these categories by studying processual aspects of learning, knowing, thinking, and meaning-making.

Even though sociocultural researchers often share a common critique of reductionist conceptions of learning, there is no *one* single sociocultural theory. Thus, over the last two or three decades, sociocultural approaches have been shaped, influenced, and adapted by a wide range of researchers who come from or work within a variety of research traditions and disciplines, i.e.

psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and linguistics (cf. Wertsch, 1991; Dysthe, 2003; Säljö, 2003). In this way, a sociocultural approach can be described as an inter-disciplinary or even *non*-disciplinary approach to educational research. This flexibility has paved the way for a number of different sociocultural research traditions such as cultural psychology (Cole, 1996; Bruner, 1990; Rogoff, 1990), activity theory (Engeström, 1987), socio-cognitive approaches (Resnick et al., 1997; Kirshner & Whitson, 1997), and theories of situated learning and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the overlaps and disagreements between different sociocultural approaches and their theoretical assumptions (cf. Dysthe, 2003; Sawyer, 2002; Shaffer & Clinton, 2007). However, it should be noted that many sociocultural approaches are more or less directly inspired by Vygotsky's sociohistorical theory of how humans learn by appropriating various "tools", i.e. language, signs and artefacts (Vygotsky, 1978; cf. Wertsch, 1991). Even though Vygotsky's dialectical theory is valuable when describing the educational use of language or technology, this perspective easily leads to quite deterministic and rationalistic conclusions of how such tools "work" (Wegerif, 2007: 33). Moreover, Vygotsky's theory of tools comes up short in the attempt to account for the *dialogical* and *creative* aspects of thinking, learning and playing, which are central to an understanding of educational gaming. In this way, I agree with Wegerif that sociocultural approaches easily turn into quasi-Marxist or "realist" interpretations of the world. However, instead of abandoning the sociocultural framework altogether, I believe that it can be reformulated to include broader perspectives on the meaning-making processes of teaching and playing through educational games.

In summary, the sociocultural approach of this thesis is based on a range of theoretical assumptions that are relevant when studying how educational games are enacted and validated within educational settings (cf. chapter 2). First of all, this study assumes a *practice-oriented* approach to educational gaming, which focuses on the ways in which teachers and students enact, recognise and validate particular social actions within an educational context (Scollon, 2001; Gee, 2003; Bloome et al., 2005; cf. chapters 3 and 5). Moreover, this thesis assumes a *relational ontology*, which means that the social interaction of educational gaming cannot be reduced to substantialist categories, but should be understood as mutual transactions between the social actors of the educational game encounter (Emirbayer, 1997; Goffman, 1961a). The approach taken here is also founded upon a *pragmatist epistemology*, as I assume that the knowledge aspects of educational gaming cannot be studied as fixed entities, but should be mapped and interpreted in

relation to teachers and students' context-specific processes of construction and re-construction of experience (Dewey, 1916; Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Finally, the thesis assumes a *dialogical perspective* on educational gaming, which explores discursive tensions between different ideological positions and perspectives (Bakhtin, 1981; Ongstad, 1997; Wegerif, 2007).

Based on these assumptions, I will now present a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding the meaning-making processes and competencies of educational gaming as a *dynamic interplay of inquiry, interaction and discourse*. Thus, the following sections conceptualise educational gaming as the processual interplay of inquiry (Dewey, 1916, 1933), interaction (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974), and discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). This corresponds with Barth's anthropology of knowledge, which implies that educational gaming can be studied as two *overlapping* traditions of knowledge that both involve assertions (inquiry), modes of representation (discourse), and social forms of organisation (interaction) (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). Consequently, the inquiry, interaction and discourse of educational gaming both involve the everyday knowledge aspects of a given educational setting – i.e. teacher and student practices – and the domain-specific meanings of a particular game, which includes scenario-based problems, contingent outcomes, rules, goals, roles and resources within the dialogical game space. Moreover, this multidimensional interplay between *inquiry*, *interaction*, and *discourse* revolves around the central category of *social action* – see Figure 4.1 below.[26]
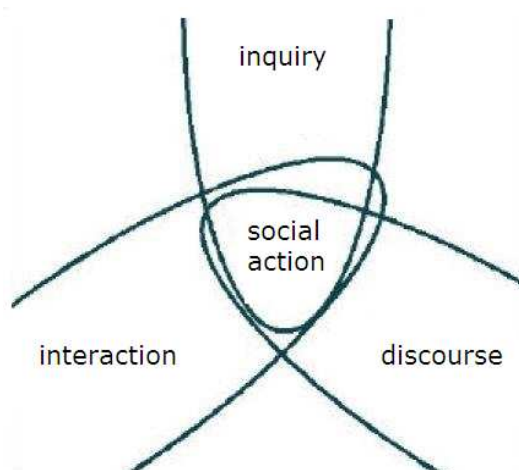
Figure 4.1: The multi-dimensional interplay between inquiry, interaction, and discourse.

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[26] The layout and perspectives of the model presented here are heavily inspired by Ron Scollon's Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA), which presents an interdisciplinary framework for mapping social actors' trajectories of situated practices in relation to their historical body, interaction order and discourse in place (cf. Scollon, 2001). However, Scollon's theoretical and analytical perspectives on everyday interaction have far broader implications than this study, which primarily addresses the domain-specific practices and meaning-making processes of educational gaming.

This model does not represent an ontological truth about the world, but should merely be seen as a useful illustration of the *interplay* between the meaning-making processes and competent practices of educational gaming. Thus, the model can be used to *map* how social actors (i.e. teachers and students) enact and validate a particular game (i.e. *The Power Game*) by inquiring into the goals, rules and potential outcomes of the election scenario through different interactional roles (i.e. facilitator and performer) and discursive positions (i.e. teacher authority and student voices), which involve different modes of representation (i.e. websites, spoken language, hand-outs with role descriptions etc.). In this way, it becomes possible to understand and analyse the meaning-making processes and practices of educational gaming by *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* the different dimensions of inquiry, interaction and discourse, which represent complimentary perspectives (cf. chapter 5). In the next three sections, I will expand each of these theoretical dimensions of educational gaming.

4.2. Educational gaming as inquiry

As mentioned, the work of John Dewey presents a widely accepted theoretical framework for understanding game-based teaching and learning (Dewey, 1916; cf. chapter 2). This is no coincidence as Dewey was deeply concerned both with the processes of teaching and learning *and* the ways in which play and games could be used to design meaningful learning environments. In order to follow Dewey's views on play and games in the curriculum, it is important to understand his notions of "experience" and "inquiry", which are two central and interrelated concepts in his pragmatist philosophy.[27] For Dewey, *experience* is a holistic and dynamic phenomenon, which is continually subject to change due to critical thinking:

> The term experience may thus be interpreted with reference either to the empirical or to the experimental attitude of mind. Experience is not a rigid and closed thing; it is vital, and hence growing. When dominated by the past, by custom and routine, it is often opposed to the reasonable, the thoughtful. But experience also includes the reflection that sets us free from the limiting influence of sense, appetite, and tradition (Dewey, 1933: 277).

In this way, Dewey's concept of experience refers to a *process* (to experience) and to the *result* (an experience), which may lead to change, elaboration or expansion of capacities to understand and act

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[27] As a testimony of the central role of "experience" in Dewey's works, one merely needs to glance at the titles of his influential works on the philosophy of science, *Experience and Nature* (1925); the philosophy of art, *Art as Experience* (1934); and his lectures on the philosophy of education, *Experience and Education* (1938b).

in new or changed ways (Elkjær, 2007: 40). Moreover, experience is closely linked with Dewey's *theory of inquiry*, which describes how individuals "think" and "reconstruct" experience (Dewey, 1916, 1933, 1938a). The process of an inquiry involves five stages, even though the stages do not necessarily follow each other in linear progression:

1) **Indeterminancy or disturbance:** Inquiry arises when individuals encounter "indeterminate" situations, and start to doubt their knowledge and experience of a given issue. This pre-cognitive stage of inquiry may be felt as an intuitive "hunch" in relation to existing habits.

2) **Intellectualisation: defining the problem:** At this stage, the individual recognises that a situation is problematic and has started an active articulation of the problem.

3) **Formation of a working hypothesis:** What follows is an analysis of the conditions of the situation which leads to the formulation of a "working hypothesis" (or "plan").

4) **Reasoning – in a narrower sense:** The working hypothesis is further evaluated and re-formulated through thought experiments.

5) **Testing the hypothesis by action:** Only the practical testing of the hypothesis in material activity makes it possible to draw conclusions about its validity. This may lead to a solution to the problem at hand and new ideas (Dewey, 1933, 1938a; adapted from Bernstein, 1966: 101-113 and Miettinen, 2000: 65-67).

As these stages suggest, Dewey conceptualises inquiry as a progressive determination of a problem and its solution, and describes how a successful inquiry results in knowledge, which must be understood in relation to its actual context. Thus, Dewey views learning as "the continuous process of reconstructing experience" (Elkjær, 2007: 40). In this way, Gee clearly echoes Dewey when he describes how playing a video game requires the player to engage in the following process:

1. The player must *probe* the virtual world (which involves looking around the current environment, clicking on something, or engaging in a certain action).

2. Based on reflection while probing and afterwards, the player must form a *hypothesis* about what something (a text, object, artefact, event, or action) might mean in a usefully situated way.

3. The player *reprobes* the world with that hypothesis in mind, seeing what effect he or she gets.

4. The player treats this effect as feedback from the world and accepts or *rethinks* his or her original hypothesis. (Gee, 2003: 90).

Gee's description of the probe-hypothesize-reprobe-rethink cycle is quite similar to Dewey's model of inquiry, which he also referred to as "hypothesis testing" (Dewey, 1933: 105). Thus, Dewey's theory of inquiry represents a general model of how we think and learn, which is both relevant for understanding education and gaming, and thus educational gaming.

One of the core aspects of Dewey's theory of inquiry is the concept of *reflection*. Thus, reflection is the *process* by which one makes meaning from experiences that involve more than simply attending to events – they also involve interactions with other individuals, the environment, and the world. In summary, Dewey argued that reflective thinking occurs in two states: "It originates in a state of doubt, uncertainty or difficulty, and further turns into an act of searching, hunting, inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose the perplexity" (Dewey, 1933: 105). Thus, reflection may be defined as *a response to a situation of uncertainty or a problem.* Translated to the context of educational gaming, reflection occurs as game participants consciously, coherently, and purposefully apply ideas while strategising and implementing each phase of problem solving. In this sense, reflection from experience is crucial when trying to teach with and learn from games (cf. chapter 3).

Dewey's model of inquiry as the basis of thinking and learning has often been mis-interpreted as being too instrumentalist. Thus, it is important to underline that Dewey's entire philosophy is an attempt to avoid futile epistemological dualisms, i.e. between "science" and "culture" or education "from within" and "from without" (Dewey, 1938b: 5). In an oft cited quotation from *Art as Experience*, Dewey describes how experience also has an important *aesthetic* dimension:

> A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is *an* experience (Dewey, 1934: 35).

As this quote shows, Dewey's concept of experience clearly goes beyond a purely cognitive view, where experience equals acquisition of knowledge (Miettinen, 2000). Thus, a full understanding of experience and inquiry cannot be isolated from their emotional, ethical, and aesthetic qualities.

4.2.1. Play and imagination

Among educational theorists, John Dewey is well-known for stressing the learning potential of play and game activities within education (Makedon, 1993; Vaage, 2000). Thus, Dewey devotes an entire chapter in *Democracy and Education* to "Play and Work in the Curriculum". In tune with the main argument presented throughout the book, he begins the chapter by noting that it is "desirable"

that education, as such, starts "from and with the experience and capacities of learners" (Dewey, 1916: 202). This can be done through the "the introduction of forms of activity, in play and work, similar to those in which children and youth engage outside of school" (Dewey, 1916: 202). Dewey makes no fundamental distinction between play and work activities, as they "both involve ends consciously entertained and the selection and adaptation of materials and processes designed to affect the desired ends" (Dewey, 1916: 210). Thus, play and work mostly differ in terms of "time-spans", which "influence the directness of means and ends" (Dewey, 1916: 210). In this sense, play and work activities simply represent two different aspects on a *continuum* of meaningful relations between ends and means. This assertion also goes against the commonsensical notion that play is goal-free or is an end in itself.

In summary, Dewey views play as being meaningful, goal-oriented, and interest-based. Moreover, play is free and plastic as it is both directed toward present and future (projected) activities (cf. chapter 2). However, in order to realise the educational value of play it is necessary to understand play as an *imaginative* activity (Dewey, 1916: 245). Play activities are too important to be reduced to a purely developmental phenomenon among children:

> It is still usual to regard this [imaginative] activity as a specially marked-off stage of childish growth, and to overlook the fact that the difference between play and what is regarded as serious employment should be not a difference between the presence and absence of imagination, but a difference in the materials with which imagination is occupied (Dewey, 1916: 245).

In this way, play is closely linked with the imagination, which is "the medium of realization of every kind of thing which lies beyond the scope of direct physical response" (Dewey, 1916: 245). Put differently, Dewey's conception of imagination represents "the capacity to concretely perceive what is before us in light of what could be" (Fesmire, 2003: 65). Thus, the educational value of play activities must be based on the understanding that:

> The imagination is as much a normal and integral part of human activity as is muscular movement. <u>The educative value of manual activities and of laboratory exercises, as well as of play, depends upon the extent in which they aid in bringing about a sensing of the *meaning* of what is going on</u>. In effect, if not in name, they are dramatizations. Their utilitarian value in forming habits of skill to be used for tangible results is important, but not when isolated from the appreciative side. <u>Were it not for the accompanying play of imagination, there would be no road from a direct activity to representative knowledge; for it is</u>

> by imagination that symbols are translated over into a direct meaning and integrated with a narrower activity so as to expand and enrich it (Dewey, 1916: 245-6; my emphasis added).

Play activity as such is no guarantee for avoiding "mechanical methods in teaching" (Dewey, 1916: 245). Thus, the value of educational gaming is entirely dependent upon whether the imaginative aspects of play are able to support students understanding of "what is going on". In this way, *imaginative play allows meaning to be created through "dramatizations" of particular aspects of knowledge.* Consequently, the presumably distinct categories of imagination and reality represent a subtle *continuum* of finely graded experience as human beings do not experience reality directly but always through symbols, language, and social interaction (Waskul & Lust, 2004).

4.2.2. Play as creative action

Dewey's characterisation of play as "imaginative" should be seen in the wider context of his pragmatist philosophy. The root meaning of the Greek word *pragma* is "that which has been done, an act, a deed, a fact".[28] Thus, Dewey's pragmatism is fundamentally a philosophy of *action* which portrays human actors as active participants whose experience and knowledge of the world only make sense in relation to practice (Bernstein, 1971; Brinkmann, 2006: 13, 31). The link between Dewey's conception of play and his understanding of action has been convincingly elaborated by the German sociologist Hans Joas, who has re-formulated Dewey's pragmatism as a "theory of the creativity of action" (Joas, 1996: 133). According to Joas, Dewey not only views play but *all* human action as an expression of "creativity" to the extent that actors are able to "reconstruct" their doings and perception of the world, whenever they encounter unforeseen situations and problems in their everyday activities (Joas, 1996: 126-7). Thus, pragmatists such as Dewey and Mead "maintain that all human action is caught in the tension between unreflected habitual action and acts of creativity" (Joas, 1996: 129). This means that creativity can be *defined* as "the liberation of the capacity for new actions" (Joas, 1996: 133). Dewey unfolds this view of creativity in his book *Creative Intelligence* (1917):

> The pragmatic theory of intelligence means that the function of mind is to project new and more complex ends – to free experience from routine and from caprice. Not the use of thought to accomplish purposes already given either in the mechanism of the body or in that of the existent state of the society,

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[28] Cf. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, www.dev.m-w.com/dictionary/pragmatic.

but the use of intelligence to liberate and liberalize action, is the pragmatic lesson (Dewey, 1917; quoted by Joas, 1996: 133).

From this pragmatist perspective, play represents a *model of action* as the "capacity for invention or creativity" presupposes the "playing through" of alternative courses of action (Joas, 1993: 22-3). Thus, the contingent relationship between ends and means in children's play should not be seen as an exotic exception from the norm of more "mundane" actions; play should rather be seen as a model for understanding the imaginative dimension in human action *as such*. In this way, Dewey's pragmatist theory of action implies a creative or *playful* view upon social agency.

According to Joas, Dewey's work represents a fundamental scepticism of "the means-ends schema" that is so commonly used when interpreting everyday action as "goal-driven" (Joas, 1996). Thus, Joas argues that Dewey's conception of play can be seen as a critique of the tendency to reduce human action to either overly rational (utilitarian) or normative (morally determined) motives (Joas, 1996: 153). Dewey bases his critique of the means-ends thinking on the contrast between action in pursuit of *externally* imposed goals and an ideal of action that becomes infused with meaning through goals that are *intrinsic* to the on-going activities. Thus, Dewey makes an important distinction between the goals and the results of actions, as goals are merely anticipated future states that do not describe what happens in the present. Or as Joas writes: "If we only dream of the future, we are not acting" (Joas, 1996: 154). In order to clarify the difference between goals and results, Dewey introduces the term *end in view* that defines the role of goals in the organisation of *present* action (Dewey, 1916). To use Dewey's own example: When a hunter takes aim at a rabbit with a gun, his overall goal is presumably "the target", but his immediate goal or end in view is actually "hitting the target", which connects the hunters' intentionality with his actual "doing with the thing" (Dewey, 1916: 112). Thus, *ends in view are not vaguely conceived future situations, but concrete plans of action which serve to guide present action.* Similarly, the teachers and students that take part in *The Power Game* continually adjust and re-adjust their ends in view in order to enact and validate the practices and knowledge aspects of the election scenario.

The distinction between goal and end in view may seem rather subtle. But the distinction has far-reaching implications for a theory of action as Dewey does not:

…presuppose that the actor generally has a clear goal, and that it only remains to make the appropriate choice of means. On the contrary, the goals of actions are usually relatively undefined, and only become more specific as a consequence of the decision to use particular means (Joas, 1996: 154).

As quoted earlier, Dewey makes no fundamental distinction between play and work. Both activities may be valuable in a school context if students are allowed to pursue goals that are experienced as *meaningful*. Thus, Dewey repeatedly warns against the use of externally imposed goals as the model for education, teaching, learning and the design of learning environments. Instead, he emphasises the importance of goals "which emerge in the course of the action itself but which can also be revised or abandoned" (Joas, 1996: 155-6). The point here is that neither play nor work should be seen as prototypical activities for education unless they are carried out with respect to teachers' and students' own perception of goals, means, and ends in view.

Joas' re-interpretation of Dewey's pragmatism as a "theory of situated creativity" raises a critique of humans as purely rational agents that navigate instrumentally through means-ends-schemes (Joas, 1996: 133f). This critique is particularly important when trying to understand how games are enacted and validated within the realm of educational institutions that *by definition* are inscribed in the great modernistic narrative of "progress" where nation states, teachers and parents expect students to acquire specific skills and competencies (Popkewitz, 1998; cf. chapter 3). However, as Dewey argues, the actual *doings* of educational gaming cannot be reduced to rational means-ends schemes. Instead, the situated interaction between teachers, students, and learning resources are played out as contingent re-distributions of means, ends and ends in view, which often make classroom contexts seem "messy" from an outsider's perspective (Barab & Squire, 2004).

4.2.3. Dramatic rehearsal

The two preceding sections discussed how Dewey views play as an imaginative activity of educational value, and how his assumptions on creativity and playful actions represent a critique of rational means-end schemes. For now, I will turn to Dewey's concept of *dramatic rehearsal*, which assumes that social actors deliberate by projecting and choosing between various scenarios for future action. Dewey uses the concept dramatic rehearsal several times in his work but presents the most extensive elaboration in *Human Nature and Conduct*:

> Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action… [It] is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like (...) Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable (Dewey, 1922: 132-3).

This excerpt illustrates how Dewey views the process of decision making (deliberation) through the lens of an imaginative *drama* metaphor. Thus, decisions are made through the imaginative projection of outcomes, where the "possible competing lines of action" are resolved through a thought experiment. Moreover, Dewey's compelling use of the drama metaphor also implies that decisions cannot be reduced to utilitarian, rational or mechanical exercises, but that they have emotional, creative and personal qualities as well.

Interestingly, there are relatively few discussions within the vast research literature on Dewey of his concept of dramatic rehearsal. A notable exception is the phenomenologist Alfred Schütz, who praises Dewey's concept as a "fortunate image" for understanding everyday rationality (Schütz, 1943: 140). Other attempts are primarily related to overall discussions on moral or ethical deliberation (Caspary, 1991, 2000, 2006; Fesmire, 1995, 2003; Rönssön, 2003; McVea, 2006). As Fesmire points out, dramatic rehearsal is intended to describe an important *phase* of deliberation that does not characterise the whole process of making moral decisions, which includes "duties and contractual obligations, short and long-term consequences, traits of character to be affected, and rights" (Fesmire, 2003: 70). Instead, dramatic rehearsal should be seen as the *process* of "crystallizing possibilities and transforming them into directive hypotheses" (Fesmire, 2003: 70). Thus, deliberation can in no way guarantee that the response of a "thought experiment" will be successful. But what it can do is make the process of choosing more intelligent than would be the case with "blind" trial-and-error (Biesta, 2006: 8).

The notion of dramatic rehearsal provides a valuable perspective for understanding educational gaming as a simultaneously *real* and *imagined* inquiry into domain-specific scenarios. Dewey defines dramatic rehearsal as the capacity to stage and evaluate "acts", which implies an "irrevocable" difference between acts that are "tried out in imagination" and acts that are "overtly tried out" with real-life consequences (Dewey, 1922: 132-3). This description shares obvious similarities with games as they require participants to inquire into and resolve scenario-specific problems (cf. chapter 2). On the other hand, there is also a striking difference between moral deliberation and educational game activities in terms of the actual *consequences* that follow particular actions. Thus, when it comes to educational games, acts are both imagined and tried out, but *without* all the real-life consequences of the practices, knowledge forms and outcomes that are being simulated in the game world. Simply put, there is a difference in *realism* between the dramatic rehearsals of everyday life and in games, which only "play at" or simulate the stakes and

risks that characterise the "serious" nature of moral deliberation, i.e. a real-life politician trying to win a parliamentary election experiences more personal and emotional risk than students trying to win the election scenario of *The Power Game*. At the same time, the lack of real-life consequences in educational games makes it possible to design a relatively safe learning environment, where teachers can *stage* particular game scenarios to be enacted and validated for *educational purposes*. In this sense, educational games are able to provide a safe but meaningful way of letting teachers and students make mistakes (e.g. by giving a poor political presentation) and dramatically rehearse particular "competing possible lines of action" that are *relevant* to particular educational goals (Dewey, 1922: 132). Seen from this pragmatist perspective, the educational value of games is not so much a question of learning facts or giving the "right" answers, but more a question of exploring the contingent outcomes and domain-specific processes of problem-based scenarios.

4.2.4. Scenario competence

Dewey's pragmatist conceptions of inquiry, play, creativity and dramatic rehearsal describe different aspects of enacting knowledge through the continual construction and reconstruction of experience. In this way, Dewey's notion of inquiry can be used to analyse how social actors – i.e. teachers and students – imagine and realise possible outcomes when they explore the situated problems of educational gaming. Even though Dewey does not use the term scenario, I will argue that his metaphorical image of dramatic rehearsal warrant that the inquiry-based learning and thinking of educational gaming can be described as *scenario-based inquiry.*[29] Moreover, Dewey used the term competence to describe the capacity of social actors to achieve value- and knowledge-based aims (Dewey, 1916; cf. chapter 3). Thus, it is possible to explore educational gaming in relation to students' *scenario competence*, which represents the ability to enact and critically play through imaginative scenarios in relation to real-life problems and domain-specific forms of knowledge.

The concept scenario competence was originally coined by Bernard Eric Jensen, a Danish researcher of history teaching ("history didactics"), who has defined scenario competence as "the ability to project, unfold and evaluate sociocultural scenarios" (Jensen, 1996: 12, my translation). According to Jensen, history students should be able to develop scenario competence

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[29] The learning researcher Roger C. Schank also bases his educational theory of "Goal-Based Scenarios" on the educational philosophy of John Dewey (Schank, 1993, 1995). However, in contrast to Dewey's holistic perspective on learning, experience and inquiry, Schank's notion of scenario is defined rather narrowly in relation to cognitive theories on "scripts" and "skills".

by comparing relations between what was (the past), what is (the present), and what will be (the future). This could be done through reading and discussing historical novels or by teaching with contra-factual scenarios – i.e. "What would Europe have looked like if the Germans had won the Second World War?" Posing such a question can be used to initiate a range of subject-related discussions on the contingent outcomes of possible historical scenarios. Thus, history as a school subject is not only about what *has* already happened ("that is history"), but also about what *is* happening ("history is being made").[30] Jensen further relates scenario competence to students' phenomenological conception of history, which he defines as their "consciousness of history" (*historiebevidsthed*). Students' consciousness of history is not only formed by the content presented in textbooks, but is also based on their everyday knowledge and experiences from the Internet, historical films, museums, old family photos, local history etc.

Jensen's conception of scenarios is limited to the context of history teaching and the interplay between an historical past, present, and future. But assuming that Dewey's theory of inquiry also can be understood as a *theory of scenario-based inquiry*, there is no reason why students' ability to develop scenario competence should be restricted to history as a school subject. Arguably, teachers and students must be able to engage with a wide range of sociocultural scenarios, which means that scenario competence can potentially be developed within the context of *all* subjects – as well as outside school contexts. Thus, the notions of scenario and scenario competence both refer to *imagined* activities (dramatic rehearsal) and the *realised* activities of a particular inquiry. However, it is important to exercise caution when using these terms as countless forms of scenario-based learning resources (i.e. games, simulations, fictional texts etc.) and scenario-based forms of teaching (i.e. project-based work forms, drama pedagogy, storytelling etc.) exist that do not necessarily *result* in scenario-based inquiry. To make the situation even more complicated, many educational practices are often based on a wide array of more or less implicit scenarios, which have become so "naturalised" that neither students nor teachers experience them as scenarios, i.e. when students have to learn how to shop in French as a foreign language by taking on the role of a shopkeeper or a customer (Schütz, 1962: 212). In order to narrow my scope, this thesis focuses on how teachers and students enacted and validated the election scenario of *The Power Game*, which represented a relatively unfamiliar type of learning resource and form of teaching. Thus, the teachers and students in this study *explicitly* experienced the game as a scenario-based form of teaching and learning that differed from the everyday repertoire of classroom interaction.

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[30] This approach to history teaching is somewhat similar to Kurt Squire's studies on how the computer strategy game *Civilization III* can be used in history classrooms to "re-play" historical scenarios (Squire, 2004).

In summary, Jensen's conception of scenario competence can be extended to a more general perspective on teaching and learning, which also includes educational gaming. Drawing upon Dewey's theoretical framework, I re-define scenario competence as *the ability to imagine, enact and critically play through domain-specific scenarios in relation to particular problems and knowledge aspects.* In addition to Dewey, this definition is also inspired by the work of Gee and Barth (cf. chapter 2). Thus, scenario competent inquiry reflects the individual's ability to dramatically rehearse and weigh consequences in relation to particular *semiotic domains* that involve assertions related to different *traditions of knowledge* (Gee, 2003; Barth, 2002). Applied to this study, the upper secondary students that participated in *The Power Game* had to be scenario competent in order to imagine, enact and reflect upon the problems, epistemologies and practices of real-life politicians in a general election *and* the everyday criteria for validating knowledge within the context of a social studies classroom. Similarly, the participating teachers had to be scenario competent in order to be able to facilitate, authorise and evaluate the game sessions – both in relation to the game goals and the educational goals of the election scenario (cf. chapters 7 and 8).

4.3. Educational gaming as interaction

Dewey's pragmatism provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the scenario-based inquiry of educational gaming. However, Dewey's writings only offer limited analytical insight into the assigned roles and social interaction among game participants, which form key aspects of educational game scenarios. Thus, in this section, I introduce an *interactionist* perspective on how social actors – i.e. teachers and students – make meaning when facilitating and performing within the context of an educational game scenario. As the term suggests, interactionism is a microsociological perspective, which assumes that meaning is produced through the interactions of individuals (Atkinson & Housley, 2003: 2; Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2002). Thus, the aim of an interactionist approach is not to identify particular social classes or underlying structures, but to understand and map mutual patterns of relationship among participants in the social world. In order to explore how educational games can be enacted and validated, I concentrate on theoretical perspectives from two central figures of the interactionist tradition, namely George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman, who both used play and games to illustrate how people interact through the *roles* of everyday life.

4.3.1. Taking the roles of others

While Dewey focused on the imaginative and creative aspects of play in relation to the school curriculum, his close friend and pragmatist colleague, Mead, concentrated on the social and intersubjective aspects of play and games (Joas, 1996). In this way, Mead developed a comprehensive theory of the social self, which assumed that the development of the self was deeply related with social interaction through play, games, language and other forms of communication (Mead, 1934: 150-164). Thus, Mead provides a valuable starting point when trying to understand the social interaction of educational gaming.

For Mead, the basic requirement of any form of play is the ability to "take the role of another", as when children get together to "play Indian" (Mead, 1934: 150). The situation is somewhat different in more organised games, as the participants "must be ready to take the attitude of all the others involved in the game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other" (Mead, 1934: 151). The point being that the others should not so much be seen as specific individuals, but as other team members or participants in the game. Furthermore, the attitudes of the other players "organize a sort of unit, and it is that organization which controls the response of the individual" (Mead, 1934: 154). This organisation is exemplified in the game of baseball, where all players must coordinate their acts in response to the assumed acts of the other players. Mead then introduces his famous concept of *the generalised other*, which describes "the unity of self" given to the individual by his social membership in a community, i.e. on a baseball team (Mead, 1934: 154). Thus, when playing baseball, the participants must be able to take the attitude and perspective of the *abstract* other of the social group of their baseball team: "The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (Mead, 1934: 154). Thus, the generalised other is the general notion that a person has of the common expectations that others have about actions and thoughts within a particular society. *This means that any time actors try to imagine what is expected of them in relation to a wider social group or community, they are taking on the perspective of the generalised other.* Similarly, the generalised other can also be described as "a stage beyond the processes of 'taking the role of the other' where the other is another identifiable individual or set of individuals" (Holdsworth & Morgan, 2007: 402).

In addition to baseball, Mead offers another interesting example of how an individual can be related to "the generalised other", which is highly relevant to this study:

> In politics, for example, the individual identifies himself with an entire political party and takes the organized attitudes of that entire party toward the rest of the given social community and toward the

problems which confront the party within the given social situation; and he consequently reacts or responds in terms of the organized attitudes of the party as a whole (Mead, 1934: 156).

In this way, Mead's concept can be used to contextualise the empirical analysis of *The Power Game* sessions as the students were asked to take on the roles as politicians and thereby identify themselves with the "generalised" relationship between real-life politicians and their political parties.

4.3.2. The performing self

According to Mead, games are characterised by the individual's ability to take the roles and attitudes of other participants, and by the ability to relate his or her role in the game to the generalised other. In this way, Mead introduces an interactionist conceptualisation of game scenarios that focuses on the social interaction between the participants. This interactionist approach to games is further elaborated in the writings of Erving Goffman, who based his entire microsociology on the study of social encounters.[31] In order to describe the social interaction of educational games, I present three aspects of Goffman's work. The first aspect regards his theory of social interaction as *performances*, which relates to the students' performances in *The Power Game* sessions (Goffman, 1959). The second aspects concerns Goffman's analysis of *gaming encounter*s, which describes important interaction patterns and rules of leisure games, which are also relevant when trying to understand educational gaming (Goffman, 1961a). Finally, I will briefly introduce Goffman's *frame analysis*, which can be used to describe participants' situational experience of "what is going on" when enacting an educational game scenario (Goffman, 1974; cf. chapter 2).

Goffman's work has a remarkably consistent focus on the same area of study, namely social encounters and the way social actors continually challenge and maintain "the social order" through their everyday, face-to-face interaction (Drew & Wootton, 1988; Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2002). Typical examples of social encounters include people waiting for a bus, attending a lecture or playing a game. However, even though Goffman sticks to the same object of study, he takes quite different approaches when analysing various aspects of social interaction. He often uses *analytical metaphors* to foreground (and background) certain aspects of everyday life. The three most common metaphors applied in Goffman's writings are: Social life as a *drama*, social life as a *game*,

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[31] Goffman's theory of the socially constituted self is in many ways inspired by Mead. However, Goffman criticises Mead's view of role-taking as being too passive. For Goffman, the social self should rather be explained by the individual's *active* attempt to project his or her appearance onto others (cf. Kristiansen & Jacobsen, 2002: 43-44).

and social life as a *ritual* (Branaman, 1997). In this section, I primarily focus on how he viewed social life as a drama, and how this approach is relevant when analysing the performative aspects of educational gaming.

Goffman gives his most elaborate presentation of social life as a drama in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), where he develops a *dramaturgical perspective* on the way that people "express themselves in interaction with similarly expressive others" (Brissett & Edgley, 2005: 3). Goffman distinguishes between two different forms of expressiveness, as the individual both intends to "give" certain expressions to others, but at the same time also "gives off" a wide range of other, more or less, unintended expressions (Goffman, 1959: 2). In this way, Goffman uses the drama metaphor to question the seemingly natural relationship between individual's intended expressions, and how these expressions are experienced by others. However, Goffman does not claim that social life as such *is* a drama, even though it may come close: "Scripts even in the hands of unpractised players can come to life because life itself is a dramatically enacted thing. All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify" (Goffman, 1959: 78). Thus, Goffman's dramaturgical framework can be read as a virtual catalogue of analytical concepts that describe different nuances in how people *stage* themselves through everyday social interaction. Here, I draw attention to central concepts such as "performance", "front", "team", "backstage", "front region", "impression management", "face work" and "role", which are all relevant when trying to understand how teachers and students enact and validate educational games through different forms of social interaction.

For Goffman, a *performance* is "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman, 1959: 26). A performance always involves some form of "belief in the part one is playing" and a *front* that is the "expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman, 1959: 28). The front relates to both the scenery of a given setting and to personal aspects such as clothing, sex, age, size, looks etc. Moreover, a successful performance also depends upon *dramatic realization*, which refers to how an individual "typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory acts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure" (Goffman, 1959: 40).[32] For Goffman, performance is not simply a matter of the individual's self-presentation. Performance requires collaboration between participants on a *team*. Goffman defines a team as "any set of individuals

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[32] Interestingly, there is some similarity here to Dewey's "dramatic rehearsal", as both concepts describe how intentional acts (i.e. self-presentation and deliberation) depend upon imaginative action (cf. section 4.2.3).

who cooperate in staging a single routine" (Goffman, 1959: 85). Most teams have "directors" who have to stage the course of events. Thus, he describes teachers as directors who have a recurring interest in the continuous legitimisation of the social situation in a classroom context. This means that teachers must be able to manage students' "unsuitable performances" and distribute roles for various activities (Goffman, 1959: 101-06).

Goffman further introduces *region* as a central concept, which describes "any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception" (Goffman, 1959: 109). There are two basic forms of regions – *front region* and *backstage* (or back region). The front region of a performer is "an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards" (Goffman, 1959: 110). Returning to the classroom example, a lecturing teacher or a student making a presentation both represent everyday cases of front region performances as they present themselves to the "audience" of the classroom. According to Goffman, front region performances are often tension-filled as they rely on the individual's capacity for *impression management* and always involve risk of miscommunication or embarrassment in relation to his or her presented self. Thus, teachers and students may feel relieved when they end their performances and leave the front region. This relief or more relaxed form of behaviour is expressed in a different location, namely "backstage", which Goffman defines as "a place, relative to the given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman, 1959: 114). Thus, at the two upper secondary schools in this study, the teachers' used their common room as backstage, i.e. when frankly discussing their classes and teaching experiences with colleagues. Similarly, students often used hallways or the cafeteria as back regions for evaluating or imitating their teachers or peers' performances.

In other words, front region and backstage describe different modes of *formality*, which is reflected in gestures, eye contact, language, and many other aspects of face-to-face communication. The discrepancy between formality and informality across different settings means that the passage between front region and backstage also involves the potential risk of losing face – i.e. as "when a performer leaves the back region and enters the place where the audience is to be found, or when he returns therefrom", which involves a "putting on and taking off of character" (Goffman, 1959: 123). This transformation from front region to backstage behaviour was highly significant for the students who played politicians in *The Power Game* (cf. chapter 8). Initially, the politicians would sit together with other party members in their respective political groups and research their three key political issues collaboratively. In this phase, the activities of the politicians,

journalists and spin doctors would often overlap. However, once the game advanced to the presentation phase, the politicians had to take their place on the panel and present their key issues in *front* of the classroom audience. This change of focus from backstage to front region clearly affected the students' experience of the election scenario as they had to perform, observe and respond through their assigned roles as professional politicians and voters.

Goffman's term *impression management* aptly describes the students-as-politicians' attempt to control their self-expression. Impression management represents a goal-oriented – conscious or unconscious – attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about their personal appearance by regulating and controlling information in social interaction (Goffman, 1959: 208-212). In an essay entitled "Face Work", Goffman uses a similar term to describe the reciprocal aspect of giving an impression and giving off expression (Goffman, 1967a). Face work concerns the individual's attempt to "save face" or avoid "losing one's face", and is defined as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face" (Goffman, 1967a: 12). Any person or subculture has their "own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices" (Goffman, 1967a: 23). Consequently, *The Power Game* sessions can be analysed in relation to the students' face-saving practices, which relate to the students' *everyday roles* and their *assigned roles* as professional politicians.

As my last example indicates, the concept of *role* is also a key aspect in Goffman's dramaturgical sociology. Unlike Mead, who assumes that the self *develops* by taking on the roles of others, Goffman's notion of roles is far more focused upon the *presentation* of the self. His role theory represents a middle-ground between Mead's voluntarism and a more functionalist sociology (Biddle & Thomas, 1966; cf. Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2002: 106). Goffman further elaborates his role theory in the essay "Role Distance", where he provides valuable reflection on the flexible and ambiguous status of interactional roles:

> Roles may not only be *played* but also *played at*, as when children, stage actors, and other kinds of cutups mimic a role for the avowed purpose of make-believe; here, surely, doing is not being. But this is easy to deal with. A movie star who plays at being a doctor is not in the role of doctor but in the role of actor; and this latter role, we are told, he is likely to take quite seriously. The work of his role is to portray a doctor, but the work is only incidental; his actual role is no more make-believe than that of a real doctor – merely better paid… These desperate performers are caught exactly between illusion and reality, and must lead one audience to accept the role portrait as real, even while assuring another audience that the actor in no way is convincing himself (Goffman, 1961b: 99).

The point here is that playing a role never implies taking on a fixed identity. Thus, the everyday roles of "teachers" and "students" should not be seen as passive categories as they involve active and continuous reflection on the norms and expectations created within the institutional context. Moreover, any role involves the possibility of some form of *role distance*, which Goffman defines as "actions which effectively convey some *disdainful detachment* of the [real life] performer from a role he is performing" (Goffman, 1961b: 110). The possible diversification of student roles is well-documented by Selma Therese Lyng in her study of junior high school students (Lyng, 2004). These social actors are not only "students" in an educational setting who focus on learning content, but also young people who participate in social arenas to find matching roles in the repertoire of available roles and to learn the unwritten rules of social conduct. Similarly, the students in *The Power Game* sessions embrace and distance themselves from their assigned roles as politicians in a dynamic process that reflects their self-image and their personal beliefs (cf. chapter 8).

4.3.3. Games as encounters

Even though Goffman is mostly known for his use of dramaturgical metaphors, he also used *games* as a metaphor for social life. Goffman explored the game metaphor in *Strategic Interaction* (1969) and in the two essays "Where the Action Is" (1967b) and "Fun in Games" (1961a). Here, I focus mainly on "Fun in Games", which is somewhat overlooked within the sociology of play and games (Henricks, 2006). The stated purpose of Goffman's essay is to undertake a "serious" investigation of "fun" by using games as a case in point to explore this aspect of social encounters. In doing so, Goffman creates a valuable set of theoretical concepts that can be used to understand games – including educational games – as social encounters.

Goffman defines an *encounter* as a social occurrence where people orient to one another in face-to-face interaction. This is accomplished through a "single visual and cognitive focus", a "mutual and preferential openness to communication", a "heightened mutual relevance of acts", and an "eye-to-eye ecological huddle" (Goffman, 1961a: 18). For Goffman, an encounter is the ultimate social reality where "the real work of the world is done" (Henricks, 2006: 150). Thus, games represent a particular form of focused encounters that create their own worlds:

> A matrix of possible events and a cast of roles through whose enactment the events occur constitute together a field for fateful dramatic action, a plane of being, an engine of meaning, a world in itself, different from all other worlds except the ones generated when the same game is played at other times… Games, then, are world-building activities (Goffman, 1961a: 25).

Furthermore, game encounters are characterised by three specialised rules that determine the relationship between the game world and the world beyond the game event. The first rule is termed *rules of irrelevance* and describes how successful games require certain issues or themes to be taken out of consideration, for example, the cost of a chess piece or of the board itself is of absolutely no importance to the course of play. Here, Goffman cites Bateson to describe how games place an interpretive "frame" around the events that determine what does and does not make sense within the game (Bateson, 1955: 44). According to this logic, games are not only dependent on the exclusion, but also the inclusion of specific elements. Thus, the second rule designates how games employ *realised resources*; that is, how certain elements are defined as being "in play" and help establish the micro-cosmos of the game world. For instance, if a pawn was from missing from a chess set, a bottle cap could easily be a fine replacement.[33] Finally, Goffman identifies a third set of norms that he terms *transformation rules*. Although participants use games to create worlds of their own, games still have "boundaries" that are semi-permeable. Certain issues inevitably pass through from the exterior world into the game world in the form of, for example a ringing phone that interrupts the game or personal comments between players that refer to their social identity outside of the game. Thus, transformation rules may both "inhibit" or "facilitate" the way external issues are "given expression inside the encounter" (Goffman, 1961a: 31).

For Goffman, game encounters are principally enacted and maintained through *mutual rules of relevance and irrelevance*. As tempting as it may be to view games as ontological worlds of their own, the possibility always exists that exterior events or issues may sneak in and change the game. To emphasise this point, Goffman makes a useful distinction between *playing* and *gaming*, which can be used to open the "black box" or break the "magic circle" of games (cf. chapter 2). While playing a game only describes "the process of move-taking" in a game-strategic sense, gaming describes "activity that is not strictly relevant to the outcome of the play and cannot be defined in terms of the game" (Goffman, 1961a: 33). Correspondingly, Goffman also distinguishes between *players* and *participants*. In doing so, he criticises the rational approach taken in game theory, which only focuses on the moves taken by players in narrowly defined contests and settings (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944).[34] As Goffman argues: "while it is as players that we can win, it is only as participants that we can get fun out of this winning" (Goffman, 1961a: 34).

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[33] The notion of "realisable resources" is analogous to Barth's claim that any tradition of knowledge – including games – involves particular modes and resources for communication (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2).

[34] Goffman's critique of game theory mirrors Dewey and Joas' critique of rationalist and normative models of social action, which assume that social actors interact by following pre-determined means-ends schemes (cf. section 4.2.2).

Goffman further analyses how game encounters are able to invoke a sense of "fun" or "euphoria" in the participants through "spontaneous engrossment" in a particular game activity. This requires a balance between "anxiety" and "boredom" that depends on the participants' social skills and the challenges of the game. But gaming also involves a "tension" between a participant's perception of the game world and the one in which he or she "is obliged to dwell" (Goffman, 1961a: 40). He claims that this tension is crucial for managing the *integrity* of the boundary between the game world and the exterior world. To illustrate this, Goffman provides an extensive array of examples on how various exterior events may pass through the boundary of a game encounter and influence the meaning-making processes of the game activities, i.e. how "leaky words" may contain ambiguous sexual connotations that distort the game reality or how laughter can be used to create relief in game encounters. Furthermore, Goffman notes that the "fun" in games cannot be reduced merely to a matter of "winning". However uncertain an outcome may be, this factor is not enough to ensure engagement in a game. Thus, flipping a coin is not interesting as an activity in itself, but only makes sense in relation to a wider social context, which requires an understanding of what *really* is at stake when the coin is flipped.

The transformative links between the game world and the exterior world imply that the everyday contrast between the recreational sphere and the workaday sphere is a false dichotomy; a claim which echoes Dewey's discussion of the continuum between work and play activities (cf. section 4.2.1). Thus, the "problem of too-serious or not-serious-enough arises in gaming encounters not because a game is involved but because an encounter is involved" (Goffman, 1961a: 63). Or, to paraphrase Goffman, in order to understand educational gaming, it is not enough to claim that it is educative. Rather, it is necessary to *seriously* consider why and in what way gaming is educative.

4.3.4. Framing the game

Having presented Goffman's theories of everyday performances and game encounters, I now turn to his theory of *Frame Analysis* (1974; cf. chapter 2). Based on an essay about play theory by Gregory Bateson, Goffman argues that any situation is "framed" in particular ways, which influence the way in which social actors experience the situation (Bateson, 1955). Thus, Goffman assumes that:

> …definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principals of organization which govern events […] and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify (Goffman 1974: 10f).

Goffman's definition of frames involves cognitive structures and interpretive aspects of a given social situation, which guide the perception and representation of reality. Moreover, frames are not consciously manufactured but are unconsciously adopted in the course of communicative processes. Simply put, frames are defined in terms of which parts of reality are noticed and which parts are not. Thus, when enacting *The Power Game*, teachers and students defined the activity as an imaginary election scenario. At the same time, *The Power Game* was also defined as a relevant way of "doing" social studies. In this way, the playful knowledge aspects of educational gaming represent a potential "frame clash" between game frames and educational frames (Green & Dixon, 1994; cf. chapter 2).

The strength and the weakness of Goffman's frame analysis is that is relatively open to interpretation. Thus, Goffman does not define the actual *meaning* of frames, but only describes how they work as organising principles (Scheff, 2005). Numerous attempts have been made to adopt Goffman's frame analysis for a broad variety purposes, i.e. within sociology, media studies, sociolinguistics and game studies (cf. Gitlin, 1980; Fine, 1983; Tannen, 1993; Ensink, 2003; Linderoth, 2004; Shaffer, 2006). As mentioned in chapter 2, games involve dynamic shifts between various interpretive frames and their knowledge aspects. As an example, Gary Alan Fine describes how fantasy role-playing games operate on the basis of "three basic frames": *person*, *player*, and *persona* (Fine, 1983). As Fine writes, each of these frames:

> …has a world of knowledge associated with it – the world of commonsense knowledge grounded in one's primary framework, the world of game rules grounded in the game structure, and the knowledge of the fantasy world (itself a hypothetical primary framework) (Fine, 1983: 194).

Similarly, when students take on roles within the context of *The Power Game*, they also initiate and respond to a range of different play framings, which are related to the students' lifeworld (person), the roles of the game scenario (player), and the actual performances of the students (persona) (cf. chapter 8).

Nevertheless, Fine's approach is only partially relevant for this study as his findings are based on a study of leisure games. Thus, Fine's three "basic frames" do not include the *educational* framing of *The Power Game*, which add additional layers of complexity through the existing knowledge traditions and practices of a given school context (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). Instead of using Fine's "basic frames" as a model for analysing the layered meanings of educational

gaming, I prefer the open-ended bracket notation developed by Titus Ensink that can be used to illustrate the dynamic relationship between different interpretive frames (Ensink, 2003). Applying Ensink's notation system, the relationship between the different interpretive frames of *The Power Game* can be illustrated as follows:

[real-life politics [student role [election scenario [assigned role [social action]]]]]

As this notation indicates, the *social actions* of the game participants in *The Power Game* sessions were related to the norms and expectations of their assigned roles within each political group, which were part of the real and imagined world of the election scenario. However, the participants' social actions were also related to the everyday world of being a social studies student. Finally, the participants' social actions were also related the world of real-life politics that extended beyond the school context. The bracket notation suggests a hierarchy between the different frames. However, it is important to emphasise that the relationship between the frames is highly *dynamic* as play frames may change rapidly, i.e. during a single performance or utterance within the context of a game session (Fine, 1983; Ensink, 2003). Thus, the interpretive frames of educational games imply a complex interplay between multiple roles, goals and perspectives.

As mentioned, Goffman only writes about recreational players who become engrossed in leisure games according to their own individual desires and interests. Educational games are different in the sense that they are non-volitional: The students *have to* participate. Educational gaming *is* a form of school as the goals and choice of activity are largely defined by the teacher and the educational context. Thus, the "membrane" surrounding an educational game encounter is far more permeable by exterior events than a recreational game encounter is (Goffman, 1961a). More specifically, the rules of relevance and irrelevance are also determined by the *educational context* of the game, for example, by the role and aims of the teacher or the relevance of the game epistemology to the curriculum. Consequently, it is not unusual that the play frames of educational games to occasionally break down or become re-framed, for instance, in order to promote critical reflection among the game participants. In this way, educational games must be flexible concerning disturbances from their surroundings as they are often less "game-like" than the recreational (board) games described by Goffman. In spite of these differences, Goffman's analysis of dramaturgical performances, gaming encounters and frames are still valuable when analysing the roles, rules and "world-building activities" of educational gaming.

4.3.5. Social competence

As mentioned, Dewey's theoretical framework can be used to understand educational gaming as scenario-based inquiry and to formulate key aspects of students' scenario competence. At the same time, Dewey's theory only offers limited "expressive potential" for mapping the roles and social interaction of educational games (Strike, 1974). Thus, based upon the theoretical frameworks of Mead and Goffman, it is possible to understand, describe and analyse how students enact *social competence* when participating in educational game scenarios.

The term social competence is defined in a myriad of different ways, for example, in relation to the need for social competence in the workplace, the role of social competence in educational contexts, or the lack of social competence among children and at-risk young people (Persson, 2003). Many attempts to define social competence are based on the assumption that individuals need to become integrated with particular groups or group identities. However, my definition of social competence primarily focuses on the *relational aspects* of the social interaction among educational game participants. Based upon Mead's interactionist perspective, one of the central characteristics of games is the way that players are able to take on particular roles and experience the perspective of "the generalised other" in relation to a socially constituted self. Similarly, but with a more external view of the self, a Goffmanian perspective suggests that game encounters enable a "focused" form of interaction where participants perform in relation to mutually negotiated rules, norms and frames. Based upon these perspectives, I define social competence as *the ability to take on the perspectives of others and perform through the norms and expectations of situated roles in relation to particular knowledge domains*. More specifically, my analysis of *The Power Game* sessions illustrates how the students enacted and validated their roles when performing in front of their classmates, and how they experienced the perspectives of others by relating to different ideological positions (cf. chapter 8). Similarly, the analysis in the following describes how the teachers had to take on the somewhat unfamiliar role as facilitators in order to stage and evaluate the game scenario (cf. chapter 7).

4.4. The discourse of educational gaming

The two preceding sections have presented theoretical perspectives for understanding game-based inquiry and interaction. However, a final dimension is still missing from the analytical framework concerning the *discursive* aspects of educational gaming, which is particularly relevant when trying

to understand the meaning-making processes of debate games. Dewey, Mead, and Goffman all stressed the importance of communication and language in social interaction (Dewey, 1916, 1925; Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1981). But none of these thinkers developed a coherent framework that can be used to describe and analyse the interplay of political discourse in relation to *The Power Game*, which is the empirical focus of this study. This brings me to back to the philosophy and language theory introduced in chapter 3 of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work has been used as a valuable inspiration for analysing various aspects of educational discourse (cf. Wertsch, 1991; Dysthe, 1996, 2006; Ongstad, 1997, 2007a, 2007b; Smidt, 2002; Lillis, 2003; Skidmore, 2006; Matusov, 2007; Wegerif, 2007; Alexander, 2008).

As mentioned, Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy can be used to formulate a *dialogical game pedagogy* that addresses important aspects of teaching with games, i.e. the centripetal/centrifugal forces of teaching and gaming, the reconfiguration of teacher authority, the multiple voices of a dialogical game space, and how games can be used to promote understanding by taking an outsider's perspective (cf. chapter 3). Moreover, Bakhtin's work also introduces a theory of language and discourse which is encapsulated in his notions of "utterance", "speech genre", and "position" (Bakhtin, 1986). Based on these terms, the educational researcher Sigmund Ongstad has attempted to formulate a Bakhtin-inspired *positioning theory* in order to analyse the speech genres, positionings, and ideologies of classroom interaction (Ongstad, 1997, 2007a, 2007b). Thus, as I will discuss below, positioning theory can be used to understand the discursive aspects of educational gaming in combination with Mead and Goffman's interactionist perspectives (Smidt, 2002).

4.4.1. Speech genres and positions

In his now famous essay on "The Problems of Speech Genres", Bakhtin presents the outline of his "translinguistic" theory of language (Bakhtin, 1986). The essay, which was written around 1952-3, is driven by a polemical attack on two dominating schools among Russian linguists, namely Saussurean structuralism and Vosslerian stylistics. As a contrast to these formalist approaches, Bakhtin wishes to reject the primacy of the sentence and the word as units for the analysis of language use.[35] Instead, the idea was to pay careful attention to how language is realised as "utterances" and how utterances are related to "speech genres":

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[35] Due to his focus on everyday language-in-use, Bakhtin has sometimes been termed a "pragmatist" (Holquist, 2002) and his ideas have been compared to Dewey's pragmatist philosophy (McCarthy & Wright, 2004).

> Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral or written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects – thematic content, style, and compositional structure – are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres* (Bakhtin, 1986: 60).

As the quote demonstrates, Bakhtin defines *speech genres* as the conventional uses of language by social groups, which range from everyday dialogue, oral narratives, writing, military commands, business documents and political commentary to the major genres of the novel. Moreover, speech genres are constituted by *utterances*, which should be seen as a "whole" or a "unit" of speech. Thus, an utterance is "clearly deliminated by the change of speaking subjects, which ends by relinquishing the floor to the other or to make room for the other's active responsive understanding" (Bakhtin, 1986: 71).

Bakhtin's concept of genre is *dynamic* as it presupposes an active speaker who, with an individual and subjective "speech plan", is able to choose among particular speech genres. At the same time, the speaker's utterance is also "shaped and developed" within the generic forms of the particular speech genre. In this way, the relationship between genre and utterance reflects a dynamic relationship between *agency* and *structure*, between *micro* and *macro*. Furthermore, this dynamic is based on Bakhtin's notion of addressivity and the inherently *dialogical* dimension of language that allows genres to be forged in a ceaseless exchange between speakers and listeners across time and space (cf. chapter 3). However, Ongstad's close reading of Bakhtin's dense essay reveals another important concept, which has a more clearly deliminated meaning than "dialogic" (Ongstad, 1997). For Ongstad, the key to understanding Bakhtin's theory of language, discourse and communication is the term *position*. According to Bakhtin, all people express and respond to various positions through their utterances:

> Each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker, to which one may respond or may assume, with respect to it, a responsive position (Bakhtin, 1986: 72).

Bakhtin further defines a position as "the relation of the utterance to the speaker himself (the author of the utterance) and to the other participants in speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1986: 84). A position is a *metaphor* for describing "the place" from which the speaker utters and interprets his or her own utterances, as well as being responsive to the utterances of others. Furthermore, the utterance is characterised by three features: *referentiality*, *expressivity*, and *addressivity* (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 1997). In any utterance, the utterer positions himself or herself in three ways: in relation to the topic (referentiality), in relation to the given ways of speaking about the topic (expressivity), and in relation to expected listeners or readers (addressivity).

Due to the paradoxical nature of language, which continually fixes and changes meaning, it is both possible and impossible to speak from an "objective" position (Ongstad, 1997: 160f). To illustrate this essential dynamic of communication, Ongstad uses the verb "positioning", which can also be seen as a noun: "positionings". Position and positioning are purely *relational* concepts, which makes them empty or devoid of meaning.[36] Thus, they only become meaningful when applied to the actual aspects of concrete utterances. By using positioning as a theoretical and analytical concept, Ongstad is able to analyse teachers and students' "self-positionings" through written and verbal discourse in different educational contexts. Moreover, Ongstad argues that Bakhtin's theory of speech genres should be understood as a *triadic* model of communication as teachers and students' mutual positioning always involve referentiality, expressivity, and addressivity. In this respect, Bakhtin's theory shares triadic similarities with the communication theories of Bühler, Habermas, and Halliday (Ongstad, 1997, 2007a, 2007b). At the same time, Ongstad fully acknowledges that "the concept of positioning can make sense without having to relate explicitly to a triad" (Ongstad, 2002: 350).

4.4.2. Roles and positions

As Ongstad suggests, there are numerous ways of applying *positioning theory* to the analysis of classroom discourse.[37] My main inspiration for using positioning theory to study the discourse of educational gaming is based on an article by Ongstad's colleague Jon Smidt, who explicitly connects the dialogical writings of Bakhtin with the interactionist tradition of Mead and Goffman:

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[36] In this respect, they are similar to Goffman's notion of frames, which is also a relational concept (cf. section 4.3.4).

[37] As Ongstad notes, Rom Harré and his colleagues have developed another version of positioning theory, which is based on the problems and issues of social psychology (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; cf. Ongstad, 1997). Thus, it is important to distinguish between Ongstad and Harre's approaches, as Ongstad's version of positioning theory is far more oriented towards linguistic and semiotic aspects of communication.

> Whereas the tradition from Mead has characterized the *roles* we assume when presenting ourselves in everyday life (see Goffman 1959/1990), the tradition from Bakhtin (1986) has focused on the way people *position* themselves dialogically in their utterances (Smidt, 2002: 422).

As Smidt notes, Ongstad criticises the sociological conception of *roles* for being "too static" (Ongstad, 1997: 166-7). A similar critique has been raised by social psychologists such as Rom Harré and Michael Billig, who also believe that role theory and the notion of roles represents a somewhat deterministic view of social actors (Billig, 1996; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). As Billig notes, the role of metaphor in Goffman's dramaturgical sociology implies that everything happens on a stage, which removes focus from the discursive practices that precede and follow a particular "performance" (Goffman, 1959; Billig, 1996). In order to overcome such analytical problems, Ongstad proposes that the notion of roles should be replaced with a dynamic genre concept and a flexible conception of positioning. In this way, the commonsensical notion of roles such a "mother", "friend", or "researcher" can be seen as fixed positionings or stereotypes that can overcome changes across situations and genres. In spite of such criticism, Smidt finds that *both* role and position are useful terms in his research on student writing:

> I use the term *discourse roles* (or *textual roles*) to refer to the discoursal presentation of selves offered by culturally patterned ways of writing as student writers try their hands at being political commentators, entertainers, philosophers, writers of fiction, or journalists. I use *positionings* in reference to the students' unique and always changing stances *within* these roles and genres and in relation to topic, form, expected readers, and the norms of school writing. Thus, the overlapping concepts of positionings and discourse roles emphasize the connection between the unique utterance and the cultural expectations of speech genres (Smidt, 2002: 424).

Similarly, Smidt's use of "discourse roles" and "positionings" can also be used to understand the roles and positionings of educational gaming, i.e. how students perform and communicate through the roles and speech genres of professional politicians within the context of *The Power Game*. Unfortunately, Smidt's definition of discourse roles as "discoursal presentation of selves" that follow "cultural patterns" is somewhat vague as it does not specify what it means to represent a role. Furthermore, Smidt mostly refers to roles that relate to students' writing processes, which downplays the importance of spoken discourse and social interaction among teachers and students in a classroom context.

As Ongstad, Harré and Billig suggest, the concept of *role* is often avoided as a theoretical and analytical concept even though the term is widely used in everyday educational discourse, for example, when speaking of teacher-student roles (Dale, 1998). One explanation for this omission is that the notion of a role is frequently associated with the functionalist role theories of social psychology which have been more or less abandoned due to their static assumptions about family roles, gender roles and roles in the workplace (cf. Biddle & Thomas, 1966). However, as the sociologist Hans Joas argues, it is possible to re-define role theory in more "critical" terms by revisiting Mead's concept of role-taking, which is based upon a *relational* understanding of how social interaction occurs in particular contexts (Joas, 1993; Mead, 1934). *This means that roles are continually defined and re-defined in relation to the situated enactment of norms and expectations.* Thus, Joas defines a role as "the normative expectation of situationally specific meaningful behavior" (Joas, 1993: 226). Furthermore, Joas' definition implies that expectations toward roles are *reflexive* as:

> …the individual acquires the ability to see a situation not only in his or her own immediate perspective, and not only, through role-taking, in alter's perspective but to adopt a third perspective in which the context of both actors is reconstructed as an objective one. This is what Mead had in mind with his idea of 'the generalized other' (Joas, 1993: 226-7).

From this contextualised perspective, roles are merely "models of conduct" that cannot "cause" behaviour. Moreover, roles do not exist as pre-given entities but *emerge* through participants' continual reflection on mutual expectations of norms and values at the very level of situated social interaction. Thus, the degree of voluntarism or determinism, which is so often attributed to the concept of "taking a role", is essentially not a theoretical but an *empirical* question – i.e. the difference between students' everyday roles and their assigned roles within the context of *The Power Game.*[38]

In summary, Joas' Mead-inspired definition represents a dynamic alternative to the static "role theories" rightly criticised by Ongstad, Harré and Billig. In this way, there is no reason to restrict a theoretical and analytical focus on social agency to the purely discursive (semiotic) epistemology of Ongstad's positioning theory (Ongstad, 1997). Consequently, this thesis assumes that the meaning-making processes and practices of educational gaming should be understood as an

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[38] In discussions on Mead and Goffman's view on agency, Mead is often presented as a "voluntarist" and Goffman as a mediator between Mead's voluntarism and a Durkheim-inspired structuralism (Kristiansen & Jacobsen, 2002).

interplay between different aspects of social interaction (roles) and discourse (positions). In this respect, I agree with Smidt that roles and positioning are valuable concepts that can mutually support each other (Smidt, 2002). Thus, both *role* and *position* are analytical metaphors, which merely address different aspects of agency, meaning-making and validation criteria in relation to the knowledge forms of educational gaming (Barth, 2002; cf. chapters 2 and 3). Below, Table 4.1 summarises the different metaphorical aspects of roles and positions:

Metaphorical aspects	Role	Position
Agency	Social interaction	Utterance
Meaning-making	Socially constituted self	Referentiality, expressivity and addressivity
Validation criteria	Norms and expectations	Genre-specific

Table 4.1: Conceptual comparison of role and position.

As this table suggests, it is possible to analyse the social interaction and discourse of educational games by foregrounding (and backgrounding) different aspects of roles and positionings. Thus, roles and positionings are both *analytical* and *relational* concepts that bridge the divide between micro and macro perspectives. To illustrate: The teachers and students in this study adopted roles (i.e. as facilitators and performers) in order to present themselves in ways that fulfilled the norms and expectations of *The Power Game* within a classroom setting. Similarly, the same teachers and students also positioned themselves through genre-specific forms of discourse, which referred to the content of the election scenario (referentiality), particular emotional and stylistic ways of speaking (expressivity) and transformed particular speaker-hearer relationships (addressivity). In this way, the overlapping notions of roles and positions makes it possible to conceptualise and analyse complimentary aspects of discourse and social interaction, which are crucial for understanding how educational games are enacted and validated within particular educational contexts.

To further illustrate the close relationship between roles and positions, I conclude with one of Bakhtin's own examples. As mentioned in chapter 3, Bakhtin assumes that *new meanings emerge* in the tension between authoritative discourse (monologism) and internally persuasive discourse (dialogism). Thus, there is a close relationship between the authoritative "image" and creative discourse of the person speaking:

> Certain kinds of internally persuasive discourse can be fundamentally and organically fused with the image of a speaking person: ethical (discourse fused the image of, let us say, a preacher), philosophical discourse (discourse fused the image of a wise man), sociopolitical (discourse fused with an image of a Leader). While creatively stylizing upon and experimenting with another's discourse, we attempt to

guess, to imagine, how a person with authority might conduct himself in the given circumstances, the light he would cast on them with his discourse. In such experimental guesswork, the image of the speaking person and his discourse become the object of creative, artistic imagination (Bakhtin, 1981: 347).

There are at least two interesting points to make from this quote. First of all, the "image" of an authority who speaks (i.e. politician, priest or philosopher) has a striking resemblance to Mead's notion of the generalised other (Mead, 1934; cf. section 4.3.1). In contrast to Mead, who is mainly concerned with the social dynamics of role-taking, Bakhtin emphasises how individuals orient themselves toward the *discourse* of representative authorities. Bakhtin also includes a more ideological aspect to the image of the generalised other. Second, the quote also implies that authors of novels and the students participating in *The Power Game* both use *creative imagination* in order to "stylize" and "experiment" with the "sociopolitical" discourse of authorities, for example, in the ways that the students in this study adopted the speaking image of professional politicians (cf. chapter 8). In this way, Bakhtin demonstrates that the image (role) and discourse (positions) of speaking persons are closely connected.

4.4.3. Communicative competence

Whereas sections 4.2 and 4.3 focused on scenario-based inquiry and social interaction, this section primarily describes the discursive dimensions of educational gaming. By drawing upon Bakhtin's theory of speech genres, utterances and positions, it becomes possible to analyse and understand how *communicative competence* can be enacted and validated within the dialogical space of a game scenario.

Similar to social competence, numerous definitions exist of the term communicative competence which range from linguistic frameworks (Chomsky, 1965; Canale & Swain, 1980), ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1966/1979) and sociological approaches to communication theory (Habermas, 1981; Bundsgaard, 2005). In contrast to psychological approaches, Wilson and Sabee regard Bakhtin as an important theoretical influence for understanding the social and relational aspects of communicative competence (Wilson & Sabee, 2003: 29f). Likewise, Baxter and Montgomery base their descriptions of "interactional competence" on Bakhtin's view of human communication as filled with dynamic contradictions and a dialogical multivoicedness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These two latter aspects are particularly important in relation to the dialogical

space of educational gaming, which is characterised by heterogeneous tensions between the emerging voices of a given game scenario.

Based on Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy, I define communicative competence as *the ability to understand and respond through genre-specific utterances within the context of a dialogical space*. From this perspective, communicative competence is more than just a matter of acquiring "skills" such as being able to master a particular speech genre, i.e. the social language of professional politicians. Instead, the game participants in *The Power Game* had to be able to understand and respond through the transformed speaker-hearer relationships of the classroom context, which tried to imitate and re-create the dialogical space of a parliamentary debate. This process involved important tensions between the centrifugal/centripetal logics of gaming and schooling. Thus, the teachers that facilitated the game scenario had to be able to "authorise" the students' game discourse in relation to the goals of the game (i.e. winning the election) and the learning goals of the social studies curriculum. Similarly, the participating students had to be able to represent, present and debate assigned ideological positions to their classmates and their teacher in a convincing manner.

4.5. Understanding the educational use of games

In this chapter, I have presented a theoretical and analytical framework for understanding educational game encounters. The framework is based on the assumption that teachers and students make meaning from educational games through a dynamic interplay between *inquiry*, *interaction* and *discourse*. However, the framework does not try to create a synthesis of these three theoretical perspectives. Rather, the aim has been to present three *complimentary* perspectives, which can be used to foreground (and background) various knowledge aspects of educational gaming. Moreover, I assume that educational game scenarios enable and require participants to enact *scenario competence*, *social competence* and *communicative competence*. Thus, the subsequent analytical chapters explore how the upper secondary social studies teachers and students in this study enacted and validated their game practices by facilitating and performing within the context of *The Power Game*. However, before moving on to describing my methodological approaches and empirical findings, I will summarise some overall aspects of the theoretical framework.

First of all, the framework presented here implies a *contextualised* approach to educational gaming. Even though Dewey, Mead, Goffman, and Bakhtin write from different theoretical perspectives, they share a common focus on the ways in which social actors make

meaning by *actively* engaging with the world. This can be illustrated by their use of performative metaphors: Inquiry, dramatic rehearsal, role-taking, frame, front, backstage, utterance, position, voice etc. All these concepts assume that meaning is *performative* and created *in situ* through concrete *actions* and various forms of symbolic communication. The performative metaphors also highlight how the meaning-making processes of educational gaming depend on the participants' ability to *creatively imagine* complimentary forms of inquiry, interaction and discourse. Thus, educational gaming represents a *continuum* between everyday educational activities and the world-building activities of game encounters, which involve specific assertions, modes of representation and social forms of organisations to be negotiated by teachers and students within the local classroom context of a particular game session (Barth, 2002; cf. section 4.2.1 and 4.3.3). In this way, this framework clearly emphasises sociocultural perspectives on learning as *meaning-making processes* that background "classical" psychological approaches to educational gaming such as cognitivism and behaviourism (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006).

Second, the theoretical and analytical model presented here is *relational* because it does not focus on individuals or groups, but rather on the mutual relationships between the social actors of educational game encounters. Thus, game participants can be seen as social actors who are relatively free to experience and play with the assertions, modes of representation and social organisation of a particular game world (Barth, 2002; Klabbers, 2006; cf. chapter 2). At the same time, the actual actions of game participants are also influenced by the inquiry-based problems of particular game scenarios (Dewey, 1916), the norms and expectations of their roles and their generalised others (Mead, 1934), the interpretive frames and rules of the game encounter (Goffman, 1961a), and the speaker-hearer positionings of the dialogical game space (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). In this way, the framework presented here tries to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency as it assumes that *educational games are enacted by participants* and *the participants also become enacted by the very same games*. This relational perspective emphasises how the enactment and validation of particular game scenarios involves *contingent* and *transformative* processes of meaning-making that cannot be determined in advance. Thus, even though student competencies are often viewed as *individual* abilities they are always evaluated and validated through *social* relationships (Persson, 2003).

Third, the theoretical and analytical framework is primarily *descriptive* as it aims to understand the meaning-making processes of educational gaming as they emerge through teachers and students' enactment of particular game scenarios. Thus, the framework is not intended to

describe how students' game competencies may be developed to pursue particular goals, i.e. teacher goals, curricular goals, societal goals etc. (cf. chapter 3). Instead, the framework presents a *generalised perspective* on inquiry-based learning, interactional roles and discursive positioning within the context of educational gaming. Translated to this study, the framework is used to examine how teachers and students enact and validate the election scenario of *The Power Game* within the context of Danish general upper secondary education by mapping the "messy" details and processual interplay of knowledge aspects in educational gaming.

Finally, the framework has broader implications than analysing and understanding the educational use of debate games, which is the game format studied in this thesis. Thus, the framework is based on the pragmatist assumption that it is impossible to identify the *essential* qualities of different games even though different games certainly may imply different barriers and opportunities for learning (cf. chapter 2). Given the enormous variety of game designs and educational contexts, it is naïve to believe that the theoretical framework presented here can or should be relevant when trying to understand and analyse *any* form of educational gaming. Arguably, the framework is particularly relevant when studying game scenarios and educational contexts that involve a dynamic interplay between *inquiry*, *interaction* and *discourse*. However, the framework needs to be further developed with additional theoretical and analytical perspectives in order to address the educational use of other game formats – i.e. computer games, which involve mechanical feedback mechanisms and participation through multimodal interfaces (Linderoth, 2004; Harr et al., 2008; Silseth, 2008). In this respect, the relationship between meaning-making processes and particular game configurations still needs to be further explored.

5. Methodological approaches

This chapter presents the methodological approaches used in my explorative study of educational gaming. The first section discusses how I combine the methodologies of design-based research and discourse analysis, which are based on engineering and enlightenment models of research. In the second section, I argue that these models of research share a series of common pragmatist assumptions on the interdependence of knowledge and action. The third section provides a more in-depth presentation of design-based research, which I have used to generate empirical data and explore theoretical assumptions on educational gaming through a series of design interventions. The fourth section presents a methodological framework for analysing my empirical data through an ethnographic approach to classroom-based discourse analysis. In the fifth section, I frame the overall context of my fieldwork, which involved finding schools and teachers for collaboration. Next, the sixth section specifies analytical strategies and methods for collecting, coding and analysing my empirical data. The last section discusses the notion of validity in relation to my analytical questions, analytical perspectives and combined methodological approaches.

5.1. Multiple methodologies – problems and possibilities

This explorative study of educational gaming is based on a combination of two methodological approaches. First of all, the empirical data presented and analysed here was generated through a series of design interventions using *The Power Game* in classroom contexts which involved iterative processes of design, use and re-design in relation to my initial theoretical assumptions. In order to further analyse the empirical data I performed a discourse analysis of how teachers and students enacted, interpreted and validated their participation in the five game sessions. Thus, my multi-methodological approach combines *design-based research* with *an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis*.

In brief, design-based research is an emerging methodological paradigm within educational research which explores learning processes in relation to the use of actual designs for of learning (The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). Thus, design-based research is based on "design experiments" in which researchers, designers, and educators collaborate in an attempt to elaborate theories of learning by designing, studying, and refining rich, theory-based innovations in realistic classroom environments (Brown, 1992; Barab & Squire, 2004). The strength of design-

based research is that the approach is interdisciplinary as it is open to different analytical approaches (i.e. design methods, ethnography, discourse analysis, grounded theory etc.) to design-in-use, which all acknowledge the importance of the classroom context. On the other hand, this analytical pluralism is also a weakness as design-based research only offers few guidelines on how and for what reasons concrete design experiments should be conceptualised in relation to particular theoretical and analytical frameworks. As a consequence, design-based research is by no means a "fixed" paradigm, but should be seen as a methodological umbrella term for design interventionist approaches to educational research (van den Akker et al., 2006).

In order to provide a coherent framework for analysing and understanding educational gaming, this study also draws upon an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis (Gee & Green, 1998). The label discourse analysis is a notoriously polysemantic term containing many different meanings within a variety of disciplines and research communities (van Dijk, 1997). In this dissertation, discourse analysis is used as a common reference for classroom-based forms of discourse analysis which not only acknowledges the importance of teachers and students' spoken dialogue, but also pays close attention to the ways in which their discourse is socially constructed through actual *actions* related to particular practices and to the use of various cultural artefacts and semiotic resources. This ethnographically and semiotically inspired approach to discourse analysis is mainly based on Judith L. Green and James Paul Gee's analytical framework (Gee & Green, 1998), but it also draws upon similar approaches such as Mediated Discourse Analysis (Scollon, 2001; Norris & Jones, 2005), positioning analysis (Ongstad, 2007a, 2007b), frame analysis (Ensink, 2003), and a microethnographic approach to classroom discourse analysis (Bloom et al., 2005). More specifically, this study explores how teachers and students enact and validate *The Power Game* by *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* different aspects of their social interaction (roles), dialogical discourse (positionings) and inquiry (experience) – cf. chapter 4.

Sections 5.3 and 5.4 describe my approaches to design-based research and discourse analysis in more detail. But first I will outline some of the problems and possibilities that arise from combining these methodologies as they are based on somewhat different aims and assorted assumptions about *knowledge* and how it should be studied. In a discussion paper on the status of the social sciences, educational researcher Martyn Hammersley describes the difference between design-based research and discourse analysis as a tension between two different models of research: The "engineering model" and the "enlightenment model" (Hammersley, 2004). According to Hammersley, the *engineering model* refers to research that "develops new policies, techniques, or

forms of practice and/or evaluates how well they work; much as engineering research produces tools, technologies or physical structures of various kinds, or methods of testing the performance these" (Hammersley, 2004: 7). He relates the emergence of design-based research as an educational research paradigm for current international trends. Thus,

> …many governments now see social and educational research as contributing to their policymaking and serving as a basis for improving educational practice. And some researchers, seeking to close what the believe is a credibility gap between research and practice, are promoting forms of inquiry that embody the engineering model. This is true, for example, of the various kinds of design-based research (Hammersley, 2004: 8).

Hammersley then contrasts the engineering model with the *enlightenment model*, which "generally treats the impact of research as more diffuse, and therefore as more contingent and uncertain in outcome" (Hammersley, 2004: 7). A common aim of the enlightenment model is to:

> …supply a new mode of viewing the world that replaces the spontaneous and ideological ways in which policymakers and practitioners are normally inclined to view things. For other advocates of the enlightenment model, however, the contribution of research is seen as much more uncertain and small-scale: it is a matter of providing ideas and information that policymakers and practitioners can make use of as resources; as, when, and how they find this appropriate. In other words, *how* those resources are employed is not built into the research itself, in the way it is supposed to be for the engineering model (Hammersley, 2004: 7).

Hammersley offers no discussion of whether or how these two models can be integrated. Still, the methodological approach taken in this study assumes that it is possible to *combine* the engineering and enlightenment models of research, even though these approaches differ in their orientation toward either improvement or critical re-descriptions of the world. In spite of these their differences, I believe that these methodologies can be reconciled as they share fundamental assumptions on the close relationship between *knowledge* and *action*. A complimentary approach offers valuable possibilities for exploring the complex relationship between theoretical assumptions, processes of design and re-design, and a more detailed analysis of how game scenarios (or other types of learning resources) are enacted and validated by teachers and students in particular educational contexts. In this way, the two research models can be reconciled through a *pragmatist epistemology*.

5.2. A pragmatist foundation for educational research

The meaning of the term "pragmatism" was originally formulated by the philosopher Charles S. Peirce, who argued that in order to attribute meaning to concepts one must be able to apply them to existence (Peirce, 1955; Biesta & Burbules, 2003: 6).[39] Thus, the core assumption of pragmatism is that an intimate connection exists between *knowledge* and *action*, which corresponds well with the present study's attempt to explore how knowledge is produced and validated through educational gaming. Moreover, Peirce also introduced the important concept of *abduction*, which represents a more commonsensical form of reasoning than induction and deduction. In the context of modern science, abductive reasoning seeks to offer explanations, including causal explanations that differ from systematic descriptions (Klausen, 2007). The basic investigative logic of abduction is that one should look for *the best explanation* of a given phenomenon. Thus, abduction means relating a certain phenomenon (i.e. particular *evidence*) to a hypothesis that, if true, would represent a good explanation of the phenomenon. This means that abductive science allows hypothesis making and investigation on the grounds of non-observable phenomena so that phenomena can be inferred, although not directly observed, leading to the suggestion of an explanation. In the words of Dannermark and colleagues:

> Abduction is to move from a conception of something to a different, possibly more developed or deeper conception of it. This happens through our placing and interpreting the original ideas about the phenomenon in the frame of a new set of ideas… all abduction builds on creativity and imagination (Dannermark et al., 2002: 91f).

Let me give two examples of abductive reasoning from this study. The first example is based on my design interventionist approach to fieldwork. As mentioned in chapter 1, this research project started out with the somewhat vague assumption that it was possible to explore the meaning-making processes of educational gaming by designing a "realistic" election scenario where the participants could inquire into political ideologies through the imagined roles of professional practioners. Since the students were assigned particular roles (politicians, journalists, spin doctors and stakeholders), I assumed that these roles would frame their "realistic" experience of the game scenario through social interaction and discursive positioning. However, as my observations and subsequent

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[39] Peirce's definition of pragmatism is inspired by Kant, who referred to the situation in which knowledge and action are strictly separate as "practical" and the situation in which knowledge and action are intimately connected as "pragmatic" (Peirce, 1955: 252).

interviews indicate, the students reacted quite differently to their assigned roles. Based on several negative responses from teachers and students, it was obvious that the role of the stakeholder was too obscure and passive, which explains why it was removed from the election scenario after the fourth game session. Consequently, the process of re-designing the game scenario was subject to abductive reasoning in order to create an election scenario that was not only "realistic" but *relevant* to the participants (cf. chapter 6).

The second example is based on my discourse analytic approach to the game sessions. After transcribing and coding the post-game interviews and video recordings of the game sessions, I explored patterns of variation and invariation in how the students interpreted their roles and ideological positions. Thus, by comparing and contrasting the students' political performances, I identified four different ideological voices among the students playing politicians: Reproductive voices, professionalised voices, personalised voices, and parodic voices (cf. chapter 8). Furthermore, comparing these different voices with responses from the teachers and the classroom audience made it is possible to describe patterns of relationships in relation to how the students' communicative competence was validated within the context of the dialogical game space. In this way, my discourse analytic approach provides the premises for a range of abductive insights on the relationship between the students' roles, ideological voices and game competencies.

As the two examples show, this study explores how different knowledge aspects of *The Power Game* were enacted and validated through empirical analysis and abductive inferencing, which lead to the re-design and re-conceptualisation of the election scenario. Unlike deductive and inductive research, "there are no fixed criteria from which it is possible to assess in a definite way the validity of an abductive conclusion" (Dannermark et al., 2002: 81). Obviously, whether my findings *actually* represent valid knowledge is a matter to be decided discursively by a wider community of scholars and other potential users of educational research, which relies on the basis of my theoretical assumptions, methodological approaches and the documentation offered in the subsequent analyses (cf. chapters 6, 7 and 8). *If* the examples offered above represent valid abductions (as I truly believe they do), the argument can be made that a pragmatist foundation for educational research reconciles the engineering *and* the enlightenment model of research.

Put differently, a pragmatist epistemology addresses the empirical aim of this study, which is *to generate new knowledge on the meaning-making processes and practices of educational gaming*. Again, the underlying assumption is that knowledge is intimately related to *action* and should be conceptualised as something we use in order to live, work, and act in the world. This

corresponds with Dewey's view on educational research, or "educational inquiry" as he termed it, which involves creating or seeking out indeterminate situations for the sake of advancing knowledge (Biesta & Burbules, 2003: 67). However, the "results" of educational inquiry cannot be converted into immediate *rules* for educational action:

> If we retain the word "rule" at all, we must say that scientific results furnish a rule for the conduct of *observations and inquiries*, not a rule for overt action. They function not directly with respect to practice and its results, but indirectly, through the medium of an altered mental attitude (Dewey, 1929: 15).

Thus, the aim of a pragmatist approach to educational game research is to enrich designers and educators' *abilities to judge* by providing them with a wider range of alternatives from which to select when dealing with individual game designs and situations. In this way, the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey and Peirce provides theoretical grounding for conceptualising educational research as educational *inquiry* that is not based on claims of truth but rather on the *viability* of theories to describe phenomena and produce change in the world. This can be done by exploring the *contingent* relationship between the "ends" and the "means" of educational gaming. In the following sections I provide more in-depth descriptions of how this pragmatic foundation can guide the methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis.

5.3. Design-based research

As mentioned, the empirical data presented in this study was generated through a series of design experiments, where I as researcher *and* designer developed and applied a particular game design by intervening into a field on the basis of assumptions or "local theories". More concretely, this study is based on a series of design interventions with a particular debate game – *The Power Game* – taught and played in social science classrooms in order to explore, confirm or re-construct initial assumptions on the meaning-making processes of educational gaming. This approach to educational "design experiments" was initially formulated by learning researcher Ann Brown in the early nineties, but has since been further explored by a growing number of educational researchers (Brown, 1992; The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Barab & Squire, 2004). Thus, design-based research may be defined as "a series of approaches, with the intent of producing new theories, artifacts, and practices that account for and potentially impact learning and teaching in naturalistic settings" (Barab & Squire, 2004: 2).

To some extent, the origin and practice of design-based research can be seen as a response to the behaviourist and cognitive research paradigms that have dominated educational research, and especially American educational research, for the last three to four decades (Greeno et al., 1996). Even though these "experimentalist" approaches are able to provide valuable insight on isolated phenomena (i.e. by testing students' domain-specific knowledge in particular subjects), such methodologies are unable to describe or account for the complexity of real-life classroom contexts. In this regard, design-based research marks a *contextual turn* within educational research, which can be illustrated by Kurt Squire and Sasha Barab's comparison between design-based research and "experimentalist" approaches (Barab & Squire, 2004). See Table 5.1 below:

Category	Psychological experimentation	Design-based research
Location of research	Conducted in laboratory settings	Occurs in the buzzing, blooming confusion of real-life settings where most learning actually occurs
Complexity of variables	Frequently involves a single or a couple of dependent variables	Involves multiple dependent variables, including collaboration among learners, available resources, system variables
Focus of research	Focuses on identifying a few variables and holding them constant	Focuses on characterizing the situation in all its complexity, much of which is not now *a priori*
Unfolding of procedures	Uses fixed procedures	Involves flexible design revision in which there is a tentative initial set that are revised depending on their success in practice
Amount of social interaction	Isolates learners to control interaction	Frequently involves complex social interactions
Characterizing the findings	Focusing on testing hypothesis	Involves looking at multiple aspects of the design and developing a profile that characterizes the design in practice
Role of participants	Treats participants as subjects	Involves different participants in the design so as to bring their differing expertise into producing and analyzing the design

Table 5.1: Comparison of psychological experimentation and design-based research methods. Adapted and revised from Barab & Squire 2004: 4, cf. also Elf, 2008.

As this comparison suggests, design-based research attempts to tackle the complexity that arises when trying to understand the *use of designs* in classroom settings. Here, design-based research marks a radical break with psychological experimentation due to its *pragmatic* philosophical underpinnings. Thus, the *value of a theory* in a design-based inquiry is "based upon actual changes" in the local classroom setting (Barab & Squire, 2004: 6). In this way, design-based research assumes a close relationship between knowledge, action and abductive reasoning.

5.3.1. The aims of educational design research

According to van den Akker et al. educational design research tries to accomplish three goals: 1) to increase the relevance of research for policy and practice, 2) to develop empirically grounded theories, and 3) to increase the robustness of design practice (van den Akker et al., 2006: 3-4). The first aim fits well with Hammersley's observation that design-based research tries to "close the credibility gap between research and practice" (Hammersley, 2004: 8). However, this goal inevitably leads to a *dilemma* between the agendas of researchers, designers and educators. Seen from a researcher's perspective, design-based research is theory- and policy-driven, and aims to *explore* the impetus of particular innovative learning resources. This is also the case with this particular study, which analyses the design and use of a debate game in two Danish upper secondary schools. On the other hand, design-based research also tries to meet and match concrete design specifications, teachers' pedagogical needs, student interests, curricular goals and the knowledge traditions of the local school culture. Van den Akker and his colleagues argue that design-based research *is* able to create a stronger link between research and practice when it manages to provide educators with appropriate knowledge and relevant designs for learning (van den Akker et al., 2006). This claim can be backed by several studies that indicate how educational reform does not lead to any significant change unless teachers, being primary *gatekeepers* of the school subjects, engage in the reform process and are allowed to do so in innovative and creative ways (cf. e.g. Hargreaves, 1994; Randi & Corno, 1997; Elf, 2008). Thus, educational research and policy-making with a change agenda need to have their feet solidly placed on the ground and acknowledge "the primacy of classroom culture" (Squire et al., 2003).

The second aim of design-based research concerns the development of empirically grounded *theories*. This is quite a broad aim as there is no consensus on the ontological and epistemological status of the theories to be generated through design experiments (van den Akker et al., 2006). Consequently, the drive towards theory-building raises a number of questions in relation

to the validity of "local theories" and to what degree such theoretical findings can be generalised. One of the problems is that the design-based researcher *intervenes* in real settings with the intent of provoking a possible new social reality through the use of a given learning material. A stake is put in the ground, so to speak, which to some degree re-configures the local practices and culture of the classroom setting (Barab & Squire, 2004). However, design interventions are different from other interventionist approaches such as action research, which directly attempts to *change* the practices of a given setting (Nowotny et al., 2001). Admittedly, design-based research does attempt to *engineer* the production of meaning making processes, but the overall aim is to "naturalise" the relationship between a given design and its users by refining the design experiments in a particular setting over an extended time period. To quote Barab and Squire, design-based research must attempt to characterise the "complexity, fragility, messiness, and eventual solidity of the design, and doing so in a way that will be valuable to others" (Barab & Squire (2004: 4). But the validity of design interventions ultimately depends upon the ability to produce *new theoretical insights*:

> …the validation of a particular design framework is not simply intended to show the value of a particular curriculum. Instead, design-based research strives to generate and advance a particular set of theoretical constructs that transcends the environmental particulars of the contexts in which they were generated, selected, or refined. This focus on advancing theory grounded in naturalistic contexts sets design-based research apart from laboratory experiments or evaluation research (Barab & Squire, 2004: 5).

In this study, the aim of producing new theory has been pursued by exploring hypotheses on a "realistic" game design through a series of five design experiments with five different teachers in five different classrooms in order to demonstrate the invariances and variances of findings that emerge from variable settings and agents exposed to the same designed material. By studying the same game design in five different classrooms, this study assumes that the empirical findings should be able to reach beyond the local contexts by formulating new theoretical perspectives on the processes of teaching and learning through (debate) games.

In spite of this theoretical aim, design-based research only offers vague guidelines on how to advance theory that is *grounded* in naturalistic settings. Some design-based researchers advocate the use of particular analytical frameworks such as grounded theory or ethnomethodology for generating new theoretical concepts (Barab & Squire, 2004; Koschmann et al., 2007). However, as several critics have argued, the rigorousness of such micro-oriented approaches easily "misses the best" of *qualitative* inquiry as they reduce the interpretation of meaning-making processes to the

abstract logic of *quantifiable* coding schemes (Thomas & James, 2006: 790). Even though grounded theory and ethnomethodology can be used fruitfully for various purposes, I find it highly problematic to assume that design-based research should rely *a priori* on these methodological approaches as post-positivistic guarantors of validity. Consequently, my adaptation of design-based research assumes a more holistic theoretical perspective that not only refers to the actual design-in-use, but also broader sociocultural perspectives on the knowledge aspects of gaming, teaching and learning as well as the "folk psychologies" of the participating teachers and students (Barth, 2002; Bruner, 1990).

The bottom line is that the design interventions in this study *did* aim to generate new theoretical perspectives on educational gaming. But the theoretical contribution is not solely based on an isolated analysis of how *The Power Game* was enacted as a *design* – i.e. as a concrete design for teaching and learning. The process of enacting and validating *The Power Game* involved a wide range of different knowledge aspects and complex patterns of relationships among the game participants which can be understood as a dynamic interplay of inquiry-based experience, social interaction and dialogical discourse (cf. chapter 4). This move from loosely formulated theoretical assumptions of exploring a "realistic" game design to developing a theoretical and analytical framework for *understanding the meaning-making processes of educational gaming* represents a form of abductive reasoning (cf. section 5.2). In this respect, I disagree with rationalist assumptions of being able to "test" theory, which is the term some design-based researchers use when they describe the "application" of designs and theoretical models (Cobb et al., 2003: 9). From my perspective, the pragmatist agenda of design-based research must acknowledge the *agentive* nature of meaning makers in the local field of classrooms. Thus, teachers and students will always already remake, albeit in very different ways, the educational designs offered to them through dynamic and heterogeneous processes. This remaking cannot be understood simply as "test", "application" or "implementation", but should rather be thought of as an *adaptation* that reflects how the social actors transform available designs and semiotic resources and create new meanings through interaction, dialogue, and inquiry-based experience (Randi & Corno, 1997).

The third and final goal of design-based research is to increase the *robustness* of designs and design practices. However, the aim is not merely to create "effective" designs or distribute new types of learning resources, but to generate knowledge and "explicit learning that can advance subsequent design efforts" (van den Akker et al., 2006: 4). In a joint article with other design-based researchers, we have visualised design-based research as two cyclical processes of

research and design, which attempts to generate theory and actual designs on the bases of a common problem (Ejersbo et al., 2008). This "osmotic" model is presented below in figure 5.1:
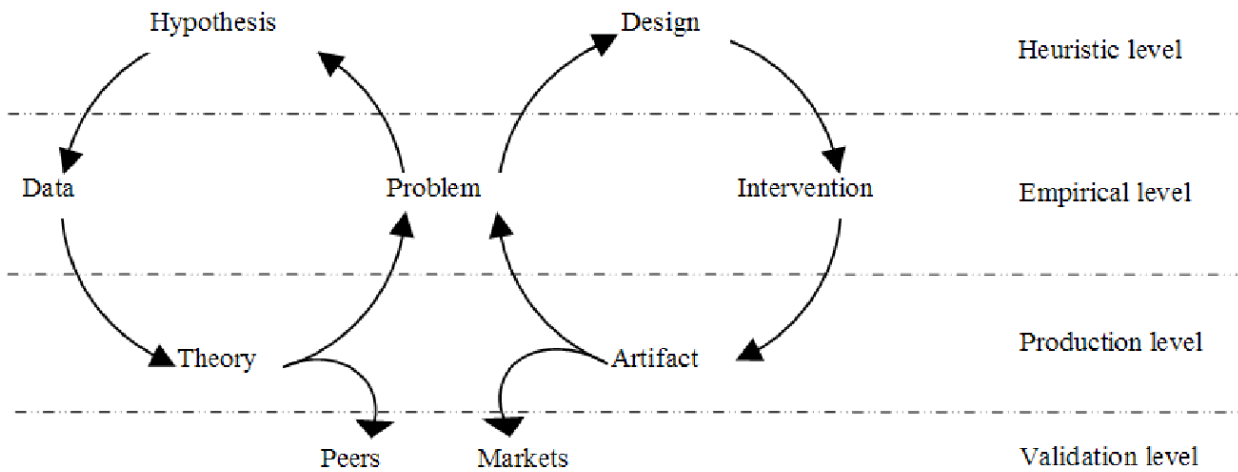
Figure 5.1: The "osmotic" model illustrates how design-based research attempts to balance artefact and theory generation. The left circle mimics traditional ways of doing education research, which is aimed at peers. The right circle mimics a production cycle, but with stronger involvement of user feedback. Ideally, a design research project moves in synchronous circular movements, starting from the centre and going in both directions. However, this synchronicity rarely happens in practice (Ejersbo et al., 2008: 150).

The model represents an idealised "macro view" of how design-based research involves mutual processes of design and research that both answer to a particular problem. Thus, my research project represents an attempt to qualify the educational use of games by developing and exploring the adaptation of *The Power Game* in relation to a particular *problem*, which is the lack of contextualised descriptions and theoretically informed knowledge on the actual enactment and validation of educational gaming. Moreover, this problem is related to my development of theoretical assumptions, design hypotheses and the actual design and re-design of *The Power Game*. At the same time, the cyclical dynamics represented in the model are also inadequate as they downplay the "messiness" of educational design-based research, which involves multiple and contingent outcomes that are extremely difficult to "engineer" or predict (cf. chapter 6).

5.3.2. Design-based research applied to this study

For the purpose of this research project, I have designed and intervened with a particular game design in five consecutive game sessions over the course of a year. This process involved designing the election scenario, co-designing the game website with DR Education, classroom observations as well as collecting material from and dialoguing with the social actors of the field, especially the five

teachers and the social studies students that enacted the scenario of *The Power Game*. Before each of the game sessions, I held preliminary meetings with the participating teachers and e-mailed the game instructions, which offered relatively detailed descriptions of the goals and phases of the election scenario. The game instructions implied a wide range of epistemological, pedagogical, curricular, technological, and social commitments that needed to be interpreted and adapted by the teachers and students.

As mentioned, the aim of my design interventions was to *qualify* the educational use of games by exploring a particular debate game on parliamentary elections within the context of Danish upper secondary education. This approach was somewhat loosely based on an open-ended game design, Dewey's theory of inquiry-based learning and a competence-oriented approach to educational gaming (cf. chapters 2, 3 and 4). Thus, the initial aim of this research project was a holistic exploration of how the participating teachers would facilitate the game scenario, and how the students would enact various forms of knowledge and competencies in order to meet and validate the domain-specific demands of *The Power Game*. Moreover, the design of the game scenario was based on two *design hypotheses* (cf. chapter 6). First, I assumed that the game design should be "realistic" to ensure that the teachers and students would accept it as a "serious" or *legitimate* design for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the design was based on the hypothesis that the role-playing scenario could benefit from *integration* with various forms of online game resources. Hence, the students were expected to find relevant information and key political issues on the real-life political parties' websites. Moreover, the students were also expected to use a game website designed in collaboration with DR Education with a selection of video clips on their different roles within the game including various texts on parliamentary elections.

As my fieldwork only involved a limited form of collaboration with the participating teachers and DR Education, there were clear limits on the amount of time and resources, which could be expended on using and re-designing the game resources. Moreover, the two upper secondary schools that I worked with had relatively inflexible time schedules when it came to finding an entire day for playing *The Power Game*. Consequently, I had almost no influence on the final dates of the game sessions which meant that it was quite difficult to plan how and when I would analyse the empirical data and refine theoretical assumptions between each of the five design experiments. Due to these practical constraints, I was eventually unable to fulfil all the ambitious goals of design-based research, which assumes a close relationship between theory building, iterative cycles of design and re-design, and empirical analysis. Instead, my design interventions

represented a pragmatic approach for *refining the game design* and *generating empirical data* on educational gaming. Thus, after observing each game session and conducting post-game interviews, I only made minor revisions in the game design based on pragmatic considerations of what game elements that did or did not "work" in the eyes of teachers and students. This process of informing the design and re-design of *The Power Game* is documented in chapter 6, which presents the analytical findings of this study as seen from a *design perspective*.

Parallel to the process of designing and re-designing the game scenario, I was faced with a considerable *interpretive gap* between understanding how the game design "worked" and a broader understanding of the interaction and communication between the participating teachers and students. Simply put, *it was difficult to understand how the social actors enacted and validated the game scenario without considering wider pedagogical issues and discursive practices of the classroom context.* During the design interventions, I became increasingly interested in the teachers' pedagogical approaches to the game scenario and the students' debate practices. By focusing on these aspects of the game sessions, I decided to re-conceptualise *The Power Game* from being a role-play to a debate game (cf. chapter 2). Moreover, I began to formulate initial assumptions of a dialogical game pedagogy, which addressed different aspects of teacher authority and student voices (cf. chapter 3). After finishing the design interventions, I then re-elaborated my initial theoretical assumptions, which resulted in a more detailed framework for understanding the meaning-making processes, knowledge aspects and practices of educational gaming as an interplay of inquiry, interaction, and discourse (cf. chapter 4). Next, I transcribed and analysed the empirical data from the five game sessions with particular emphasis on my video recordings and post-game interviews. Based upon my re-elaborated analytical framework and the emerging patterns of interaction in the empirical data, I decided to present the analytical findings from a *teacher perspective* and a *student perspective* (cf. chapter 7 and 8). Thus, the teacher perspective describes how the five teachers in the study facilitated, authorised, and evaluated *The Power Game*. Similarly, the student perspective maps how the students playing politicians performed, communicated and experienced the election scenario through their assigned roles and ideological positions in relation to their game competencies.

The brief research narrative presented above describes how this study has only *partially* followed the ambitious aims of design-based research. Seen in retrospect, the refinement of the open-ended game scenario toward a more "useful" learning resource followed a rather pragmatic line of reasoning that was mainly related to particular *design* features and the actual

design-in-use. After the design interventions, my gradual shifting of theoretical and analytical perspectives was based on an attempt to grapple with the complexity of the *teachers* and *students'* educational game practices within a classroom context. Obviously, this approach does not follow the somewhat idealised cycles of design-based research presented in figure 5.1, which underplays the constant friction between empirical research and the parallel refinement of theory and design. Instead, I have tried to follow another aim of design-based research, which is to "acknowledge the primacy of classroom culture":

> …contextualizing the curriculum is ultimately a local phenomenon that arises as a result of a number of factors, including students' needs, students' goals, teachers' goals, local constraints, and teacher's pedagogical values (Squire et al., 2003: 468).

Thus, this study conceptualises educational gaming as a *transformative* process, where teachers and students are working together in a classroom community by mutually constructing and negotiating the content, which *may* or *may not* involve particular aspects of the game design (Ongstad, 2004; Bloome et al., 2005). Consequently, teachers and students are both producers and interpreters of meaning when enacting and validating *The Power Game*. As mentioned, design-based research offers no coherent framework for analysing or understanding the meaning-making processes of educational gaming. In this sense, design-based research is first and last *a design interventionist approach for generating empirical data in order to refine theoretical models and particular designs for teaching and learning*. In the next section, I present my methodological approach to discourse analysis that I have used to analyse and interpret how the teachers and students adapted and transformed *The Power Game* in relation to their everyday ways of "doing" school.

5.4. Discourse analysis

As mentioned above, two out of the three analytical chapters in this study are based on a discourse analytic approach on how the participating teachers and students enacted and validated *The Power Game* scenario (cf. chapters 7 and 8). But why choose discourse analysis as a methodological and analytical approach? My answer is that the central activity of *The Power Game* – and other forms of debate games – is the production and reception of *discourses* through domain-specific debate practices. In this way, discourse analysis represents an obvious starting point for the analysis of the meaning-making processes in this form of educational gaming. In contrast to design-based research, which tries to "engineer" educational research through actual design interventions, discourse

analysis is based on an "enlightenment" model, where the aim is to understand and provide (re-)descriptions of particular social phenomena (Hammersley, 2004; cf. section 5.1). Thus, this study employs discourse analysis as a methodological approach *and* an analytical framework for understanding how teachers and students enacted and validated the discursive practices, scenario-based inquiry and social interaction of the five game sessions.

A myriad of different methodological and theoretical approaches to discourse analysis exist (van Dijk, 1997). However, in this study, discourse analysis primarily refers to classroom-based approaches to discourse analysis within the context of educational research. As the literacy researcher David Bloome and his colleagues argue, educational researchers "have created their own history of research on the use of language in classrooms that is distinct from but complements that in the disciplines of anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and social psychology" (Bloom et al., 2005: xv). More specifically, then, this study draws on James Paul Gee and Judith L. Green's comprehensive methodological framework that adopts an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis (Gee & Green, 1998).

5.4.1. Ethnographic perspectives on discourse analysis

In their extensive review article on the relation between discourse analysis, learning and social practice, Gee and Green describe how educational researchers "often combine discourse analysis with *ethnographic* approaches in order to examine questions of what counts as learning in a local setting" (Gee & Green, 1998: 119). Ethnography can be defined as "a particular research perspective that is characterized by an epistemological commitment to explicit and holistic interpretation from a bottom-up perspective" and "an empirical interest in first-hand exploration" (Schrøder et al., 2003: 64). However, Gee and Green stress that as discourse analysts they do not claim to be conducting ethnography per se. Rather, they wish to argue that the "cultural perspective guiding ethnography can be productively used in discourse studies" (Gee & Green, 1998: 126). This claim is based upon Spindler and Spindler's conceptualisation of ethnography as the study of "the dialogue of action and interaction" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987: 2). More specifically, the term dialogue refers to an intricate relationship between *discourse* and *action*. Thus, discourse analysis guided by an ethnographic perspective:

> …forms a basis for identifying what members of a social group (e.g., a classroom or other educational setting) need to know, produce, predict, interpret, and evaluate in a given setting or social group to participate appropriately… and through that participation, learn (i.e. acquire and construct the cultural

knowledge of the group). Thus, an ethnographic perspective provides a conceptual approach for analyzing discourse data (oral or written) from an emic (insider's) perspective and for examining how discourse shapes both what is available to be learned and what is, in fact, learned (Gee & Green, 1998: 126).

Similarly, this study employs a discourse analytic approach to *describe* how teachers and students participated through the roles, discourses and epistemologies of *The Power Game*, and how the participants *interpreted* their game experience in terms of learning and knowledge production as seen from an emic perspective.

Gee and Green further identify three key tasks for an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis. The first task concerns *exploration of part-whole, whole-part relationships*. This means that the goal of ethnographic perspective is "to arrive at a holistic understanding of the overall historical, cultural, or social context, whether that whole be an entire society or the beginning of a single lesson" (Erickson, 1979: 1; quoted by Gee & Green, 1998: 126). Translated to this study, my discourse analytic approach explores how different aspects of the teachers and students' meaning-making processes are linked to the overall classroom context of the enacted game scenario and vice versa. This analytical process of linking part-whole and whole-part relationships is analogous to the pragmatist notion of abductive reasoning (cf. section 5.2).

The second analytical task set out by Gee and Green regards *the use of contrastive relevance*, a term which the authors have borrowed from Dell Hymes, founder of the ethnography of communication. By focusing on contrastive relevance, the ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis tries to demonstrate the functional relevance of the "bit of life, or language and actions within that bit" (Hymes, 1977: 92). More specifically, contrastive relevance provides a way of examining and identifying what counts as cultural knowledge, practice and/or participation constituting a particular "bit of life" within a group. Thus, contrastive relevance depends on the analysis of talk and actions among members from an emic (insider's) perspective. In this empirical study, contrastive relevance is used to explore how particular actions and utterances of the game participants' mark a *difference* – both within the context of each of the single game sessions and in relation to everyday school practices. As Gee and Green argues, the contrast between various meanings is not fixed to a specific analytical unit, but can occur at any level of analysis. Rather, the "key is to show the *relevance* of this contrast in understanding what teachers and students are doing together" (Gee & Green, 1998: 126; emphasis added).

Finally, any form of discourse analysis involves a certain understanding of *reflexivity*, which refers to "the way in which language always takes on a specific meaning from the actual context in which it is used, while, simultaneously, helping to construct what we take that context to mean and be in the first place" (Gee & Green, 1998: 127). In other words, reflexivity refers to assumptions about how language (and other forms of discourse) both *reflects* and *constructs* the situation in which it is used. Thus, my conception of reflexivity is based upon Bakhtin's *dialogical perspective* on utterances, positions, speech genres and speaker-hearer relationships (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; cf. chapters 3 and 4). Briefly summarised, Bakhtin does not view speakers and hearers as separate entities as each is implicated in the actions (speaking and hearing) of the other. What follows, then, is that *the aim of discourse analysis is to focus on interpretation and the meaning construction of particular speaker-hearer relationships.* As Bakhtin argues: "in reality any communication… addressed to someone or evoking something, has a particular purpose, that is, it is a real link in the chain of speech communion in a particular sphere of human activity or everyday life" (Bakhtin, 1986: 83). In relation to this study, this means that the discourse generated by teachers and students can be seen as a chain of utterances, which involves mutual positionings between speakers and hearers in relation to the dialogical game space of the election scenario.

5.4.2. Logic-of-inquiry

By adopting a discourse analytic framework, this study assumes a close relationship between theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Gee and Green quote anthropologist Ray L. Birdwhistell on the danger of separating theory and methodology:

> The interdependence of theory and methodology can be hidden by exclusive focus upon either philosophy or technique. Once separated, only the most sophisticated can reconstitute them into investigatory practice (Birdwhistell, 1977: 104).

In order to avoid this separation, the researcher must articulate his or her study as a *logic-of-inquiry*, which addresses the contingent relationship between theoretical perspectives and empirical-analytical approaches (Gee & Green, 1998: 120). Obviously, countless ways of relating theory and methodology exist. Gee and Green address this problem by proposing a general framework entitled "The MASS System", which can be used to analyse a given *situation* in relation to the Material aspects, Activity aspects, Semiotic aspects, and Sociocultural aspects (hence the name MASS). Furthermore, these aspects can be analysed in relation to different "building tasks" as people always

communicate and build meanings in relation to particular purposes. These building tasks include: "world building", "activity building", "identity building", and "connection building" (Gee & Green, 1998: 134-9). Based on a wide range of theoretical assumptions on the relationship between the four MASS aspects and the four building tasks, Gee and Green create a matrix that poses an impressive array of analytical questions such as "What are the sign systems being used in the situation (e.g. speech, writing, images, and gestures)?" etc. As the reader may imagine, this framework is quite comprehensive and extends far beyond the analytical aims of this study. Gee and Green are well aware of this: "No single study or analysis will use all of these elements or questions. Rather, in each analysis, the researcher selects those that are relevant to the questions being examined and the data being analyzed" (Gee & Green, 1998: 139). Thus, this study is only partially based on the many analytical aspects of Gee and Green's framework.

To sum up: In order to analyse how *The Power Game* was enacted and validated, this study has followed a logic-of-inquiry that relates an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis with my theoretical framework presented in chapter 4. Thus, my analyses assume that the practices and meaning-making processes of educational gaming can be understood as a dynamic interplay of inquiry (experience), interaction (roles), and dialogic discourse (positionings). These theoretical perspectives can be conceptualised as three analytical questions:

- **Interaction:** How did the social actors adopt their assigned roles and interact within the context of the educational game encounter?
- **Discourse:** How did teachers and students position themselves through the available discourses of the dialogical game space?
- **Inquiry:** How did participants experience and reflect upon the aims, processes and outcomes of their scenario-based inquiry?

As these questions indicate, my primary aim is to describe *processual* aspects of educational gaming. Furthermore, my approach is *relational* as it does not focus on particular social groups or individual actors, but rather the dialogical relationships between the social actors in classroom settings. Following a sociocultural approach, I assume that educational gaming represents a dynamic interplay between discourse, interaction and inquiry, which means that these aspects of knowledge are *interdependent* and *mutually constitutive* (Barth, 2002; cf. chapters 2 and 4). However, since it is not possible during an analysis to present all these aspects simultaneously, it is necessary to *foreground* particular aspects while *backgrounding* others when analysing particular

phenomena in the empirical data (Gee & Green, 1998: 135). For heuristic purposes and the sake of analytical clarity, the following sections provide separate descriptions of how the three theoretical perspectives are related to my methodological approach. These analytical dimensions entails a particular "expressive potential", which delimits what *can* and what *cannot* be described when trying to understand the meaning-making processes of educational gaming (Strike, 1974; quoted by Gee & Green, 1998: 121).

5.4.3. Analytical units: Social actions and practices

As illustrated in the model of my theoretical and analytical framework, this study views *social action* as the primary analytical unit for a discourse analytic approach to educational gaming (cf. section 4.1). Thus, my analyses of the game sessions are all based on the attempt to foreground various aspects of interaction, discourse and inquiry in relation to particular social actions, i.e. the way in which a particular teacher introduces the different roles of *The Power Game* scenario or how students respond to their roles by speaking through a particular ideological voice. This "action-oriented" approach to discourse analysis is inspired by the interdisciplinary area of Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA), which argues that discourse analysis should explore how concrete forms of social action constitute particular *practices* (Scollon, 2001; Norris & Jones, 2005). According to Scollon, a practice refers to the accumulated experience of a social actor, which is "recognizable to other social actors as the same social action" (Scollon, 2001: 149). Thus, by mapping how different social actions are interpreted within the educational game context, it becomes possible to identify teachers and students' emerging practices within the context of the educational game encounter.

The point of using social action as the analytical unit in this study is to avoid viewing the teachers and students' "game practice" as an abstract concept. Instead, teacher and student participation in the game sessions is explored as a set of *local practices* (as a count noun) within the educational game setting. This means that the social actors in this study are not simply seen as "doing school" or "playing the game" when they engage in the educational game scenario. Rather, their actions within the game session are related to both the myriad of existing pedagogical practices *and* the available repertoire of different professional practices suggested by the semiotic domain of the election scenario (Gee, 2003). Thus, the game sessions can be seen as a re-enactment of a range of *familiar practices* such as teachers giving instructions or students making

presentations in front of the class. At the same time, the game sessions also introduce *unfamiliar practices* such as the teachers' facilitation of the game scenario and the students' debate practices.

As these examples suggest, educational gaming can be understood as part of a process of *continuity* and *change* over time and place: "Both continuity and change require work; people in interaction with each other must interactionally work to construct continuity and similarly so with change" (Bloom et al., 2005: 99). This dynamic between existing practices and new practices can also be encapsulated by viewing educational gaming as a form of *playful knowledge* as it implies a tension between emerging knowledge forms and everyday ways of enacting and validating knowledge within a classroom context. Moreover, the practices of teaching and playing games are regarded as being more or less *competent* – both in terms of schooling and gaming (cf. chapters 2 and 3).

5.4.4. Analysing interaction

As mentioned, an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis pays close attention to the interplay between discourse and *action* (Gee & Green, 1998; Scollon, 2001). This corresponds with the pragmatist assumption that playing, thinking, and learning must be understood in relation to concrete actions (cf. sections 4.2 and 5.2). Thus, in order to study the meaning-making processes of educational gaming, it is necessary to account for the dynamic and contingent ways in which discursive practices and patterns of social interaction are closely connected (Scollon, 2001). In order to understand this complex relationship, discourse analysis must be careful not to collapse the analytical distinctions between *social* practices and *discursive* practices, for example, by claiming that *all* social practices are discursive practices (Chouliarki & Fairclough, 1999).

As an answer to this methodological problem, Ron Scollon suggests that discourse analysts should be able to *foreground* patterns of social action as a way of understanding the relationship between discourse and action (Scollon, 2001). Following this line of thought, the analysis should start by asking "What is/are the action/s that is/are being taken here?" and only after answering this question go on to ask "What is the role of discourse in this/those action/s?" (Norris & Jones, 2005: 9). This analytical point is highly relevant to my discourse analytic approach since the teachers and students in this study were are not only engaged in various linguistic or semiotic practices but also in *social interaction* through various *roles*, which were continually constructed and re-constructed in relation to situated norms and the expectations of the educational game setting (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974; Joas, 1993; cf. chapter 4). In this way, the analysis

foregrounds aspects of the participants' social interaction that are *relevant* for understanding how the game scenario was enacted and validated. Thus, my analysis explores how the teachers had to adopt and adapt a relatively unfamiliar role as game facilitators which required them to stage the election scenario and scaffold the students' understanding of the expected tasks and aims of the game session. Similarly, by shifting to a student perspective, I analyse the interpretive framing of the election scenario and how the students performed through their assigned roles as politician by adopting various strategies for self-presentation and face-saving practices.

5.4.5. *Analysing discourse*

As mentioned, my discourse analytic approach is based on a *dialogical* perspective on educational discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986; cf. Ongstad, 1997, 2007a; Wegerif, 2007). Thus, when analysing the discourse of educational gaming, I am primarily interested in understanding the speaker-hearer relationships between the social participants of the game sessions. This means that the analysis principally explores how teachers and students *position* themselves through spoken discourse, which refers to both the emerging speech genres of classroom talk and the domain-specific epistemologies of *The Power Game*. In addition to spoken discourse, the analysis also includes other relevant forms of "semiotic resources", for instance, when teachers or students refer to the real-life political parties' websites or presentation videos (Scollon, 2001; Gee, 2005a). Similarly, the teachers and students' discourse was also shaped by the location of particular cultural artefacts, especially the organisation of tables and chairs within the classroom setting.

The participating teachers and students in this study represented different perspectives on the game sessions which can be conceptualised in terms of a dialogical game pedagogy (cf. chapter 3). Thus, the analysis of the teachers' approach to the election scenario mainly focuses on the dialogical notion of *authority*, which addresses the centrifugal/centripetal tensions between the logics of the election scenario and the teachers' pedagogical approaches. This dialogical notion of authority does not refer to sociological asymmetries of power between teachers and students, but describes the dynamic tension between open-ended (dialogical) and fixed (monological) forms of meaning which are continually *transformed* within the discursive context of the election scenario (Matusov, 2007). Similarly, my analysis of the students' articulation of the election scenario focuses on their discursive *voices*, which refers to the ways in which they orient and express themselves in relation to particular ideological values, i.e. their assigned ideological positions, their personal beliefs, and the expectations of their teachers and classmates (Dysthe, 1996; Ongstad, 1997, 2007a).

In this way, it becomes possible to describe how the students playing politicians responded to their roles and the available ideological positions of the game environment (Smidt, 2002). The students' discourse also reflects a process of self-positioning in which they try to find a *public voice* within the context of the parliamentary election scenario (Baxter, 1999).

5.4.6. Analysing inquiry

In addition to foregrounding patterns of interaction and discourse, my discourse analytic approach also explores how teachers and students experienced and reflected upon the aims, processes and outcomes of their scenario-based inquiry (Dewey, 1916). The teachers and students' inquiries were not limited to individual perspectives. Rather, their participation represented a *shared* inquiry as they oriented toward each other through intersubjective communication (Wegerif, 2007; cf. chapter 3). Moreover, the shared inquiry of educational gaming also represents a *dialogical* inquiry, which implies that teaching and learning is promoted by "dialogues through which knowledge is constantly being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed" (Wegerif, 2006: 60). In this way, my discourse analytic approach foregrounds different aspects of how the social actors experienced, reflected and validated the epistemologies of the dialogical game space.

Obviously, spoken discourse only provides one way of gaining analytical access to teachers and students' scenario-based inquiry. In terms of debate games, however, it is relevant mainly to conceptualise and describe inquiry in terms of dialogical inquiry since discourse forms *the* central aspect of communication, interaction, and meaning-making in this particular game format. More specifically, my analysis of the teachers and students' dialogical inquiry is primarily based on the teachers' *epistemological views* on the game scenario and the students' creative exploration of different *knowledge aspects* through the continual construction and re-construction of domain-specific hypotheses. This analytical approach is based on a comparison of particular game phases – especially the teacher introductions, the students' debate practices and the end-of-game discussions – to the post-game interviews, where I asked the participants to reflect upon and evaluate their experience of the game sessions.

5.5. Framing the context

Before moving on to the actual methods that have been used for collecting and analysing the data in this study, I will describe the overall contextual framing of my fieldwork first. This involves criteria

for selecting the educational setting for my design interventions and the different aspects of my collaboration with particular schools and teachers.

5.5.1. The setting: Danish general upper secondary school

Formally speaking, the proposal for this research project was formulated within the organisational context of the DREAM consortium (cf. chapter 1). This implied a set of obligations on my empirical work as I was expected to study the design and use of learning resources within the context of Danish upper secondary schools. More specifically, my design interventions took place in *general* upper secondary schools, also known as stx, which is one out of four types of *gymnasiums* in the Danish educational system.[40] As with the other three forms of upper secondary school (hhx, htx and hf), stx takes three years to complete in order to gain formal competence to continue at the tertiary educational level. When students begin in stx, they are approximately 16 years old and have attended school for 9-10 years. After stx, the majority move on to different forms of higher education.

My main reason for choosing stx as an educational setting for my studies was based on a *convenience principle*, which is rather common approach for conducting fieldwork within design-based research (Squire et al., 2003; Elf, 2008). Thus, stx was a convenient choice as it is the most common type of upper secondary education, with an average of two-thirds of all upper secondary students enrolled every year.[41] Focusing on the most popular type of gymnasium meant having more schools to choose from when trying to find potential teachers to collaborate with on my research project. Ideally, this choice could also make it easier to generalise my findings in relation to upper secondary education as such.

Arguably, it is possible to use *The Power Game* and other types of debate games in a wide variety of different educational contexts, for example, in secondary schools, other types of upper secondary schools, higher education, after-school programmes etc. (Snider & Schnurer, 2006). However, instead of comparing educational gaming *across* different institutional settings, I decided to narrow my scope to a particular institutional context. The idea was to generate a more *consistent* range of empirical data, which would allow me to analyse and compare how a similar group of teachers and students enacted and validated the same game scenario.

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[40] Stx is short for *studentereksamen*, which corresponds to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GSCE).
[41] Updated information about stx and other forms of upper secondary education is available on the Danish Ministry of Education's website: www.uvm.dk.

5.5.2. Finding schools and teachers

When planning the research design of this study, my aim was to conduct design experiments at two general upper secondary schools with students with varying sociocultural backgrounds. By comparing two contrasting schools, I assumed that I could produce "rich" data for analysing how teachers and students would enact *The Power Game* scenario. Thus, the aim of my qualitative study was not to find a representative sample of schools but to explore patterns of variation and invariation in relation to analytical themes that were general to the upper secondary school context (Patton, 2002). However, finding schools that were willing and able to collaborate with me proved to be challenging. As Elf and other design-based researchers have noted, many educational researchers tend to follow the tradition of selecting already known teachers/schools for their design experiments who often have relevant experience with the designs to be studied (Elf, 2008; Squire et al., 2003). As a newcomer to educational research and to the relatively closed world of upper secondary education, I had no existing network of experienced teachers or relevant schools to pick and choose from.

My contact with upper secondary schools was further disrupted by the imminent "implementation" of the extensive 2005 reform of upper secondary schools in the 2005-2006 school year, which is when I planned to conduct the main part of my empirical studies. Thus, for a number of logistical reasons it was difficult to find schools and teachers that were willing and able to collaborate and allocate an entire day ("block day"), the minimum amount of time necessary to run the game sessions, in their schedules and curriculum planning. My original intention was to conduct the design experiments in the crossdisciplinary context of Danish (Mother Tongue Education) and social studies, both of which are related to the curricular "content" of *The Power Game* scenario. This aim was backed by on-going research on the educational role-play game called *Homicide* that indicated that game scenarios could be well-suited for crossdisciplinary teaching (Magnussen, 2008). However, the combination of Danish and social studies appeared to be quite problematic as the 2005 reform still had not been implemented when I tried to contact schools and teachers. Thus, it was difficult to combine elective courses (i.e. social studies) and mandatory courses (i.e. Danish). Faced with the risk of not being able to find a combination of Danish and social studies teachers that were willing and able to participate, I chose to simplify my research design and merely concentrate on finding social studies teachers.

Next, I tried a number of different approaches to find social studies teachers who were interested in participating. I contacted the Ministry of Education's official consultant for social

studies in stx and announced my project on the website of the social studies teachers' official organisation (FALS) and on *EMU Samfundsfag*, which is a state-sponsored online repository for learning resources in social studies. These attempts were futile as they did not provide a single response or contact with any teachers or schools. In the end, I followed the recommendations of my supervisor and a colleague and contacted two schools that they regarded as "progressive" and likely partners for collaboration. The direct contact proved to be a fruitful strategy. Through e-mails and phone calls, I established contact with teachers at Redville School and Hillsdale School who where interested in trying to teach with *The Power Game*.[42] Built in the 1970s and located in the suburbs of a Danish city, the schools were somewhat similar to each other in terms of architecture and demographics. At the same time, the schools differed in terms of the percentage of students with mixed ethnic backgrounds. At Redville School approximately 40% of the students were bi-lingual, whereas this percentage was approximately 10% at Hillsdale School. Because of this difference between the two schools, I assumed that I would be able to describe how the students' game experience could be influenced by wider sociocultural issues.

As a part of my initial research question, I also focused on the relationship between educational gaming and the way that teachers and students made use of ICTs. On their websites and in their advertising material, both schools claimed that they were up-to-date with the pedagogical use of ICTs. In practice, however, the teachers at Hillsdale School turned out to have far more experience using ICTs on a daily basis. For example, during my observations they frequently used video projectors to show online resources or they managed the distribution and feedback on student assignments via the local Learning Management System (LMS). The difference between the two schools was confirmed by Joan from Redville School, who remarked that "we only advertise our use of computers to attract a wider group of students" [Redville School, field notes]. For her, Redville School's greatest strength was that the teachers were dedicated to handling the pedagogical problems that might arise from having a large group of bi-lingual students. This pedagogical focus was difficult to take advantage of in an educational "marketing" context when trying to attract new students.

5.5.3. Teacher collaboration

All in all, five social studies teachers agreed to participate in my design experiments – Joan and Karen from Redville School, plus Marianne, Thomas and Poul from Hillsdale School. Combined,

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[42] For ethical reasons, the names of the participating schools, teachers and students have been fictionalised.

they represented a relatively homogenous group as they were all experienced teachers with an average of approximately 20 years of teaching experience each. However, there were also some difference among the teachers in terms of ICT literacy and game experience. In contrast to the Redville teachers, the three teachers from Hillsdale School were more familiar with using ICT as a part of their teaching. Moreover, Poul and Thomas had more experience than Marianne, Joan and Karen with different forms of games and simulations. To some degree, these different levels of experience with ICT and games influenced the teachers' pedagogical approaches when they adopted and adapted *The Power Game* scenario in relation to their everyday teaching practices.

One of the lessons to be learned from design-based research is that teachers are often reluctant to participate in intervention projects due to time constraints and work pressure (Squire et al., 2003; Barab & Squire, 2004; Elf, 2008). This study confirms that finding because my project was clearly seen as an extra work-load in addition to the teachers' everyday duties and assignments. Even though Joan, Karen, Marianne, Thomas and Poul had all agreed to collaborate with me as a part of my research project, this collaboration was not unproblematic and involved different forms of *negotiation*. As a part of my design interventionist approach, I *did* expect some form of resistance from the field when my research agendas and the teachers' interests met. Tensions were bound to arise when, as an inexperienced outsider, I asked the teachers to collaborate with me on a series of design experiments involving a relatively unfamiliar design for learning, namely an ICT-supported debate game. In this way, my teacher collaboration always involved a certain risk of failure as the teachers had the option, at any given moment, to expel me as a researcher from their field of practice. In other words, my presence as a researcher relied on a mutual contract of *trust*, where all I had to offer them was the chance to try a new type of learning material and possibly develop their own teaching practices. In that sense, my teacher collaboration represents a more *limited* form of collaboration than the somewhat extended forms of collaboration often described by design-based researchers which often involve entire research teams with several researchers, teachers and designers (Squire et al., 2003).

Seen from a broader perspective, fieldwork is never failure proof as it always involves the *risk* of being banned from the field, which may limit the possibilities for generating new insights (Schrøder et. al. 2003). At the same time, resistance from the field can also be used to conceptualise and describe emic perspectives on the practices and worldviews of the social actors in a given study. In the following sections, I briefly summarise some of the empirical findings that emerged as a part of my collaboration and negotiation with the teachers participating in this study. My

collaboration and negotiation with the five teachers mainly consisted of three aspects: 1) adjusting expectations, 2) logistics, and 3) exploring the unknown.

5.5.4. Adjusting expectations

As mentioned, the teachers in this study decided to spend time on my project based on *personal interest*. During the preliminary meetings at Redville School and Hillsdale School, the teachers described how they hoped to learn more about educational games, develop their pedagogical use of ICTs and/or extend their knowledge in relation to social studies education. The teachers' expectations toward my project were expressed in rather general terms, which is understandable as my own research goals were loosely defined at this stage in my fieldwork. Furthermore, *The Power Game* scenario only existed as a design sketch, which made it difficult to provide detailed descriptions of the game sessions. Nevertheless, the teachers accepted that the research questions and the game design were relatively open to revision and agreed to collaborate with me.

At the same time, the teachers were well aware that our collaboration was based on an *asymmetric* relationship as they were basically helping me to complete a research project without being paid for doing extra work. For some of the teachers, this asymmetry between "me" and "them" became more explicit when they found out that I had no previous experience teaching in upper secondary schools and that my educational background was in the humanities, whereas they each had a master's degree in the social sciences. During one of the preliminary meetings, Karen told me that my lack of a similar educational background "disappointed" her as she had expected that I, as a "researcher", would be able to provide her with up-to-date "school subject-related knowledge" on political communication as a part of our collaboration [Redville School, field notes]. This comment indicates the important status of school subjects in the teachers' self-image as professional practioners within the institutional setting of upper secondary education (Dale, 1998).

Even though all the teachers expressed an interest in my project, they clearly had *different levels of expectations*. For example, the teachers from Hillsdale School were more hesitant about my proposals for fieldwork than the teachers from Redville School. There are at least two explanations for this difference in the level of involvement. First of all, the two groups of teachers had different expectations about being part of my research project. Joan and Karen from Redville were quite "excited" about the idea of being able to participate in a research project, while the teachers at Hillsdale were somewhat used to on-going research projects at their school on the pedagogical use of ICTs. In this way, Thomas, Marianne and Poul viewed me and my research

project as one researcher and one project among many others. Second, Thomas, Marianne and Poul were all deeply involved with preparing for the reform, whereas Joan and Karen would not be teaching any new "reform classes" in the upcoming 2005-2006 school year. Thus, Joan and Karen were less burdened by extra preparation work, which meant that they had more resources available for my project.

As these examples suggest, the teachers at Redville School became quite engaged in my project, while the Hillsdale teachers more or less saw themselves as doing me a favour and often set clear limits on their conditions for participation. To some degree, this difference of engagement influenced my data collection as it was often easier for me to gain permission to do participant observations or receive feedback on the game resources from the teachers at Redville School. In this way, I continually tried to adjust *my* expectations toward the teachers in relation to their willingness to collaborate.

5.5.5. *Logistics*

One of the major obstacles of design interventions is that they have to "fit" into teachers' everyday practices and the curriculum planning at the local school level. I have termed this analytical aspect *logistics* as my fieldwork involved a lot of correspondence and planning with the social actors of the field before each of the five game sessions. After establishing contact with the participating teachers, I arranged meetings at each of the schools to introduce and discuss my project, which also involved project presentations in each of the five participating classes. Moreover, I had to get written consent from the principals and all of the participating social studies students to do video observations. In addition to this, I tried to coordinate my fieldwork with my collaboration with DR Education, which involved the design and re-design of the game website (cf. chapter 6).

One of the main logistical problems of this project was to allocate one-day blocks of time for game sessions with each of the participating classes at the two schools.[43] Without a coherent time frame of five-six hours, it would be difficult and possibly meaningless to run the election scenario. Moreover, the game sessions were *crucial* to my project as this is where the empirical data that documented the use of the game design would be generated that would allow me to analyse the meaning-making processes of educational gaming. At the same time, planning the game sessions was highly *vulnerable* to the curricular structures, time schedules and administrative procedures at the local school level, which were quite difficult to control or even grasp from my

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[43] Moreover, the date for the first planned game session with the election scenario was cancelled as it coincided with a student strike [*sic*] at 94 upper secondary schools against too high quotas in the classes, cf. *Politiken* 14-10-2006.

outsider's perspective. As mentioned, the difference between mandatory and elective courses meant that I abandoned my idea of exploring the game sessions as a crossdisciplinary form of teaching and limited my scope to social studies. Moreover, in addition to the fixed time schedule at the schools, there was an on-going series of organisational and curricular changes occurring due to the implementation of the 2005 reform. In summary, all the dates for the game sessions were changed two or three times, often only with a few weeks notice. In order to tackle the scheduling, Joan from Redville School even offered to conduct the game session on a Saturday, but this idea was eventually abandoned as too few students were willing or able to turn up at school on a weekend.

As mentioned, the limited flexibility of my fieldwork was particularly problematic in relation to the logistics of my design interventionist approach, which aimed to provide sufficient time between each game session to analyse the empirical data and refine the game design and my theoretical assumptions (Barab & Squire, 2004). Eventually, I had to accept that I had virtually no control over the planning or selecting of dates for the game sessions. My lack of influence on the dates for the game sessions also meant the cancellation of the collection of additional forms of data that could be used to *contextualise* the students' experience of the game sessions. For example, I eliminated a short online survey on the students' knowledge of politics and media which also involved a blog, where the students would be asked to keep diary on issues related to politics and the media. These methods for collecting data were intended to explore the relationship between students' formal and informal learning processes, which I assumed would be relevant in relation to their experience of the election scenario and their everyday knowledge of the media and politics (Buckingham, 2000; Sefton-Green, 2004). Finally, I also cancelled a series of design workshops intended to *inform* the design process of the game website through the involvement of teachers, students and designers from DR Education (Facer & Williamson, 2004). These changes meant that my original planned process of theory-driven design, use, and re-design had to be reconceptualised. Hence, I adjusted my expectations and concentrated on whatever feedback the teachers and students would provide before, during and after the five game sessions.

5.5.6. Exploring the unknown

As the aforementioned examples indicate, there were several clashes between my research agendas and the schools' everyday constraints. Thus, this institutional setting meant there were difficult conditions for exploring and developing new types of learning resources such as an ICT-supported debate game. The responses from the participating teachers made it clear to me that educational

games represented a relatively unfamiliar or *unknown type of learning resource*. Moreover, since I was unable to try the multi-player election scenario before the actual game sessions, the process of enacting *The Power Game* also represented an *unknown object of study*. So before having observed the first game session, it was difficult for me to communicate and explain the actual *process* of enacting the election scenario to the teachers participating in this study. Similarly, the teachers had to use their *scenario competence* in order to imagine the goals, roles, rules, resources and possible outcomes of the election scenario and then relate these game elements to their existing teaching practices and educational goals (cf. chapter 4). Thus, during the initial phases of my fieldwork, it was quite challenging for the teachers to picture and understand the implications of the game scenario. This can be illustrated by an example taken from the preparation phase prior to the first game session.

Even though the teachers had told me that they did not have time to be involved in the design process, Karen, who ran the first game session, decided that she would respond to my first drafts of the game instructions in order to ensure that *The Power Game* scenario would "work". In this way, she and I hoped to avoid chaos and confusion in the first game session, which we both viewed as a crash test. During two phone conversations, Karen gave valuable feedback on the game instructions, which she eventually approved after I had written more detailed descriptions of each phase of the game. Still, she was quite insecure about teaching with the election scenario as she had no prior experience with game-based teaching. Karen was especially reluctant about using the game website and she repeatedly tried to persuade *me* to teach instead of her. However, from the start of this study I had decided that I would not teach because doing so would severely reduce my opportunities for documenting teacher and student participation.

Karen's insecurity culminated with a lengthy "emergency" phone call the Sunday evening two days [*sic*] before the game session, which had been arranged several months in advance. On the phone, Karen started out by saying that she had decided "not to teach" with *The Power Game*, as she could not "see herself in it" [field notes]. During our phone conversation, it became clear that she was particularly troubled with the prospect of using the game website in relation to the election scenario. In the end, Karen agreed to teach with the game materials as originally planned, if she could also use an overhead projector to present the game scenario and skip the game website. Furthermore, I promised to help with any practical problems that might arise in the game session.

As this example illustrates, it was difficult for Karen to imagine how the game resources should be *enacted*, especially the use of the game website. Even though Karen had approved and even praised the final version of the game instructions, she still felt insecure about adapting the materials when she actually had to *prepare* for the game session. In this way, there was considerable difference between reading or commenting on the game instructions and actually trying to "see herself" teaching the game scenario. This points to one *dilemma* of conducting a research project with a teacher who had no prior experience with the actual object of study, which in this case was an ICT-supported debate game. On the one hand, Karen's emergency call provided me important insight into understanding that *The Power Game* represented a rather unfamiliar type of learning resource, which meant that other teachers might encounter similar problems when trying to *see themselves* in the same game design. On the other hand, it is quite likely that Karen might have overcome some of her insecurity if we had established a closer collaboration before the first game session, for example, by giving her a guided tour of the game website and discussing how it could be used in relation to the game scenario. However, a closer collaboration might also have prevented me from understanding how she would have responded to the material within a more naturalised context when she had to sit down and prepare for the game session. In the analytical chapters, I return to how Karen and the other teachers chose widely different approaches when adapting the game to their teaching practices.

5.6. Methods for collecting and analysing data

As mentioned earlier, this study combines the two methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis. Moreover, this study also involved a range of different *methods* for collecting and analysing data. Chronologically, the empirical part of the study falls into two phases. In the first part of the study, the empirical data was *generated* through a series of design interventions that aimed to follow the theory-driven steps of design, use and re-design as outlined by design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2004; cf. section 5.3). In the second part of the study, the data was transcribed, categorised and *analysed* in relation to the methodological framework of discourse analysis (Gee & Green, 1998; cf. section 5.4).

In order to understand the scope and the progression of the study, I briefly summarise the different phases of the fieldwork. The detailed project planning started in late 2004 and involved technical, logistical and instructional preparations. The fieldwork involved an extensive phase of project management, including establishing a partnership for the PhD project with DR Education as

well as finding teachers and students willing to participate. The actual data collection, which took place from January 2005 to May 2006, was divided into six phases:

1. **Design process:** The initial design phase included a review of existing educational games and relevant literature. Next, I specified the design of *The Power Game* scenario and the game website in collaboration with DR Education. After the game sessions, I interviewed members of the editorial staff at DR Education. In order to limit the scope of the thesis, I have decided not to include these interviews in my data analysis.

2. **Project presentations and observations:** In this phase, I made initial project presentations for the participating teachers at Hillsdale School and Redville School. In order to familiarise myself with the world of upper secondary education, I was allowed to observe the teachers' everyday forms of teaching. In addition to this, I also presented my project in each of the five participating social studies classes.

3. **Design workshops, blogs and online surveys:** These phases of the fieldwork were planned in order to inform the design process and contextualise the students' game experience in relation to their perception of politics and media. Due to lack of involvement from DR Education and the teachers as well as a low feedback rate from the students, these phases were eventually eliminated and they are not described further in the thesis.

4. **Game sessions:** Between October 2005 and May 2006, *The Power Game* scenario was played five times at Hillsdale School (three sessions) and Redville School (two sessions). Each of these game sessions, which lasted between five to seven hours, were documented using field notes as well as video and sound recordings. *This phase of data collection generated the main empirical material of the study.*

5. **Post-game interviews:** Shortly after each game session, I interviewed the teachers in relation to their experience and evaluation of the game scenario. Selected groups of students were interviewed one or two weeks after each of the game sessions in order to contextualise their game experience.

6. **Follow-up observations:** In an attempt to compare the students' participation in the game with similar pedagogical work forms, I also made follow-up observations of project work on the Muhammad Cartoons in the two participating classes from Redville School.

In the sections below, I describe how different methods were chosen to generate, collect and analyse the various forms of data from my fieldwork.

5.6.1. Design processes

The design process leading to *The Power Game* was mainly inspired by Jonas Löwgren and Erik Stolterman's approach to interaction design (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004). The aim of the design process was to create a "design vision" of the game concept which should be gradually refined

during iterative processes of design and re-design. During the whole design process, I wrote a design log, which contained an analysis of the social studies curriculum, reviews of existing game designs and relevant literature, sketches for the game scenario and reflections on possible changes. From the outset of the design process, I intended to include feedback from teachers, students, and designers from DR Education to help improve the game design. In order to structure the feedback, I planned two design workshops in relation to a working prototype of the game, but these were cancelled due to lack of time, resources and willingness to participate. Still, both teachers and students provided valuable comments on the game material and game website, particularly during the end-of-game discussions and the post-game interviews. In this way, I *informed* the design and re-design of game elements after each game session by including the participants' experience of the game scenario (Facer & Williamson, 2004). This approach to "informant design" is a less ambitious and less demanding method than more participatory or collaborative forms of design, which are notoriously difficult to realise within educational contexts (Scaife et al., 1997). The design process is described in more detail in chapter 6.

5.6.2. Observing the field

In order to explore educational gaming from an emic perspective, I tried to familiarise myself with the participating teachers and students' worldview through field observations. In many ways, I was a "stranger" to the institutional world of upper secondary education, to use Alfred Schütz' famously cited term (Schütz, 1964). According to Schütz, human beings more or less consciously represent different "types" when they perceive and interpret their surroundings. Thus, as a type, the "stranger" sees beyond the lived experiences of everyday life, but is not so detached as to lose contact with the people being studied. As a novice social scientist, I tried to use my position as a stranger as a bridge between creating a social scientific account and the everyday experiences of the teachers and students being studied. Even though I have a general upper secondary education, I had graduated more than 15 years earlier. Furthermore, I had no teaching experience within the context of upper secondary education. In this way, there was a clear distance between "me", being a novice researcher with a rather loosely formulated hypothesis on the educational value of game scenarios, and "them", which included experienced teachers with professional identities embedded in the local culture of their school setting, and social studies students who tried to fulfil the goals, roles and rules of "schooling".

In contrast to longitudinal, ethnographic studies, where the researcher remains in the same setting for several months or years, this study mostly focused on the "world-building activities" within the relatively short time span of each standalone game session (Goffman, 1961a). In order to contextualise my findings from the game sessions, I also observed everyday classroom interaction. In this way, I was able to observe how the game scenario both reflected *continuity* and *change* in relation to the teachers and students' existing pedagogical practices (Bloome et al., 2005). On one hand, the game scenario fit into the continuity of classroom life as all the participating teachers and students accepted the game scenario as a relevant way of "doing" social studies. On the other hand, the game scenario also required the teachers to re-configure their everyday ways of teaching. Similarly, the students had to play along with the framing of the game scenario and its domain-specific election practices which involved ideological conflicts, rules, roles and communicative resources (mainly speaking and reading). In the post-game interviews, I discussed some of these observations with the teachers and students in order to compare my interpretation as a "stranger" with their insider perspective.

During my fieldwork, I shifted between different foci for empirical observation. The anthropologist James P. Spradley distinguishes between observations that are *descriptive*, *focused*, and *selective* (Spradley, 1980: 33-34). Thus, my initial observations of social studies classrooms were mainly descriptive as the aim was to get an overall impression of existing teaching practices and the students' patterns of social interaction. Some teachers clearly enjoyed the regulated dialogue of classroom instruction, whereas other teachers were more interested in teaching through project-based work forms. After having observed a few lessons, I decided to create focused descriptions of how particular forms of teaching affected the social interaction of the classroom. Although the students were relatively quiet during classroom instruction, they did not necessarily direct their attention toward the teacher. Instead, several students would "secretly" play card games on their laptops, pass notes about what to do after school, send text messages on their cell phones, yawn, look out the window or comment on my presence. During group work and project work, the students would often engage in many different activities at once, frequently shifting between chit-chat, internet searches and more focused discussion in relation to their assignments. Based on these observations, I formulated working hypotheses on the relationship between different teaching practices and the value of the students' learning activities. In my post-game interviews with teachers and students, I returned to these hypotheses and asked the participants to compare their game experience with different forms of teaching, especially project-based group work.

5.6.3. Observing the game sessions

The next phase of observations after the project presentations in each class centred on the actual game sessions, which represent the main empirical data of this study. During the five game sessions, I shifted between descriptive and focused/selective forms of observation. Furthermore, I had invited a colleague to assist with practical aspects of the video observations during each of the game sessions. For example, he or she would help me with placing the video camera in the right positions, changing tapes and ensuring that the tapes were organised correctly. Moreover, each of my assisting colleagues was also asked to make general observations of the overall interaction in the classroom. Thus, after each session, I briefly compared my own impressions to both the assistant's observations, and the teacher's experience of the game session. As mentioned, I was unable to actually try *The Power Game* with upper secondary students before the first game session. This meant that the first game session was also the first time the game had ever been played which is why I decided to describe as many different aspects as possible of the game activities. In the next four game sessions, I shifted between *different areas of foci* as the game progressed through the *different game phases.* The main areas of foci were the teacher presentations, student ICT-based group work, student performances during the presentation and debate phases, and the final teacher-led discussion of the game result.

During the group work phases it was often difficult to decide what to observe, as four to six groups of students were working simultaneously. Thus, during all of the five game sessions, I found myself shifting perspectives between the different groups as it was difficult to find a fixed focus when observing the on-going interaction. These observations were further complicated by the fact that each of the groups represented different political ideologies and each of the students was assigned a particular role, which they more or less interpreted freely. Moreover, the group phases were characterised by a high level of activity, which made them even more complex to observe. Faced with this overwhelming complexity, I decided to mainly focus my observations on patterns of interaction that involved the whole class where the dialogue was either centred on the teacher or one of the students. Thus, my observations of the game sessions mainly concentrated on the teacher's presentation, the students' debate practices and the end-of-game discussion. This choice was partly made for pragmatic reasons in order to reduce the complexity of the observations and focus on isolated or "visible" forms of speaker-hearer relationships. More importantly this choice of focus was backed by my observations of the end-of-game discussions and responses during post-game

interviews, which made it clear that the teachers and students were particularly oriented toward the collective dialogical space of the election scenario. Consequently, *this study does not attempt to analyse the students' shared inquiry at the group level, but mainly focuses on the dialogic inquiry at the collective level of the classroom.*

In addition to these different choices concerning participant observation, I was also partly *involved* in the enactment of the game scenarios. As a part of my collaboration with the teachers, I had agreed to help them with any practical problems that might arise in relation to "using" the game resources of *The Power Game*. This included everything from printing out game instructions and helping distribute hand outs to students during the game sessions to trying to solve technical problems, for example, with Internet connections. During the game sessions, I was sometimes confronted with *dilemmas* in relation to the teachers' facilitation of the game scenario. In some cases, the teachers would unknowingly skip or mix up important game information – i.e. the premises for the final voting procedure. In these situations, I would ask myself: Should this be seen as a practical problem that I ought to help correct or should I simply study this as an integrated part of the teachers' pedagogical approach?

Initially, my research project mostly focused on the students' game experience, which meant that I had downplayed the role of the teachers. Thus, in the first game session, the teacher, Karen, often addressed me directly when giving instructions and expected me to intervene in the game session whenever necessary. This also explains why I interrupted Michael and Nazema's heated debate on immigration politics after the first presentation round as the *rules* of the election scenario stated that they were not allowed to debate but only to ask critical questions in this phase [GS 1: #3]. However, after realising the importance of teachers as *gatekeepers* for deciding whether to use educational games as well as the importance of their widely different *pedagogical approaches*, I decided to intervene less and divide my research focus more evenly between teachers and students. Still, it was difficult for me as a designer of the game to overlook the way in which teachers facilitated the *intentions* of the game scenario and sometimes omitted important information when instructing to the students. This clash between my intentions as a researcher-designer and the teachers' interests was particularly obvious at the end of the game sessions. According to the game instructions, the teachers were supposed to conduct an "end-of-game discussion" – i.e. by discussing the realism of the election result and relate it to curricular topics. However, once the election result had been announced some teachers such as Karen and Thomas were about to finish off and cancel the end-of-game discussion. Still, at the end of all the five game

sessions, I insisted that there should be a discussion of the game results even though that some students were exhausted after a whole day of political campaigning. This was based upon the assumption that the end-of-game discussions were crucially important as a way to promote the students' critical thinking in relation to the game result, subject-related issues and the real world of professional politics (Dewey, 1933; Klabbers, 2006; cf. chapters 3 and 4).

Similar intervention dilemmas arose in relation to the students. When introducing the game, the teachers all mentioned that my role was to observe and not to participate in the game sessions. However, when the students were in doubt about the tasks and objectives of their roles, they would sometimes turn to me as the game designer for clarification. In order to avoid unnecessary intervention, I often responded to these questions by re-directing the students to their teachers, who, for the most part, were able to help the students' in their interpretations of what was expected of them in their roles as politicians, journalists, and spin doctors within the game setting. Sometimes the students' questions turned into negotiations, for instance when Ramon, who played a journalist, repeatedly asked me and the teacher for permission to spy on the other groups' key political issues [GS 1: #2]. At other times, *I* would interrupt the students' on-going group work and ask them simple questions on what they were discussing or how they interpreted their roles.

5.6.4. Video and sound recording

The *primary* source of data for this study is based on video (and sound) recordings of the five game sessions. A decade ago, video analysis was still a relatively exotic phenomenon within educational research (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). With video technology becoming more accessible to researchers, recognition of the advantages of video recordings when analysing participants' patterns of interaction and discourse has grown (Rønholt et al., 2003; Norris, 2004; Goldman et al., 2007). One of the main advantages of video recordings is that it is possible to *review* particular video clips. Consequently, I used the video clips to help support my memory of the game sessions, which often involved several activities going on at the same time. Furthermore, video technology made it possible to show selected video clips to other researchers in data sessions for *collaborative* discussions of analytical strategies and possible interpretations.

Like any other technology for data recording, video also has drawbacks. Since I only used one camera, it was sometimes difficult to ensure the *continuity* of the video data, especially when changing video tapes. In order to solve this problem, I equipped each student group with a small MP3 sound recorder, which was used to document the sound of a full game session in a fairly

good sound quality. In this way, I was able to create a backup of the students' dialogue, which was used to support my transcriptions whenever the sound of the video recordings was lacking or insufficient. Another problem with video recordings is that the analyst easily becomes swamped with the massive amount of data generated (Collins et al., 2004: 19). Thus, it was both difficult to *frame* the events to be recorded using different camera positions and difficult to *select* data for more detailed analysis. This was particularly a problem in relation to the group work phases of the game scenario, where I was faced with a dilemma of trying to film four to six different political groups of students with one video camera. Deciding which groups to film and from what angle the group activities should be framed was a quite complex task. As mentioned above, I eventually decided to focus the video recordings and my video analysis on game phases where the teacher and the students had a shared focus of attention at the collective level of the classroom, especially the teacher introductions, the students' debate practices and the end-of-game discussions.

5.6.5. Video analysis

In section 5.4, I described general methodological aspects of an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis – i.e. the contingent relationship between discourse and action, the use of contrastive relevance, a holistic conceptualisation of the field, and the reflexivity of dialogical speaker-hearer relationships (Gee & Green, 1998). Furthermore, the logic-of-inquiry of my video analysis is based on theoretical assumptions about the interplay between inquiry, discourse and interaction within the context of educational gaming (cf. chapter 4). However, in order to apply these theoretical and analytical perspectives to my video recordings, it is necessary to consider the constraints and possibilities of interpreting recorded data from classroom settings. In an article entitled "Interactional Ethnography", Judith L. Green and her colleagues in the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group discuss how to conduct video analysis on the basis of an ethnographic approach to discourse analysis (Green et al., 2007). Inspired by the article, this study has focused on the following analytical issues.

5.6.6. Video data as text and action

Video recordings represent a *text* – a form of discourse. Thus, what is captured on video recordings are the actors (teachers and students) and their words and actions within the sociocultural context, as well as visual texts related to the physical spaces, objects and graphic artifacts of the classroom. However, the actors are also "texts for each other", not merely for me as a researcher, as they

"discursively and socially signal to each other" what their actions mean, what counts as appropriate and/or expected actions, and how the actions observed are connected to prior and future activity and knowledge (Green et al., 2007: 118).

In this study, my main focus is not on particular individuals or groups, but on the interplay or meaning-making *relations* between individuals and the classroom collectively. More specifically, I have analysed how the teachers and students enacted *roles* through social interaction, how they *positioned* themselves through various speaker-hearer relationships, and how their experience of the game sessions can be described as a scenario-based *inquiry* (cf. chapter 4). In this process, they created specific opportunities for expressing individual voices as well as different epistemologies and forms of knowledge production. Thus, my analysis of the video data unfolded by examining chains of interactions in a particular phase or sequence of activity – such as the teachers' introductions to the game scenario or the students' parliamentary debate performances. In this way, *the analytical aim of the video analysis was to explore the agency of individual members as they spoke, performed and interpreted the discourse (primarily spoken dialogue) at the collective level of the classroom.*

5.6.7. Transcription and coding

The transcription and coding of the more than 30 hours of video data from the game sessions was quite comprehensive as the video recordings involved multiple actors (teachers and students), multiple forms of social interaction (i.e. dialogue involving the whole class, group discussions and individual performances), multiple semiotic resources (i.e. spoken language, texts and video clips on websites) and various artefacts such as tables, chairs, pen, paper and computers. After reviewing, transcribing and coding *all* the video recordings from the first game session (approximately six hours of game activities), I narrowed my focus to game phases where the participants had a *shared focus* of attention that referred to the *collective* dialogical space of the classroom setting. Thus, for the remaining four game sessions I only transcribed and coded the game phases, where there were visible speaker-hearer relationships in terms of the teacher introductions, student debate practices and end-of-game discussions.

Inspired by Jordan and Henderson's discussion of different forms of coding, all the video transcriptions were coded by using the following categories: time codes, meaning-making processes (interpretations), action and discourse (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). This process was guided by the field notes that I had taken during my own observations, and by the analytical themes

that had emerged in relation to the post-game interviews with teachers and students. The actual coding of the data is illustrated below in Table 5.2, using an excerpt taken from the second tape of the second game session [GS 2: #2], where Marianne initiates her introduction to the game scenario.

Time code	Meaning (interpretation)	Action	Discourse
[GS 2: #2] 09:40	Marianne is reassured that the game has been tried before.	Teacher speaks to me and the students.	*(…) We'll just jump into it and get a head start… Well, it's good that it's been tried with another class. I think that's quite reassuring, that's really good. So that… so that's fine.*
09:50	Formal start of the game introduction. Contextual framing of the election scenario.	Turns and looks at slide #1 of game introduction (shown via overhead projector).	*And we'll stay with the election theme, you might say. Now, it's not a municipal election, it's a parliamentary election that is in focus today. The whole day.*
(…)	(…)	(...)	(...)

Table 5.2: An example of how the video data was coded.

Since each of the five game sessions followed the same game instructions for *The Power Game* within similar educational settings, it was possible to make relatively direct comparisons between particular phases of the different game sessions. In this way, the video data was both organised according to a *vertical structure* (the progression of each game session) and a *horizontal structure* (comparison between the different game sessions). This created a data set with the same selected phases from each of the five game sessions, which included five different versions of similar teacher introductions, similar debate practices and similar end-of-game discussions.

Based on these principles for selection, transcription and coding, I gradually started to explore and develop *analytical themes* in relation to different analytical perspectives (design perspective, teacher perspective and student perspective) and in relation to the logic-of-inquiry of my study described above (cf. section 5.4.2). During this phase of my data analysis, I also compared my preliminary findings with data from my post-game interviews in order to contextualise my analytical themes. In this way, a number of analytical themes emerged regarding different aspects of enacting and validating educational games, for example, how the game design was required to enact a form of relevant realism, the teachers' different pedagogical approaches and the students' attempts at playful exposure during the parliamentary debates (cf. chapters 6, 7 and 8).

5.6.8. Selecting key situations

Having identified a series of analytical themes, I then selected key *situations* from the video data that reflected the analytical themes in relation to my research question and the informants' own interpretations of the game sessions. According to Gee and Green, a situation can be defined as "a segment of social life", which is chosen on the basis of a particular logic-of-inquiry (Gee & Green, 1998: 134). Thus, the situations chosen in this study reflect how educational gaming can be enacted and validated as an interplay between inquiry, discourse, and interaction by *analysing* particular forms of social actions, practices and competencies. Situations include, for example, the way a particular teacher presented the role of the politician or how a student playing a politician positioned him- or herself through a personalised or a parodic ideological voice when presenting political issues to the audience of classmates/voters within the dialogical game space of the election scenario.

The key situations selected were then used to anchor a series of analyses of the discourse and actions in prior or subsequent events as well as similar events from other game sessions, which followed the principles of *contrastive relevance* and *part-whole, whole-part relations* discussed above (cf. section 5.4.1). This form of holistic and contrastive analysis could involve *backward* and/or *forward mapping* from a key situation or anchor point (Green et al., 2007). Based on the relatively fixed procedure of the five game sessions, it was possible to compare the same phases across each of the five game sessions. In this way, Karen's introduction to the role descriptions of the game scenario was comparable to Marianne, Thomas, Joan, and Poul's introductions. Similarly, it was possible to compare how different students-as-politicians from the National Party chose to present their key political issues. As the analytical findings show, there were both significant patterns of variance and invariance between the individual teachers and students' ways of interpreting and realising the game scenario.

5.6.9. Video responses

Methodologically, videotaping in a school presents dilemmas because it *interferes* with classroom practices. The presence of a video camera easily draws the attention of students in an educational context. However, even though I video taped five game sessions with five different teachers and five classes with a total of about 90 students and more than 30 hours of film, I did not experience episodes that made me seriously question video recording as a valuable approach for exploring the meaning-making processes of educational gaming. Moreover, I did not receive any negative

responses from the students in relation to being videotaped. Even though the students expressed no concerns about being filmed, they were well aware that their participation in the game sessions was being recorded. From time to time, some of the students, especially some of the boys, would react to the presence of the video camera by "acting out" or giving exaggerated performances in front of the lens. This often occurred if I, or my assisting colleague, were absent when the camera was recording. Hence, these performances can be seen as *video responses* to my presence as a researcher and the presence of the camera. These performative reactions are quite similar to findings documented in other studies based on video research among Danish general upper secondary students (Slot, 2008; Frølunde, in press).

The only negative response I received from being filmed came from one of the teachers, Marianne, from Hillsdale School, who was quite concerned about the ethical aspects of video recording. Similar to the other four game sessions, the students or their parents had to provide written permission stating that they had consented to being filmed as a part of my research project. However, when I presented my project in Marianne's class, she interrupted me and claimed that the consent forms I wanted the students to sign were legally questionable [Hillsdale School, field notes]. This took me by surprise because I had mailed the consent form to her in advance for approval. More specifically, Marianne insisted that the consent form explicitly stated that the video recordings would only be shown in "closed research fora". In the end, I agreed to amend the text to be able to continue my project, which means that the video recordings from this class can only be shown to other researchers.

In a brief conversation after my presentation, Marianne explained that she was concerned about any ethical problems that might arise from recording and showing video data of the students' participation. She assumed that the students' emotional behaviour during the game might be harmful to them if their performances were exposed in a compromising context. As Marianne had predicted, many students *did* become emotionally engaged in the five game sessions, especially in relation to winning or losing the election. In spite of this, none of them expressed any concern about playing the game or being filmed. Instead, they often made jokes about their performances and the presence of the camera. For example, when there were conflicting interpretations of what had or had not been said during the debates, the students referred to the video camera recordings as a possible way of finding out "what really happened". Marianne's somewhat protective reaction toward video recording can also be seen as an expression of her *own* fear of losing "face" (Goffman, 1967a). When she interrupted my project presentation, she made the

following comment to the students about her own role as a teacher in the ensuing game session: "I am definitely going to make mistakes. Then Thorkild and other researchers can sit and laugh at them [*sic*]!" [Hillsdale School, field notes]. As this self-deprecating remark indicates, Marianne was not fully comfortable with the idea of playing the game and being filmed as it involved the possibility of being "scrutinised" by me or other researchers. This negative reaction to video recording also indicates how the teachers were somewhat reluctant about accepting my presence as a "stranger" in their professional field of practice (Schütz, 1964; cf. section 5.5.2).

5.6.10. Teacher interviews

As mentioned, the empirical analyses in this study do not aim to explore teachers or students as individual persons, but rather to explore *relational* aspects of how the social actors of the field enacted and validated the game sessions. However, in order to contextualise the participants' experience of the game sessions, I conducted separate post-game interviews with all the teachers and with selected groups of students from each game session. The five teacher interviews were semi-structured and followed the same procedure with open-ended questions related to their experience of the game scenario (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002: 344). The interviews were all based on the same interview guide containing ten questions. The first seven questions focused directly on the teachers' game experience, i.e. the teacher's positive and negative reactions toward teaching with the game scenario, the relevance and the planning of the game sessions in relation to curricular goals, pedagogical aspects of teaching with the game, the integration of the game scenario with computer media, and suggestions for improving the game design. The final three questions, in contrast, addressed more general aspects of educational gaming, for example, how the game scenario could be seen as a competence-oriented form of teaching, the educational value of role-playing, and barriers for using educational games in upper secondary education. The aim of the teacher interviews was two-fold, as I both hoped to be able to use the teachers' interpretation to contextualise my own interpretation of the game sessions, and to be able to explore general problems and opportunities for teaching with educational games as seen from a teacher perspective.

Each teacher interview was conducted shortly after each of the five game sessions in order to take advantage of the teachers' vivid memory of the game experience. As the interviews did not focus on personal or biographical details, most teachers preferred that the interview took place in the relaxed "backstage" atmosphere of the teachers' common room (Goffman, 1959). This meant that colleagues of the teachers being interviewed would sometimes come by and interrupt the

interviews. On average, the interviews were scheduled to last 30 minutes. However, there was a significant difference in the teachers' *willingness* to be interviewed and this is reflected in the length of the interviews. Thomas and Karen were interviewed for about 25 minutes, Joan for 45 minutes, and Poul and Marianne for approximately 60 minutes. During the interviews, the focus of our conversation shifted between the teachers' overall interpretations of the game sessions, their formative evaluation of the game design, and general perspectives on the status and role of games within an educational context. In this way, the interviews represent a mix between a *hermeneutic* approach, where the aim was to let the teachers describe and interpret their game experience in their own words ("emic" perspective), and a more *pragmatic* approach, where the aim was to evaluate, improve and/or inform possible re-designs of *The Power Game* scenario (design perspective).

5.6.11. Group interviews with students

As mentioned earlier, my analytical aim was to describe and interpret relational aspects of the students' participation within the educational game context. So instead of portraying the students through individual interviews, I decided to conduct *group interviews* with two selected groups of students in order to explore patterns of variation and invariation regarding their game experience which could be related to their membership of particular groups within the game sessions (Morgan, 1997; Halkier, 2002; Patton, 2002). Thus, by maintaining the original groups from the game sessions, I hoped to re-create and explore different aspects of the social interaction, discourse and inquiry that had shaped their game experiences.

One or two weeks after each game session, I conducted a group interview with two groups of students. The groups were chosen on the basis of *contrastive relevance* in order to explore different patterns of variation in the students' game experience. My overall criteria for selecting groups were to include one example of a "winner" group and one of a "loser" group in relation to the results of the game. Thus, I assumed that the students' interpretation of the game scenario, to some degree, was influenced by the emotional highs and lows of winning and losing the election (Goffman, 1961a). Furthermore, in the first four out of the five group interviews, I decided to include the group that represented the National Party since nearly all the students distanced and positioned themselves in relation to this ideological position. In the last game session, there were six instead of four political parties, which partly explain why the National Party did not have the same political influence on the game session. Thus, the National Party was not included in the last interview. Some students did not show up for various reasons because they were ill, taking driving

lessons, at the doctor's, had an appointment with the careers teacher etc. On average, there were between six to eight students present in each interview, which corresponded well with Halkier's recommendations for conducting group interviews (Halkier, 2002).

In order to explore patterns of variation between the group members' interpretations of the game sessions, I structured the group interviews around the discussion of the following topics:

1. What was your overall experience of participating in *The Power Game*?
2. How can role-play (and other game types) be used as a form of teaching?
3. How do the roles in the game relate to your own political experiences?
4. How realistic was *The Power Game* in relation to a real-life parliamentary election?

These questions formed the basis of the different phases of the five group interviews, which all lasted between 50-60 minutes. Seen in retrospect, the third question was somewhat problematic as it was quite abstract and often required me to re-phrase it several times to be understood as well as a high degree of reflection from the students. Consequently, this question often generated quite different answers that reflected a wide diversity of different political experiences and opinions among the students.

In contrast to the semi-structured teacher interviews, the group interviews were more loosely structured and often touched upon other topics than I had predicted. For example, some of the students were very keen on discussing game design and came up with numerous suggestions for "improving" the design of *The Power Game* scenario – i.e. by elaborating the role descriptions or extending the time limit of the game. In this way, the group interviews were also used to *inform* the design and re-design of *The Power Game* (cf. chapter 6). In addition, at the end of the group interviews, I showed the students two presentation videos from the game website made by the Danish People's Party and the Red-Green Alliance as a part of the 2005 parliamentary election. I selected the two clips in order to promote reflection and a discussion of the students' views of contrasting political ideologies, which was a recurring theme in the game sessions. Finally, I assumed that the students' interpretation of two video clips could be used to relate their experience of the game sessions with a broader perspective on the complex relationship between young people, politics and news media (Buckingham, 2000).

During the group interviews, I mostly focused on how the students that had played politicians interpreted the election scenario, as they often were the centre of attention during the

game sessions. Focusing on the politicians was also difficult to avoid as they were usually more talkative than the other students in the group interviews. Thus, their high response rate to my questions indicates that the students who played politicians were more engaged in the game than the students who played other roles. At the same time, it also suggested that the students who played politicians were generally more used to giving elaborated answers within a school context. This interpretation was backed by the teachers' comments on the game sessions, which often categorised the politicians as belonging to an "active" group of students. To prevent the politicians from dominating the group interviews, I also encouraged the students who had played other roles (i.e. as journalists, spin doctors, stakeholders) to contribute with their perspectives. Moreover, I often asked group members to comment on whether they agreed or disagreed with each other's opinions. In this way, I assumed that a *dialogue between differing perspectives* would help ensure the validity of the interviews by generating converging and/or contrasting interpretations (Halkier, 2002).

5.7. Validation

The final methodological issue in this chapter concerns the question of the validity or "trustworthiness" of my empirical-analytical findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This explorative study is based on *qualitative* research methodologies, which imply that validity is not something that can be measured or evaluated on the basis of hypothetical deduction common to the natural sciences (Patton, 2002). Instead, the validity of this study should be evaluated on the basis of the quality and trustworthiness of my findings in relation to my logic-of-inquiry, which involves my research question, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. The main research question of this dissertation is to explore how a particular game scenario was enacted and validated within a particular educational context. This question is based on the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4, which assume that educational games – especially debate games – are able to facilitate meaningful forms of dialogue, social interaction and inquiry-based learning.

Empirically, the research question has been explored in relation to a series of design interventions with a debate game on parliamentary elections within the context of Danish general upper secondary education. As described above, these design interventions *generated* data on educational gaming, which are analysed from a design perspective (chapter 6), a teacher perspective (chapter 7), and a student perspective (chapter 8). Multiple methods have been used to *collect* different forms of data that have been transcribed and coded in order to identify analytical themes to be explored through these perspectives – mainly design methods, participant observation, video

observation, and post-game interviews with teachers and students. In this way, this study aims to achieve validity and trustworthiness through *triangulation* of different theoretical-analytical perspectives and different data types when exploring the social phenomenon of educational gaming (Denzin, 1978). The point of triangulation is *not* "to demonstrate that different data sources or inquiry approaches yield essentially the same result" (Patton, 2002: 248). Rather, the aim is to explore consistencies by searching for "convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories" (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 126). Thus, the different data sources, themes and perspectives are used *to situate the phenomenon of educational gaming as a research object* (cf. chapter 1). In this way, the multiple methods and multiple forms of data involve a careful reflection of the particular points (of view) that are used to triangulate the phenomenon, which both refers to the "location" of my research interest and the phenomenon itself.

At the same time, the triangulation of multiple data sources and multiple methods also increases the complexity of validating the empirical findings in this study. This results in the potential danger of analytical incoherence when, for example, dividing the analysis into a design perspective, a teacher perspective and a student perspective on educational gaming in spite of the fact that these perspectives are closely connected and mutually constitutive. The problem of analysing different perspectives in relation to the same empirical data can also be described as a problem of *context* (Dourish, 2004). Thus, the term context both refers to understanding the design-in-use (i.e. students reading game hand-outs or teachers presenting the phases of the game scenario) and understanding how the teachers and students' game practices were related to existing ways of "doing" school. In order to confront this divergence, I will summarise how design-based research and discourse analysis implies two different but complimentary conceptions of context and validity.

5.7.1. Validity and context when doing design-based research
As mentioned earlier, this study combines the methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis which are based upon the epistemologies of the "engineering model" and the "enlightenment model", respectively (Hammersley, 2004; cf. section 5.1). By following different *rationales*, these two approaches offer slightly different, albeit complimentary, views on context and validity. Seen through the lens of design-based research, *context* refers to different aspects of design-in-use. Thus, when Barab and Squire declare that "context matters", they imply that design experiments should be contextualised by exploring how teachers and students actually *use* particular *designs* (Barab & Squire, 2004: 1). Furthermore, the *validity* of design experiments ultimately

depends on the ability to produce new theoretical insights (cf. section 5.3). In this design interventionist study, *The Power Game* scenario was designed, used and re-designed in order to validate my initial theoretical assumptions on the educational value of a "realistic" game design (cf. chapters 3, 4 and 6). By conducting a series of design experiments in upper secondary classrooms, both the game design and my theoretical perspectives would gradually change. Thus, the validity of the design interventions is founded upon a *pragmatist* exploration of the relationship between theoretical assumptions and the use of a knowledge-based game design for teaching and learning. Interestingly, even though design-based researchers often insist that "context matters", this methodological approach offers no coherent theoretical or analytical framework for validating design-based findings in relation to the practices and epistemologies of the social actors in an educational context.

5.7.2. *Validity and context when doing discourse analysis*

In contrast to design-based research, which assumes a close link between context and validity in relation to *design-in-use*, the discourse analytic approach taken in this study views context as a "relational property" of social interaction and discourse per se (Dourish, 2004: 22). This means that the different aspects of an educational game context are dynamically defined and emerge in relation to particular forms of social action, i.e. the way in which the teachers and students' game experience and knowledge aspects were continually shaped and re-shaped through different forms of inquiry, interpretive frames, role-taking, ideological positionings and domain-specific speech genres (cf. chapter 4). Thus, the aim of my discourse analytic approach is to describe and understand *The Power Game* sessions by contextualising how the dialogical interaction and shared inquiry between teachers and students were *negotiated* through particular speaker-hearer relationships.

According to Gee and Green, the validity of a discourse analysis is not constituted by arguing that the analysis "reflects reality" in any simple way (Gee & Green, 1998: 159-160). As humans, we *construct* our realities, although what is "out there", beyond human control, places serious constraints on this construction. Thus, "reality" as such is not "only" constructed (Hacking, 2000).[44] Furthermore, just as language is always *reflexively* related to situations so that both make each other meaningful, so, too, a discourse analysis, "being itself composed in language, is reflexively related to the 'language-plus-situation' it is about" (Gee, 2005a: 113). As an analyst, I

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[44] This pragmatist approach to discourse analysis can also be described as *discursive realism* (Schrøder et al., 2003: 45).

have interpreted my data in a certain way, and those data, so interpreted, render the analysis meaningful in certain ways and not others. Thus, validity is *never once and for all*, as all interpretations are open to on-going discussion and dispute. Neither is the analysis completely "subjective" or "relativist", as there will be always be criteria, which can be used to judge the validity of a discourse analysis.

Gee and Green propose three criteria that can be used to evaluate whether a discourse analysis is valid. The first criterion is *convergence*, which means that a "discourse analysis is more, rather than less, valid… the more different analyzes of the same data or related data, or different analytic tools applied to the same data yield similar results" (Gee & Green, 1998: 159). This criterion clearly echoes the notion of triangulation described earlier. Thus, the validity of the discourse analyses presented in this study depends on the degree to which the analytical themes and different perspectives converge in relation to my logic-of-inquiry.

Agreement is Gee and Green's second criterion which implies that analytical findings are more convincing the more 'native speakers' of the social languages in the data, or other discourse analysts, agree that the analysis reflects how such social languages actually function in such settings (Gee & Green, 1998: 159). This study tried to reach agreement by presenting my preliminary analytical findings to the social actors of the field, especially in the post-game interviews, which were based on my successive accumulation of experience during my design experiments. However, since the teachers (and students) were not willing or able to participate in closer collaboration, they were not directly involved in the detailed data analysis. My collaboration with each of the teachers simply stopped after each game session and succeeding post-game interview. On the other hand, potential disagreements between "me" and "them" on the interpretation of the data would not necessarily invalidate the findings presented in this study. Based on Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy and Schütz' notion of the "stranger", I will argue that the findings presented here provide a valuable *outsider's perspective*, which can be used – or might even be necessary – in order to understand how teachers and students enact and validate game scenarios within actual classroom settings (Bakhtin, 1986; Schütz, 1964).

Gee and Green's final criterion for validity is *coverage*, which refers to the extent to which the analysis can be "applied to related sorts of data" (Gee & Green, 1998: 159). This includes being able to make sense of what has come before and after the situation being analysed and being able to predict what might happen in related situations. Thus, in this study I have tried to achieve coverage in my analysis by comparing and contrasting different situations – both across and within

each of the five game sessions. Coverage may also be described as possibilities for *generalising* the analytical findings in this study. As with other small-sample forms of qualitative research, the generalisation of classroom research "has nothing to do with representativeness" due to the fact that qualitative studies do not live up to the sample-size requirements necessary to match this objective (Schrøder et al., 2003: 148). Following Schrøder et al., the criterion of generalisation in classroom studies can take two forms. One is to make *internal generalisations* about the findings, as when my analysis shows that the students performing as politicians through *The Power Game* scenario in five social studies classrooms can be conceptualised as a range of different ideological voices. In order for such generalisation to be meaningful, "the interpretation should remain sensitive to the diversity and possible ambivalences of the data" (Schrøder et al., 2003: 170). At the same time, the analysis presented here also tries to reduce this diversity to a form that provides a platform for recommended practice – especially in terms of game design and game pedagogy. This aspect is closely connected with the second criterion for generalisation, which concerns *external generalisation*. Thus, one of the aims of my analysis is to generalise my findings in relation to broader perspectives on educational gaming and educational game research.

5.7.3. *Validating validity*

According to Barth, any tradition of knowledge generates specific criteria for *validating* knowledge (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). Thus, my way of doing educational game research also implies particular criteria for validating the validity [*sic*] of my analytical findings. For the purpose of this project, I have aimed to answer my research question by combining the two methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis as I believe that they are able to offer valuable and complimentary analytical perspectives on the educational use of a particular debate game within the context of Danish upper secondary education. As these two approaches suggest, the meaning-making processes of educational gaming refer to both the social actors' adaptation of the actual game design *and* to emerging patterns of inquiry, social interaction and discourse – which could be directly or only indirectly related to the game design. Below, Table 5.3 summarises how these two methodologies imply different research aims and different notions of context and validity:

Focus	Design-based research	Discourse analysis
Research aim	Generate knowledge and explore theories through iterative design interventions	Understand social phenomena through analytical perspectives (logic-of-inquiry)
Context	Account for pragmatic aspects of design-in-use within educational settings	Describe the meaning-making processes of particular social actions and practices
Validation criteria	Refine theoretical assumptions and designs in relation to actual design-in-use	Trustworthy (re-)descriptions of social phenomena

Table 5.3: An overview of the design-based research and discourse analytic approaches applied in this study.

As the table shows, the different aims, contexts and validity criteria of design-based research and discourse applied in this study can be used to analyse complimentary aspects of educational gaming. Moreover, the methodologies are both founded on the pragmatist assumption that the meaning-making processes of educational gaming are based on an inextricable relationship between *knowledge* and *action* which can be traced and understood through various analytical strategies for abductive reasoning (cf. section 5.2).

Depending on the perspective (design, teacher or student), the analytical context takes on different meanings in the analytical chapters, which also implies different premises for the constitution of validity. Obviously, the distinction between the different perspectives is not clear-cut, and the division into perspectives primarily represents *analytical strategies* for exploring different aspects and analytical themes in the empirical data. The question, then, is how to validate the validity of these perspectives. According to Elliot W. Eisner, a good qualitative study can help us "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991: 58). Ideally, then, readers of this study should be able to adopt the same viewpoint as articulated by me as the researcher, and be able to reconstruct the premises for my analytical findings on educational gaming whether they agree with them or not.

6. Designing the game

This chapter analyses the pragmatist process of designing and re-designing *The Power Game* as a learning resource. The chapter is divided into six parts structured on the chronology of my design interventionist approach. First, I describe overall aspects of the design process leading to *The Power Game*, which includes a short review of existing games and relevant research literature, the generation of two design hypotheses and my collaboration with a major Danish developer and distributor of learning materials. The second section describes main features of the game scenario and the game website. In the third section, I discuss how the design interventions in this study can be understood from a pragmatist perspective by exploring two analytical themes. Thus, section four analyses the discrepancy between the intended "realism" and the actual relevance of particular game elements in *The Power Game* scenario. Similarly, the fifth section describes how the integration of game activities and online video clips resulted in a clash between interpretive frames. Finally, the chapter concludes with a tentative set of principles for the further design of educational game scenarios.

6.1. Framing the design process

From the outset, this PhD project has been part of the DREAM consortium, which has implied certain obligations. Thus, the project was initially supposed to explore the design and use of edutainment software in close collaboration with the Micro Lab (*Mikro Værkstedet A/S*), a Scandinavian provider and distributor of educational software. Second, my empirical studies were to be conducted within the context of Danish upper secondary education. However, after my first meeting with the Micro Lab in August 2004, it became clear that the company had no experience with or any plans for developing products for upper secondary education, which was seen as a smaller and more demanding market than primary education. Instead, the director of the company suggested that I could re-design and explore the use of their online debate platform *The Web Parliament* (*Webparlamentet*), which had been developed by the researcher-designer Jeppe Bundsgaard.[45] *The Web Parliament* is basically a content management system (CMS) modified to facilitate online parliamentary debate on different topics (i.e. animal rights) among secondary

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[45] *The Web Parliament* is located at this address: www.webparlament.dk.

school pupils, who are assigned positions as being either for or against certain issues. As an optional part of the debate scenario, the pupils may also go on to present arguments and proposals to real politicians. Based upon an action research approach, Bundsgaard had been able to engage teachers, students and local politicians in parliamentary debate via *The Web Parliament* (Bundsgaard, 2005). Nevertheless, I was somewhat sceptical about basing my design interventionist study on this particular learning resource.

First of all, the actual design of *The Web Parliament* is primarily text-based, which could result in a rather low aesthetic and emotional appeal to potential users (Norman, 2003). However, my main reservation concerned the open-ended aims and organisation of the debate scenario. Thus, it was difficult for me – as a potential user, researcher and re-designer – to understand and conceptualise how the actual online debate procedure could be integrated with particular classroom activities. More specifically, I feared that many upper secondary teachers would find the debate scenario too complex and time consuming, especially the idea of involving local politicians as well as students and teachers across different classes and schools. Consequently, the debate scenario resembled a standalone design experiment more than a "blackboxed" learning resource that could be transferred to different contexts and distributed to a wide audience (Fishman et al., 2004). Finally, any major re-design of the functionalities and debate features of *The Web Parliament* would depend heavily on the goodwill and abilities of its sole designer, who at this early stage of my research project was busy finishing his PhD dissertation. After weighing the pros and cons of this learning resource, I decided to end my collaboration with Micro Lab and design an educational game scenario from scratch. Ideally, this approach could provide me with greater flexibility when designing and re-designing game elements in relation to my research question and theoretical assumptions.

As mentioned in the introduction, my personal interest in educational games mainly revolves around *debate games*, i.e. "opinion-based" game scenarios where participants are assigned roles and positions in order to debate particular topics. Thus, I assume that debate games are able to facilitate the dialogical "interanimation and struggle between one's own and another's word" in relation to educational goals and practices (Bakhtin, 1981: 269; cf. chapter 3). For the purpose of this design-based research project, I was particularly interested in designing a game scenario based upon parliamentary election – a political phenomena which is sometimes referred to as the ultimate "power game" of a representative democracy (Bruce-Gardyne & Lawson, 1976; Smith, 1996). According to my working definition of games (cf. Figure 2.1), parliamentary elections have obvious

game features:

- **Conflict-based scenario**: Opposing political parties try to constitute a new government in their favour
- **Well-defined goals**: Participants attempts to win the election by advocating their key political issues
- **Rules for debate:** Discursive ground rules for conducting parliamentary debate
- **Contingent outcomes:** Difficult to predict how the individual votes will determine the outcome of the election
- **Multiple roles**: Politicians, journalists, spin doctors, stakeholders and voters
- **Resources:** Participants communicate their ideologies through various forms of semiotic resources
- **Validation:** Public evaluation of who will win/has won the election and for what reasons

As this overview suggests, a parliamentary election represents an obvious topic for an educational game scenario. Thus, parliamentary elections have been a well-known phenomena within educational contexts for several decades, and upper secondary schools around the world quite commonly arrange "mock elections", i.e. in relation to upcoming parliamentary or municipal elections (Holck, 2005; Børhaug, 2008). By building upon a familiar game phenomenon, I assumed that teachers and students would be more willing to recognise and accept the game scenario as a legitimate learning resource.

At the initial stage of my research project, I only had relatively vague assumptions about why and how to design a parliamentary election game for upper secondary education. Nevertheless, I formulated a series of *design goals* based upon my own research interests, the limited resources of my project and my assumptions about the demands and goals posed by the context of upper secondary education. The primary aim of the game design was to create a scenario that would allow students *to enact the debate practices of a Danish parliamentary election* by researching, presenting and arguing in relation to particular political issues. In real-life Danish elections, professional politicians often present their key political issues and confront their opponents in order to persuade potential voters, especially during "duels" and "party leader rounds", which are broadcast on national television. Thus, the idea was to let these performative and competitive aspects of a Danish parliamentary election to represent the core game elements of upon which *The Power Game*. Consequently, the "quantitative" aspects of a parliamentary election should only form secondary design elements, i.e. detailed analysis of voting procedures, funding for the election campaign, political budget proposals etc.[46]

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[46] Again, this design choice should be understood within the context of a *Danish* parliamentary election – i.e. fundraising arguably plays a far more explicit role within the context, for example, of an American election campaign.

Furthermore, the game design had to meet a range of pragmatic criteria. Thus, it should be *adaptable* with existing teacher practices in upper secondary schools. Moreover, the game was intended to support *emerging forms of knowledge* to ensure relevance for different educational aims and contexts. Finally, the election scenario should be *re-designable* in relation to my research question and my explorative, design interventionist approach. In order to conceptualise the actual game design, I reviewed a series of different sources, which included a comparative analysis of related game designs, research on Danish parliamentary elections, and research on the relationship between young people, news media and politics. Due to time constraints, this review process was not thoroughly systematic, but mostly served as background knowledge that could *inform* the conceptual design of *The Power Game*. Based upon the initial design specifications and reviews, I formulated the two design hypotheses explored in this study. My first hypothesis assumed that the game design should be "realistic" in order to be relevant for upper secondary social studies teachers and students. The second hypothesis assumed that it would be possible to "blend" the game environment with online media in order to support the students' learning processes. The next two sections describe these hypotheses in more detail.

6.1.1. Design hypothesis: Realistic game design

On a global scale, myriads of different debate game formats exist that are mainly targeted at English speaking audiences (cf. chapters 2 and 3). However, when analysing existing debate games that could inform the design process, I narrowed my review to Danish game titles. I subsequently refrained from making complex comparisons between the debate practices of Danish and Anglo-American parliamentary discourse and election campaigns (Ilie, 2004). The review also excluded educational computer games as this game format would be far too costly and time-consuming to produce or even re-design within the limited scope and budget of my project. Furthermore, many educational computer games, especially edutainment titles, are often based upon rather behaviouristic and cognitivist assumptions of learning, which implies a narrow conception of "skills" and "facts" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2005; Wegerif, 2007: 197). Thus, I assumed that it would be difficult to use an educational computer game for teaching students the *competencies* required for understanding, enacting and reflecting upon the ideological conflicts and debate practices of a parliamentary election scenario (cf. chapters 3 and 4).

Eventually, my review focused on relatively low-cost game formats that offered flexible possibilities for design and re-design. This included the ICT-supported role-playing game

Homicide (*Drabssag/Melved*), the online debate games *Global Island* and *Take Part Too*, the parliamentary role-playing game *In the Service of the State* (*I Statens Tjeneste*), and the aforementioned online debate platform *The Web Parliament*. Based upon my analysis and experience with playing these games, I categorised them according to different knowledge aspects (Barth, 2002), as well as how they could provide *opportunities* and *limitations* in relation to the design goals of this study. Below, Table 6.1 summarises this preliminary analysis:

Game title	Knowledge aspect	Opportunities	Limitations
Homicide (*Drabssag/Melved)*	Assertions	Students use math, science and social studies to solve a murder mystery	Difficult to match the narrative frame with existing curriculum
	Modes of representation	The students' roles and tasks are supported by the game website	The game design is costly, comprehensive and quite complex
	Social organisation	The school setting is transformed into an inquiry-based crime lab	Breaks the interpretive frame of everyday school practices
Global Island & *Take Part Too*	Assertions	Students may debate across different classrooms, schools and countries	Based upon pre-defined debate topics
	Modes of representation	Online access at anytime from anywhere to the debate environment	The game interfaces are complex and difficult to comprehend
	Social organisation	Students are required to evaluate other students' online "speeches"	Difficult to get an overview of the actual process of playing the game
In the Service of the State (*I Statens Tjeneste*)	Assertions	A political role-playing game in which students vote on different issues	Mostly focuses on voting procedures instead of being able to debate
	Modes of representation	The game activities are framed by relevant roles and video clips	The roles are limited to pre-defined characters with pre-given tasks
	Social organisation	Relatively easy to understand and facilitate the voting scenario	The drama pedagogical approach turns the game into political theatre
The Web Parliament (*Webparlamentet*)	Assertions	Adversarial debate between students on real-life political issues	The aims and content of the debate scenario may be too open-ended
	Modes of representation	The debate is facilitated through a CMS on the basis of background material	The text-based game design may have low aesthetic appeal
	Social organisation	Supports shared inquiry between students (and real life politicians)	Based upon a design experiment, which is difficult to reproduce

Table 6.1: A preliminary comparison of knowledge aspects, opportunities and limitations of different educational games in relation to the design goals of this study.

Obviously, this overview does *not* represent an exhaustive interpretation of these game scenarios and their actual uses, but merely documents how I analysed them in order to inform the design process that lead to *The Power Game*. After weighing the limitations and opportunities of the different game formats, I decided to base the game design upon an ICT-supported role-playing

format. This configuration hence seemed to provide a relevant way of exploring students' game-based competencies as well as high flexibility in relation to the pragmatic constraints of conducting design experiments within upper secondary education.

In tandem with my review of different game formats, I also mapped the "semiotic domain" of parliamentary elections involving particular practices and distinct forms of political communication (Gee, 2003). From a dialogical perspective, parliamentary debate does not represent a universal or transparent form of communication (cf. chapter 3). Instead, debate cultures are constituted by different debate practices and (more or less) ritualised forms of communication embedded into particular, often national, contexts (Olsson, 2004; Ilie, 2004). To illustrate this point, consider a Danish parliamentary election, which runs for three weeks, whereas the full presidential election procedure in the United States, beginning with pre-primary campaigns and ending with inauguration day, lasts for more than a year [*sic*]. Confronted with such cultural differences, I narrowed my review of parliamentary elections to a Danish context that included textbooks for social studies in upper secondary education (Rasmussen, 1997, 2007; Friisberg, 2004; Kromanne, 2001) and relevant research literature on the same topic (Jørgensen et al., 1994; Jønsson, 2001; Femø Nielsen, 2004). Based upon this body of literature, my research question and my design goals, I formulated a working hypothesis for the initial game design. Thus, I assumed that the game design should be based upon *a realistic scenario with emerging forms of knowledge that could offer students engaging roles and positions, be adaptable to existing teaching practices, open for re-design, and promote critical thinking.*

This design hypothesis was based on a series of aims and assumptions that related to both the affordances of the game format (ICT-supported debate game) and the goals, practices and knowledge forms of parliamentary debate within a school setting. Thus, the game scenario had to be *realistic* to ensure that students would be able to enact competencies that related to the social studies curriculum. As games represent simplified models of real-world conflicts, I presumed that a realistic game design might prevent the election scenario from being perceived as an event or "mere fun" compared to more "serious" forms of knowledge represented by textbooks within the school subject related context of upper secondary education (Gee, 2003). The design was also intended to offer *emerging forms of knowledge* that allowed teachers and students to transform, explore and question the "content" embedded in the game scenario in relation to different purposes. In contrast to textbooks or printed material, the computer medium was able to provide a generic quality to the content of the game. Thus, as a part of the game scenario, the students should be able to find key

political issues by conducting "web quests" on the websites of the real political parties (Dodge, 1995). As a result, the generic content of the election scenario would be continually updated to match the ever-changing events and issues in the contingent world of professional politics. Hence, instead of basing the game upon fixed facts about the existing political parties, the students would have to frame and formulate their own political agendas by interpreting their assigned ideological positions *and* the political issues found on the websites of the real-world parties. The students would thus be able to explore the knowledge-based *assertions* of the election scenario from multiple points of view (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). Consequently, the game design was based upon a inquiry-based view of learning which assumed that "content" cannot simply be transferred to the learner. Instead, the students' game-based learning was assumed to unfold as a continual construction and re-construction of knowledge through an active process of generating and exploring particular hypotheses in relation to the election scenario (Dewey, 1916; cf. chapter 4).

In order to support their inquiry-based learning processes, the students would be assigned *roles* and *positions* that could help them identify with and perform game-specific tasks from different perspectives (Mead, 1934; Bakhtin, 1986). Consequently, the students would be able to experience the election scenario and communicate through the interpretive frames of politicians, journalists, spin doctors, and stakeholders. In order for the game to "work" as a learning resource in a pragmatic sense, the game also had to be *adaptable* with existing teaching practices (Squire et al., 2003). Furthermore, the game scenario should be open for *re-design* in relation to my design interventionist approach, which refers to my research question, theoretical assumptions and the limited design resources available for my PhD project (cf. chapter 5). Finally, the game design should not only offer an engaging and meaningful learning experience, but also try to promote students' *critical thinking* in relation to the educational purposes of the election scenario (Dewey, 1933). Thus, I assumed that the students' critical thinking could be promoted through teacher-guided reflection, i.e. through a discussion or "debriefing" at the end of the game session, which compared the game result with real-life parliamentary elections and curricular aspects of the game scenario (Klabbers, 2006).

Parallel to formulating a design hypothesis, a design sketch for *The Power Game* gradually emerged. The design researchers Jonas Löwgren and Erik Stolterman argue that a design process represents a fully *dynamic dialectic* between three levels of abstraction: the vision, the operative image, and the specification – cf. figure 6.1 below (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004).
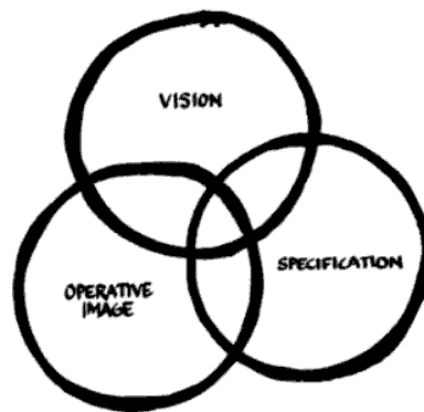
Figure 6.1: The three abstraction levels of the design process (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004: 17).

In relation to my design interventionist approach, the *design vision* refers to an organising principle for structuring attempts to respond to my design goals and research question. Thus, the goal of creating and exploring the educational use of a parliamentary election game represents the initial design vision in my project. However, this design vision was both "elusive" and "contradictory", as there were several different options for *realising* the vision (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004: 18). Consequently, I tried to sketch and externalise different versions of my design vision in order to create an *operative image*. For Löwgren and Stolterman, there is always "tension" between the original vision and the operative image that forces the designer to shift between the abstract and the concrete. From the outset, I tried to sketch a design that could be used to explore the working hypothesis formulated above. But the relationship between the vision and the operative image was also dependent upon exterior demands to the design and the reification of the designed material. Löwgren and Stolterman refer to this third aspect of the design process as the *specification*. In my case, the specification of the game design was shaped by how I presumed that teachers and students would be able to adapt *The Power Game* as a new type of learning resource. Furthermore, the specification of the design was also highly dependent upon my collaboration with DR Education (*DR Undervisning*), the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's educational unit, which I will describe in section 6.1.3.

6.1.2. Design hypothesis: Blended game environment

As mentioned above, my original aim was to design an educational game on parliamentary elections that was realistic, engaging, adaptable to existing teaching practices, open to re-design, allowed for emerging forms of knowledge, and supported students' critical thinking. In addition to this, I also

aimed to study whether, or how, digital media could be integrated with the game activities of the election scenario. This sub-question was another central premise of my PhD project and the DREAM consortium as such, which aims to explore the interplay of "new" and "old" media in relation to various forms of learning resources and learning environments.[47] Thus, in addition to the students' use of the real-life political parties' websites, I decided to explore the possibilities for *blending* the students' game activities with online video clips within the interpretive framework of *The Power Game* (cf. chapter 2).

Theoretically, endless possibilities exist for integrating game formats with interactive media (Hanghøj, 2007). Based upon my review of different game formats, I narrowed my focus to the integration of role-playing activities and online video clips, a combination that has been applied in different educational game designs such as *Homicide, In the Service of the State, Environmental Detectives* and *Savannah*. Thus, I assumed that adjusting and re-designing the role-playing activities of *The Power Game* scenario would be relatively easy in relation to particular video clips. I accordingly aimed for a high degree of flexibility in relation to my research question and iterative processes of design and re-design. However, this choice left me with a new batch of design problems: What video clips should be included? Who should produce them? How should they be integrated into the role-play? And, most importantly, why should they be included?

To answer these questions, I decided to contact DR Education which had recently established itself as the only major state-sponsored distributor of online video clips to Danish schools via annual subscriptions to a resource called */school* (*/skole*), which is basically a collection of digitised video clips from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's archives.[48] Editors and journalists at DR Education thus continually import video clips into */school* and frame them for educational purposes by grouping them into themes (i.e. "history", "physics", "literature" etc.) and by writing teacher guidelines. When I contacted DR Education in late 2004, the organisation had considerable success with selling */school* subscriptions to Danish primary schools. As a result, DR Education assumed that they could address upper secondary schools through a similar initiative entitled */upper secondary school* (*/gymnasium*), which also could provide a platform for *The Power Game*.

Even though the comprehensive DKK 323 million development project that led to the creation of */school* has been well-documented, the actual use of */school* by teachers and students'

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[47] See www.dream.dk for more information on the aims of DREAM.
[48] In late 2004, the newly created */school* archive at www.dr.dk/skole had about 12.000 video clips. As of 13-11-2008, this number had increased to 23.374 video clips .

was and still remains relatively undescribed (ITMF, 2004). One exception is a study of learning materials in Danish upper secondary education commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Education that compares the use of textbooks with DR Education's theme-based collection of video clips entitled *Images of Power* (*Magtens billeder*) (Olsen, 2005).[49] Olsen's study found that even though this interactive learning resource differed from the familiar textbook approach to the concept of "power", both teachers and students were quite enthusiastic about working with the website. Furthermore, Olsen praised the design of *Images of Power* for providing an "overview through a structured collection of materials, including links", which "promoted problem-oriented discussion" (Olsen, 2005: 95). Thus, the video clips in this online learning environment afforded possibilities for transfer between the theoretical concept of "power" and the students' everyday knowledge of the same phenomenon. However, teachers and students also remarked that this type of learning resource required a sufficient time frame, which meant that it was ill-suited for isolated use in a single lesson and was more relevant in relation to extended project work.

Even though Olsen's findings were somewhat preliminary, they clearly indicated that online video clips could be a relevant learning resource for social studies in upper secondary education. Similarly, research on media education and young people's conception of politics also suggested that news clips could be a valuable resource for understanding parliamentary elections (Buckingham, 2000; Andersen, 2003; Olsson, 2004). Based upon this body of research, I formulated my second design hypothesis, which assumed that *student understanding of a parliamentary election scenario could be supported through the "blend" of game activities (role-playing) and the interactive use of online video clips from DR's archives.* In relation to my first design hypothesis, I was particularly interested in exploring how particular video clips might help students identify with their roles and frame their committed participation in the election scenario.

6.1.3. Collaboration with DR Education

When I first contacted DR Education, I assumed that the development process could benefit from their professional staff of web designers, programmers and journalists as well as the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's rich media archives, which contain thousands of digitised video clips. In addition, DR Education, which has an effective distribution network and is widely regarded as a well-respected Danish public-service brand, might help me to establish contact with upper

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[49] Find *Images of Power* (*Magtens Billeder*) at www.dr.dk/magtensbilleder. The video clips are all based on a series of documentaries that reflect different aspects of "power" in relation to *The Power Report* (*Magtudredningen*), a publically sponsored inquiry into the power structures in Danish society (Christiansen et al., 2003).

secondary schools and teachers. However, since DR Education is a part of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's large scale organisation, its production processes were quite complex and costly. My attempt to understand the intricacies of the educational unit was complicated by an on-going organisational re-structuring, which meant that I was referred back and forth between three different editorial sections. Thus, during my first round of meetings with DR Education in late 2004, they suggested that I should test and improve the *Images of Power* website described earlier (Olsen, 2005). But since the website had no video clips on parliamentary election, this idea was too far from my design goals. In a second series of meetings, another editor at DR Education proposed designing an educational computer game on parliamentary elections based upon DR Education's existing edutainment game entitled *Power Play* (*Magtspil*) on the *Images of Power* website in which players are randomly quizzed about their knowledge of politics.[50] Basing *The Power Game* on this game format, however, was quite problematic, as it implied a rather simplistic learning environment. In this way, I would not be able to my objective of creating a realistic and competence-oriented election scenario that should be relevant to the upper secondary social studies curriculum.

Eventually, I was attached to a project group that aimed to develop a theme-based collection of video clips entitled "Media and Politics" for */upper secondary school*. Both they and I were interested in exploring how this website could be integrated with my proposed educational role-play on parliamentary elections. Furthermore, we agreed to design an online newspaper entitled "Political Party Press" that could be used either within the game scenario or as a separate learning resource. By the end of 2004, a contract was written establishing a more formal collaboration funded by DR Education, DREAM and the Danish Ministry of Education. According to the contract, my main tasks were to specify and co-develop the conceptual design and content for the game resources, which would be owned and distributed by DR Education. Furthermore, I had to ensure that the design could be related to the research question, hypotheses, and empirical fieldwork of my PhD project. After a series of meetings, I specified the aims and features of the three game resources in a design document, which can be summarised as follows:

- **The Power Game:** Instructions and hand-outs for the role-playing game on parliamentary elections
- **Media and Politics:** Collection of relevant video clips and texts on parliamentary elections, primarily based on the Danish parliamentary election in 2005
- **Political Party Press:** Online newspaper for presenting different political parties during an election

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[50] The *Power Play* game is located at: www.dr.dk/magtensbilleder/undervisning/magtspil.htm.

The design of these three resources was based on the assumption that they could either be used separately or in combination. Based upon my limited knowledge of upper secondary teachers' preferences and level of ICT competence, I assumed that a tool box containing different learning resources on politics and the media would be able to satisfy the different teachers' variety of needs. However, as I will return to later in this chapter, this assumption was quite open-ended and ambitious in relation to the teachers' everyday practices and demands.

Even though the project group at DR Education expressed a clear interest in my research project, the actual design process and collaboration posed several challenges mainly related to: 1) the constraints of the template for the web design, 2) creating content for the "Media and Politics" website, 3) the lack of resources for design workshops and other ways of generating user feedback during the design process, and 4) a lack of coordination between DR Education production plans and my design interventions at two upper secondary schools. Starting with the web design, DR Education's production processes proved to be quite inflexible concerning design solutions differing from their existing CMS design template for */school* and */upper secondary school*. However, since this design template had primarily been developed for showing texts and video clips through a rather fixed configuration, it was quite difficult to use the template as basis for a single web page that integrated all three game resources (instructions, video clips and an online newspaper). In the end, the web designer on the project split the original concept into three web pages, which meant that the "Media and Politics" website had a layout that was similar to the other themes on */upper secondary school*, "Political Party Press" was moved to a separate "game environment" that required a log-in, and *The Power Game* instructions were presented on a third page. This solution was clearly a compromise, however. At an internal review of the finished website, a visiting editor from DR Interactive, another department of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, praised the content, but criticised the overall web design for being too fragmented as there was "no proper integration" between the role-playing game, the online newspaper and the video clips [field notes]. This critique illustrates some of the problems associated with presenting new types of learning resources within a rather fixed design template.

The second challenge concerned the content of the game website. In addition to writing instructions for all the game resources, I had agreed to select the video clips for the "Media and Politics" website. Selecting from the hundreds of relevant video clips from DR's archives covering the parliamentary election in 2005 proved to be reasonably demanding. Many of the journalistic news clips represented a rather dramatic or simplistic view of a parliamentary election,

a tendency documented in a research report on Danish news media coverage of the 2005 election (Bro et al., 2005). Thus, most news journalists (including the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's) prefer to discuss different political aspects of the on-going election by highlighting *personal* aspects (i.e. politicians' personal victories or defeats) or political *processes* (i.e. "revealing" examples of spin or showing "brand new" exit polls), instead of focusing on the political *content* at stake in a parliamentary election. Consequently, it was difficult to find news clips that represented counter-views to the journalistic mainstream, i.e. ones showing the powerful role of political stakeholders or the opinions of minor political parties. Having selected the video clips for the website, I wrote short explanatory texts for each of the sub-categories and each of the video clips.[51] This task was also quite challenging, as the texts and video clips had to be relevant for both *The Power Game* scenario and for separate use.

Third, my collaboration with DR Education suffered from a lack of resources for design workshops or other initiatives that could provide feedback from potential users on early prototypes of the game resources. Initially, I proposed a close collaboration with DR Education that could help me to understand their production processes and provide the editorial staff with details on my research aims and empirical findings. In this way, I assumed that both they and I could benefit from a collaborative design process when trying to integrate *The Power Game* scenario with their design template. However, DR Education only had a minimum amount of resources allocated for my project and expected me to deliver my part of the contractual agreement without further involvement on their part. This meant that I only had a limited amount of time and opportunities for discussing the initial design visions and conceptual sketches that formed a crucial part of the early stages of the design process (Stolterman & Löwgren, 2004). Furthermore, the lack of resources made it impossible to involve DR Education's staff in design workshops or other ways of generating responses from teachers and students through an "informed" design process (Facer & Williamson, 2004). Consequently, no pre-runs of the game resources took place, and the first game session became a "crash test" of both the actual role-play and the game website (cf. chapter 5). Obviously, these constraints also made it difficult to predict or specify teachers and students' actual needs in relation to the design of the game resources.

The fourth and final challenge posed by my collaboration with DR Education concerned the lack of coordination between their production plans and the time schedule for my

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[51] To ensure high quality explanatory texts, I collaborated with an author affiliated with a Danish publisher of social studies textbooks, but our collaboration eventually collapsed as the publisher rejected that DR Education should have right to edit any of the publisher's original texts for online publication.

fieldwork. Thus, even though I had made the initial design specifications by March 2005, DR Education decided to postpone the actual production of the game website until a few weeks before their official launch of */upper secondary school* in October 2005 at a national exhibition for educational technology. This meant that I was unable to view and present teachers with a working prototype of the game resources until the design team had created a final version two weeks [*sic*] before the first game session. As I would be unable to test the game resources within a classroom setting before the actual game sessions, I feared that participating teachers and students would encounter frustrating technical bugs, especially when using the online newspaper. Furthermore, when the teacher at first game session, Karen, was finally presented with all three resources, she claimed that it was impossible to include the online newspaper in the planned one-day game session [GS 1, field notes]. Eventually, I decided to skip the online newspaper for all the game sessions as the time frame of the game sessions was too restricted to risk major failures caused by technical or usability problems, teachers' lack of ICT competencies and/or unstable broadband connections. Instead, I narrowed my empirical focus to *The Power Game* scenario and the video clips on the "Media and Politics" website. Seen in retrospect, after having observed the students' intense level of activity in the five game sessions, I agree with Karen that my initial plan of combining all three learning resources was too ambitious in relation to the limited time frame of the game scenario. Thus, the actual use of the online newspaper, whether it is to be used as a separate module or whether the game session should be extended beyond the one-day time limit, has not been explored as a part of this project.

6.2. Game resources

In this section, I go into more detail about the assumptions and main features of *The Power Game* scenario and the "Media and Politics" website that comprise the empirical focal point for this design interventionist study. Links to both of the learning resources were e-mailed to the participating teachers before each of the five game sessions conducted from November 2005 to May 2006.

6.2.1. The game scenario

The Power Game scenario is an ICT-supported debate game on election processes and political communication that spans a roughly five to seven hour time frame. The game scenario is classroom based and divides students into either four (A, B, D, F) or six political groups (A, B, C, D, E, F) representing different ideologies within the context of the Danish political landscape. Each political

party refers to both idealised ideological positions (i.e. the Socialist Party, the Liberalist Party etc.) and the political opinions of real-life Danish political parties. The relationship between the in-game parties and their real-life counterparts is show in Table 6.2 below.

In-game political parties	Real-life political parties
A: The Socialist Party	F: Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti* or *SF*) Ø: The Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*)
B: The Social Democratic Party	A: The Danish Social Democrats (*Socialdemokraterne*)
C: The Social Liberal Party	B: The Danish Social-Liberal Party (*Det Radikale Venstre*)
D: The Liberal Party	V: The Danish Liberal Party (*Venstre*)
E: The Conservative Party	C: The Danish Conservative Party (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*)
F: The National Party	O: The Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*)

Table 6.2: The relationship between in-game and real-life political parties in *The Power Game*.

The progressive phases of the election scenario can be summarised in ten phases, which involve different game activities, cf. Table 6.3 below.

PHASE	ACTIVITY (DURATION)
1. Teacher introduction	Walkthrough of the game phases and roles with the support of power points or overheads (20 minutes).
2. "Exit poll"	Initial voting based on the students' own political opinions (10 minutes).
3. Distribution of groups / roles	The teacher presents the four to six political groups. Descriptions of roles and parties are distributed. The students choose their roles (10-20 minutes).
4. Group work	Each group uses the real-life political parties' websites to discuss and prepare three key political issues and a strategy form winning the election (100-120 minutes).
5. Presentations and questions	The classroom is re-arranged so that the politicians form a panel in front of the classroom audience. Politicians present key political issues for each group. Journalists are allowed to ask critical questions (40 minutes).
6. Negotiation between parties	Discussion between the different groups about possible political alliances (20 minutes).
7. Final political debates	The politicians go back to the panel and summarise their key political issues. This is followed by questions from the audience and debate between the politicians (40 minutes).

8. Voting procedures	Voting ballots are distributed. The students both have to vote according to their own political opinions and on the most "persuasive" political party. The second category determines the outcome of the election (10 minutes).
9. Constitution of government	A new government is formed by the political parties, who receive the majority of the votes (10 minutes).
10. Discussion of game result	The teacher-guided discussion of the game result should both be related to real-life politics and to particular curricular goals (20 minutes).

Table 6.3: The game phases of *The Power Game* (adapted from the game instructions).

As will be discussed further in chapter 8 and 9, some of these phases were more important than others in relation to the election scenario's interpretive framing and overall aims. Thus, the main activities of the election scenario were clearly centred on particular *debate practices*, i.e. through preparing, presenting, questioning and debating political ideologies.

The aim of assigning students to imaginary political parties was to make them *experience* and *reflect* upon the relationship between their personal beliefs, the idealised ideological positions and the opinions of real-life political parties. Consequently, I assumed that the upper secondary students would be able to understand and imagine the in-game political parties as "a generalised other" (Mead, 1934). Obviously, the game scenario could have been modelled directly on idealised ideological positions (i.e. textbook definitions of "socialism") or restricted to the present opinions of the Danish political parties. However, inspired by Dewey's theory of inquiry-based learning, my aim was to give the students opportunities to actively explore, interpret, discuss, question and critically reflect on the complex relationship between different ideological perspectives (Dewey, 1916). Thus, instead of merely reproducing the opinions of the official parties or the theoretical definitions of the different ideologies, the students were expected to turn their understanding of political ideologies into practice by enacting different *game competencies* in terms of their scenario competence, social competence and communicative competence (cf. chapter 4). Simultaneously, I was aware that the open-ended framing of this task could cause confusion among the students. As a result, when playing the Socialist Party, the students could choose key political issues from *two* real-life parties: the Socialist People's Party (*SF*) and the Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*). Furthermore, the division into a pre-determined set of parties could also be problematic if new political parties emerged, i.e. the recently constituted centre party New Alliance (Y), which entered the Danish Parliament after the 2008 election. However, in order to balance the

amount of "left" and "right" wing parties in relation to the average number of students in a Danish upper secondary class, the game scenario was restricted to either four or six parties.

In addition to membership of the in-game political parties, each student was also assigned a *role* that represented professional practices during a general election. In order to engage the students in a "realistic" game setting, four roles were created: politicians, journalists, stakeholders, and spin doctors. The aims and tasks of the roles were described in general terms in short hand-outs to be distributed among the students – cf. Table 6.4 below.

Role	Goals	Responsibility
Politician	To communicate political messages to the voters	Determine the final political programme and lead negotiations
Journalist	To give a critical but fair coverage of the election	Prepare and ask questions to different politicians
Stakeholder	To promote a particular political cause or interest	Persuade others to adopt a particular political key issue
Spin doctor	To advice the politician on his or her communication strategy	Promote and evaluate political issues

Table 6.4: The assigned roles of *The Power Game* (adapted from the game instructions).

The role descriptions were relatively brief as the students were supposed to identify with a generalised image of their roles instead of being presented with full-blown "characters" that might distort the focus of the game on political ideologies.[52] As a result, *The Power Game* represents a somewhat functionalistic or pragmatic approach to role-playing, which is part of the explanation why I have re-labelled the game as a "debate game", since this term carries fewer drama pedagogical connotations (cf. section 2.5).

Furthermore, the election scenario represents a certain *hierarchy* among the four roles. Thus, the politicians play the most important role as the outcome (votes) of the election is based upon their ability to present and debate political topics. The journalists, spin doctors, and stakeholders, in contrast, only play supporting roles. From the outset, I was ambivalent about this role hierarchy, as it does not provide the students with equal status and equal opportunities to speak and listen within the dialogical game space. On the other hand, the role hierarchy reflected my

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[52] For the educational role-play in *In the Service of the State* (*I Statens Tjeneste*), students are given profile sheets for the characters that include background history, secret information and sub-plots unknown to other players. However, I would argue that although such pre-designed characters may add "fun" to the game play, they may also prevent the students from making their own interpretation of the ideological content of the game scenario.

design goal of creating a "realistic" game since the roles should imitate real-life parliamentary elections where politicians usually represent a more powerful group of social actors than spin doctors, journalists and stakeholders. At the same time, it was difficult to predict how this role hierarchy would be interpreted by the teachers who formed the students' political groups, and how the students would interpret the different game roles in relation to the existing "repertoire" of roles in a classroom context (Lyng, 2004).

It may be argued, as many teachers and students did in the post-game interviews, that a social hierarchy is an inevitable part of classroom teaching. Thus, some students will always be more "active" than others, i.e. by raising their hands and speaking up in class. As I only had limited prior knowledge of the students in each game session, I decided not to explore the details of the complex dynamic between their everyday student roles and their game roles. Instead, each teacher was asked to form student groups based on his or her own approaches to the game scenario. Furthermore, the teachers also decided whether or not the students should be allowed to pick their own roles within each group. In the initial four game sessions, all the students were allowed to pick their own roles. However, for the final game session, Poul, a teacher from Hillsdale School, decided which role the participating students would have. When interviewed after the game session, he described his selection criteria as follows:

> Poul: Yes, I've chosen them on the basis of my experience with, how should I put it, how eloquent they are; I mean when they give verbal presentations. I have some experience with that. That's why…
> Thorkild: Yes. You know them a bit in that sense?
> Poul: Yes. I simply stuck rather strictly to that principle. There are some students who I know have difficulties with saying something coherent, you know eh… Who are very insecure and prefer not to say anything objective or related to the school subject or objective in front of the class. And I avoided them as politicians. And then… I sat [down] … that's where I started. Then I went through the list and said to myself, now we need a leader, who could that be? Eh… And then a bit… a bit in relation to their opinions. I generally went for some sort of support, right, in relation to what I thought their opinion was [GS 5, teacher interview].

As this quote suggests, Poul preferred to "play it safe" as he chose the most articulate students to play politicians and positioned them in relation to the opinions they were likely to sympathise with. Other teachers chose quite different criteria when composing groups and would deliberatively try to challenge particular students in relation to their political opinions, for example, when Joan assigned Martin, an "active" student with explicit socialist opinions, to the National Party (cf. chapter 8). The

difference between the teachers' selection criteria illustrates the importance of creating a game design that could be *adapted* to different goals and interests. Thus, the design interventions in this study did not aim to promote a normative ideal of classroom dialogue, i.e. by striving for "ideal speech situations" and "the force of the better argument" (Habermas, 1981; cf. section 3.2). Instead, I aimed to explore and describe and understand how teachers would facilitate the game scenario, and how students would enact different competencies through the available repertoire of roles and contrasting ideological voices.

In addition to being members of a particular party and assigned roles as "election professionals", the students were also *voters*. Thus, shortly after the teacher had finished his or her introduction to the game scenario, the students would be asked to participate in an exit poll where they had to vote anonymously for one out of the six political parties/ideologies (A, B, C, D, E, F) that they identified with the most. Afterwards, the votes were counted and the result written on the board as a public announcement. The aim of the exit poll was two-fold. First of all, it was intended to engage the students in the ideological aspects (the "content") of the election scenario by asking them to take a personal stand. Second, the result was to be used for comparison with the final voting at the end of the game session. After the exit poll, the groups and roles would be distributed, and the students' role as voters would be put on the back burner until the final voting procedure when the students had to fill out a voting ballot divided into two sections. In the first section, the students had to vote (once more) for the party coming closest to their own political opinions. However, in the second section of the voting ballot, the students, using Aristotle's three rhetorical forms of appeal (ethos, logos, and pathos) as their evaluation criteria, had to vote for the party that had made, on an overall level, the most persuasive performance (Aristotle, 1991 [350 B.C.]; Ilie, 2004). This final vote was crucial to the students' experience of the election as it determined the *outcome* of the game scenario. Thus, the political party that made the best and/or most persuasive performance would win the election.

Splitting the final voting procedure into two reflected a number of design choices. Most importantly, the decisive votes of the game were *not* to be based solely upon the students' own opinions before and after the debates, as the preponderance of socialist and social liberalist voters among the general upper secondary students was likely to make the election result far too predictable. Thus, one of the educational aims of the game scenario was to let the students *experience* and *reflect* upon rhetorical aspects of political communication. Since the three rhetorical forms of appeal (ethos, logos and pathos) form a crossdisciplinary part of the Danish upper

secondary curriculum, I decided to base the decisive vote of the election scenario on them. However, I was also sceptical about this solution, as it risked putting too much emphasis on the rhetoric ("form") at the expense of the ideological aspects ("content") of the political debates. Furthermore, ethos, logos and pathos are complex, often overlapping analytical concepts, and the students only had limited amount of time for analysing the politicians' rhetorical performances and arguments within the game frame (Ilie, 2004). Subsequently, students could have difficulty providing detailed arguments about why a particular politician was persuasive in terms of an ethos, a logos and/or a pathos appeal. Finally, the rhetorical forms of appeal do not represent a core element in the social studies curriculum, but are more commonly taught within school subjects such as Danish or philosophy. Even though my study ended up being limited to social science classrooms, I kept these criteria for evaluation. This decision was backed by the new reform requiring upper secondary teachers to use more resources on planning and teaching through crossdisciplinary modules that was being implemented when I did my fieldwork (Danish Ministry of Education, 2005c).

Below, Table 6.5 summarises the design goals and game elements of *The Power Game* scenario in relation to Barth's three aspects of knowledge (cf. chapter 2).

Knowledge aspect	*The Power Game*
Assertions	Students are expected to participate in a mock parliamentary election where the aim is to find, prepare, present, debate, and evaluate key political issues according to personal beliefs, assigned political ideologies and rhetorical forms of appeal. The political parties that receive the majority of the votes for the most persuasive presentation win the election. The overall *educational aim* of the game is to let students experience and reflect on how political ideologies, election campaigns and parliamentary debates are enacted in practice.
Modes of representation	The election scenario is enacted on the basis of a set of game instructions (for the teacher), role descriptions for the students, and access to key political issues on the websites of real political parties. However, the main semiotic resource of the election scenario is the students and teachers' *spoken language.*
Social organisation	The *teacher* must facilitate the election scenario by introducing the various phases, roles, and student tasks, as well as by moderating the debate phases and the end-of-game discussion. Seen from a *student* perspective, the game alternates between various group activities and activities at the classroom level where particular students (especially politicians) present and debate key political issues in order to persuade potential voters.

Table 6.5: Overview of different knowledge aspects of *The Power Game* scenario.

As the reader may imagine, my attempt to create a "realistic" parliamentary election resulted in a rather complex game scenario, as it involved numerous different phases and activities. However, many of the game elements were also quite familiar to the participating students and teachers, who

were used to various forms of "mock elections" as well as project work, group presentations and political discussions in the class.

6.2.2. The "Media and Politics" website

In order to explore my second design hypothesis on the integration of game activities and online video, my objective was to design a website with video clips that could support student participation in the game-based learning environment. The resulting website "Media and Politics" is located on DR Education's website */upper secondary school* and is primarily based on short, digitised video clips from the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's archives, which have been "remediated" from their original context as part of news stories or documentaries, and supplemented by explanatory texts to support educational purposes (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). In order to meet DR Education's requirements, the website was designed to serve two purposes. First of all, it is to be used as a separate learning resource by teachers and students working with "Media and Politics". In this regard, the website is quite similar to the DR Education's existing themes on */upper secondary school* that include topics such as "Animation Island", "The Vietnam War", "Outer Space", "Innovation and Design" etc. Second, the website was part of my design interventionist study aimed to explore the integration of video clips with *The Power Game* scenario. The clips on the "Media and Politics" website are grouped into three overall categories with a range of sub-categories:

- **Roles:** Politician, Spin doctor, Journalist, Stakeholder, Voter
- **Election:** Highlights, Exit polls, Presentation videos, Participation
- **Communication:** Professional politics, Examples of spin, Rhetoric and trustworthiness

Each sub-category under the different "Roles" contains two video clips, whereas the remaining sub-categories contain more video clips, but a maximum of ten. See figure 6.2 below:
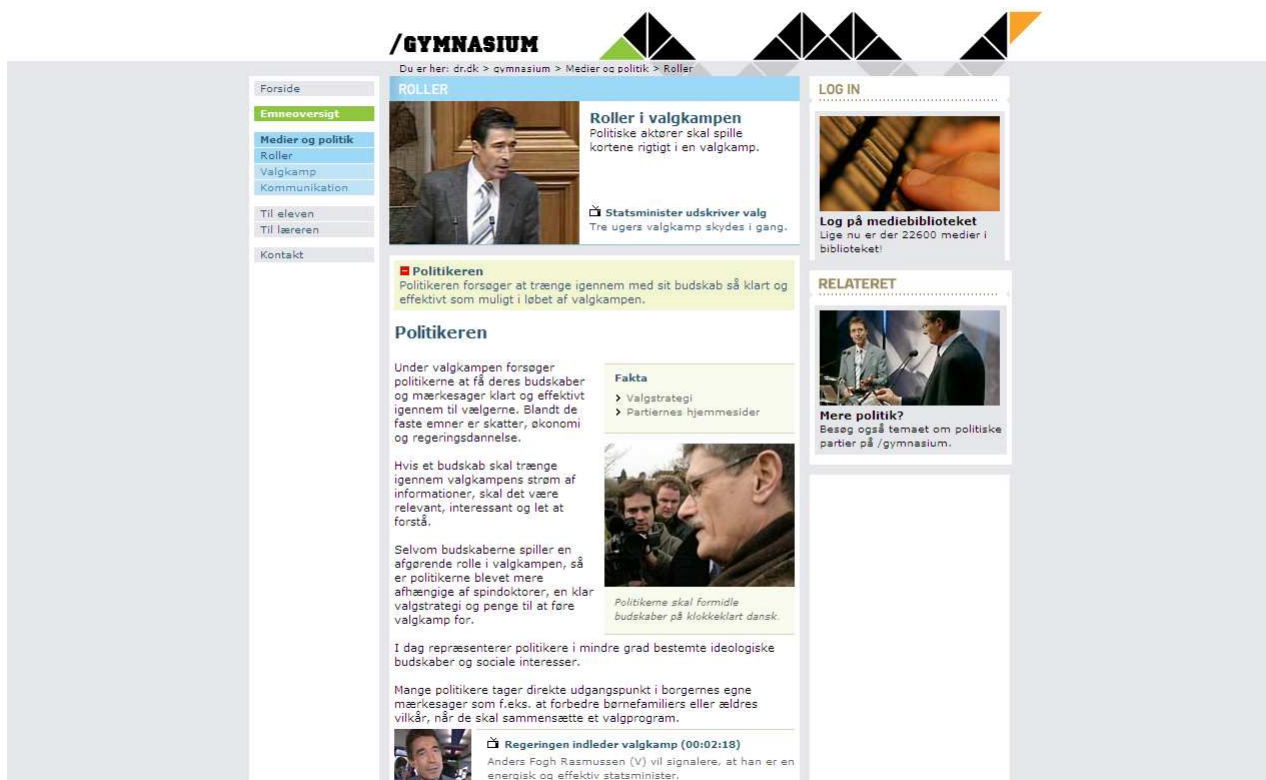
Figure 6.2: A screen dump from the "Media and Politics" website with explanatory text for the role of the politician. A thumbnail image for the first video clip is shown at the bottom of the page (www.dr.dk/gymnasium).

In collaboration with a journalist from DR Education, all the clips were selected from a large database of news clips from the Danish Broadcasting Corporations are archives primarily dealing with the then recently finished Danish general parliamentary election in February 2005. Each news clip is framed from a journalistic perspective and lasts approximately two minutes. One exception is the Danish political "Presentation Videos" from the 2005 general election in which each of the political parties running for election was given between four and five minutes to present themselves. By dividing the clips into different categories, I assumed that the students could use clips within the category "Roles" to "add realism" and identify with their roles and tasks in *The Power Game* scenario. Furthermore, I assumed that teachers could use some of the clips in the "Election" and "Communication" category to introduce the election scenario to students.

6.3. A pragmatic perspective on design, use and re-design

As mentioned earlier, this project is based on successive design interventions in five different social studies classrooms with *The Power Game* and the supplementary website "Media and Politics". These design interventions were guided by both an attempt to refine a theoretical perspective on game-based competencies *and* an attempt to design and re-design the game scenario. Thus, this

chapter focuses on the *pragmatic* relationship between my design hypotheses, the actual design of the game resources and how they were enacted and re-designed in relation to the actual game sessions and analytical findings. By taking an explorative approach to a rather open-ended game design (ICT-supported role-playing), my objective was not to develop or "test" a specific theory which could be inferred from the game design in any narrow sense (cf. section 5.3.2). Instead, the aim of my design interventionist approach was to identify relevant theoretical and analytical perspectives that both related to the actual game design and the teachers and students' realisation of the educational game scenario. Due to the constraints of my collaboration with DR Education and the participating teachers, this study involved a real risk of failure as the game design might have ended up being "unplayable" or unable to meet the requirements of a learning resource to be distributed and used within the context of upper secondary education. Since I had the main responsibility for designing *The Power Game* as the researcher/designer, the actual design interventions became driven by a pragmatic and heuristic focus on making the game design "work" according to the demands, expectations and responses of the participating teachers and students. Subsequently, the processes of design and re-design became less focused on developing new theories than on an attempt to understand how teachers and students would *adopt* and *adapt* the game scenario in relation to existing classroom practices.

Seen in retrospect, this pragmatic aspect of my design interventions can be described as "informant design", as I viewed the participating teachers and students as "experts" or "native informants" whose response to the game design would inform me on key issues that related to their experience of the game scenario (Facer & Williamson, 2004: 4). Initially, I had aimed for design workshops before the actual game sessions, which could provide me with feedback on the early prototypes of the game resources, especially the "Politics and Media" website. Due to a lack of interest and resources from teachers and DR Education, I was unable to realise this phase of the design process. Instead, the procedure I followed included keeping a design log that motivated the design choices, making extensive field notes on comments made by teachers and students on the game design during the game sessions, and questioning teacher and student interpretations of the game resources in the post-game interviews. Based on these responses, I tried to identify analytical perspectives on the pragmatic interplay between the *intended* game design and the actual *realisation* of the game scenario. Thus, the actual process of designing, observing and re-designing *The Power Game* was largely based on pragmatist assumptions about what aspects of the actual design would be (or not be) meaningful to the teachers and students involved. Analytically, re-describing every

meticulous detail about the minor design changes made to the game scenario before, during and after each of the five game sessions would be pointless. Instead, I will focus on two *analytical themes* that emerged in relation to the pragmatic design, use and re-design of *The Power Game*. The first analytical theme concerns the *realism* of the game scenario which describes how some of the game elements were seen as irrelevant by teachers and students in relation to the educational goals of the game. The second analytical theme concerns the *framing* of the game activities in relation to the students' interpretation of the online video clips on the "Politics and Media" website.

6.4. Analytical theme: Relevant realism

As mentioned in section 6.1, *The Power Game* was intended and designed as a "realistic" game scenario that imitates the real-life practices of professional politicians, spin doctors, journalists and stakeholders in a Danish parliamentary election. My first impressions from observing *The Power Game* being played was that the participating students became quite *active*, i.e. by talking together in groups, finding information on websites, making comparisons between groups etc. This impression was confirmed several times by teacher and student comments about the game sessions that often described the election scenario as an engaging and relevant form of teaching and learning. At the same time, there was significant variation in the teachers' facilitation of and the students' participation in the game scenario, which I will return to in chapter 7 and 8. For now, I focus mainly on the *pragmatic* aspects of the intentions and realisation of *The Power Game* as a learning resource. In order to frame this analytical perspective, I focus on how the teachers and students perceived the relevance and the "realism" of various game elements within the election scenario.

When observing the five game sessions, some of the game elements proved to have little or no significance for the students' overall experience of the election scenario. One example of such "irrelevant" game elements was the "call for election". Once the students' in-game political groups had been formed, a politician from either the Social Democratic Party or the Liberalist Party was asked to toss a coin in order to "call for election". This ritual was supposed to imitate Danish real-life elections where the government in power pays close attention to whether the opinion polls are in their favour before calling an election within their four years term of office. However, within the classroom context of the election scenario, this gesture turned out to be an *empty ritual*, as it had no consequences in terms of advantages or disadvantages within the game setting. After three game sessions, this game element was deleted from the game scenario to leave more space for other activities within the restricted time frame.

My next example of an "irrelevant" game element concerns the role of the stakeholder, who was supposed to promote a single key political issue in relation to his or her assigned political ideology. However, many students found it difficult to relate to this role as they had no clear image of what it meant "to be a stakeholder" within the context of a parliamentary election (cf. chapter 8). Michael, who played a politician in the first game session, expressed his critique in these terms:

> *The stakeholder*, for example, his role was very, you know, *blurry,* I think, and it never became clear to us what he really should do… Ah and I think, I mean, that sort of affects your work ethic, I think, because then you start thinking, well hey, then I might as well sit down and do all sorts of other things [GS 1, group interview].

Another student, Martin, offered a similar view: "There are no consequences or anything and in that way the role of the stakeholders becomes completely insignificant" [GS 4, group interview]. Interestingly, some of the girls who the teachers described as either "weak" or "quiet" were fond of this role as it allowed them to hide in the background and observe the debate practices of the election scenario unfold at a safe distance. However, since most of the teachers and students shared the overall impression that this role was too passive, it was removed from the game design after the fourth game session.

The third example of problematic game elements concerns the making of election posters. This game activity generated a more mixed response that can be divided into three different views. Some students, especially high-profile politicians such as Michael, felt that "the poster thing" should be scrapped from the game scenario in order to have more time [GS 1, group interview]. Other students, mainly girls, for example, Michelle, felt that the process of making election posters was not given sufficient priority within the game session:

> Michelle: The thing about having to make posters, I was fairly *disappointed* that we did not have more *time* for it, because… trying to make it a bit funnier or something by being a bit *creative*
> Thorkild: It wasn't commented on either, after…
> Michelle: No, but we were told that we should be creative and such and then we had eight minutes to do it. That was sort of bad! [GS 2, group interview].

A third group of students was more compromising and suggested that the election posters should simply be a collective task for each group that runs parallel with other activities. Eventually, I

decided to remove the election posters from the game scenario after the fourth game session as both teachers and students emphasised the limited amount of time available in the game. This decision was further backed by the teachers' lack of focus on the election posters during the end-of-game discussion. Even though Marianne, Karen, Thomas and Joan all appreciated how the students became quite involved when making their posters, none of these teachers spent time commenting on or discussing the content, aesthetics, or rhetorical appeal of the actual posters during the final evaluation of the game result. As a result, the students' production of election posters within the context of social studies education was mostly seen as a "creative" and "fun" activity with only a minimal amount of subject-related content in comparison with more important game activities.

My final example of an "irrelevant" game element concerns the constitution of a new government at the end of the election scenario. This game phase was clearly the most chaotic, as there were no fixed procedures or guidelines on how the different political parties were to agree on and present a new government. Thus, at the end of the first game session, the students who won the election spent a lot of time and energy on "flooding out" by letting out emotional responses and taunting their opponents instead of simply constituting a new government (Goffman, 1961a; cf. chapter 4). The problem persisted during the next two game sessions, which is illustrated in the following comment from Thomas, the teacher in the third game session:

> That's also where *the game has its weakness*, I think. It's in the *final part* with… the *constitution of government* and it may be that I have not read it properly and fully understood how to go about it, the thing that should look like a normal constitution of government and such… [GS 3, teacher interview].

This criticism led me to leave this phase out in the fourth game session in consultation with the teacher (Joan), who preferred a shorter version of the overall game scenario. However, Poul, who lead the fifth game session, was quite interested in the actual negotiations, voting procedures and constitution of the new government. For him, these activities formed a central part of the election scenario as the experience of negotiating and constituting a new government was very "difficult to replace" with other forms of teaching [GS 5, teacher interview]. In order to make up for the lacking structure of the activity, Poul decided that the teacher should act as a mediator between the different political parties when constituting a new government. Thus, instead of letting the winning parties indulge in their victory through improvised theatrical performances, he collected notes written by the political parties listing which parties they recommended for possible collaboration in a future

government. Consequently, Poul was able evaluate which political parties could constitute the new government through a simplified version of the "Queen's round of consultations".[53]

By describing the response to and re-design of the different game elements mentioned above, it is possible to identify a discrepancy between the *intended* realism of the game scenario and the students' actual *experience* of game elements and learning goals within the educational context (cf. also Harr et al., 2008). It is widely assumed that educational games may provide students with learning environments that give players a chance to solve simulations of meaningful problems and to do so in "realistic" ways (Shaffer, 2006). However, since educational games imply a simplification of real-world practices, it is ultimately a contradiction in terms to create a fully realistic game. When designing *The Power Game*, I had to limit the number of game goals, resources and activities to make them fit within the time frame of the election scenario. The notion of "realistic" game design hence also implies a problematic *paradox*. If the design of *The Power Game* included too many details from real-life elections, it would become too complex, too "unrealistic" in a pragmatic sense, to be realised as a learning resource by teachers and students within an everyday school setting. Returning to the examples above, the response from the participating teachers and students indicate that my initial game design of *The Power Game* was too focused on imitating the procedures and practices of real-world elections in order to create a "realistic" setting. Some game elements facilitated student performances that had no implications or consequences for the main game activities. Subsequently, these "realistic" game elements were merely *representational* as they did not connect the students' possible lines of action with the overall educational goals of the game scenario (Galloway, 2004; Linderoth, 2004). Thus, during the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews, both students and teachers mostly valued or emphasised the game elements that supported the main game activities, i.e. researching key issues, presenting, negotiating, debating, and voting. As a consequence, the "irrelevant" game elements have either been re-designed or removed from the current version of the game scenario.

As suggested by my examples, it is impossible to *determine* in advance whether a game design is actually "realistic" or "authentic" (Petraglia, 1998). Thus, the educational value of a realistic game design ultimately depends on how teachers and students *experience* it as being meaningful or "relevant" in relation to particular educational goals. When designing and re-designing *The Power Game*, I had to consider a variety of relevance criteria from different perspectives. Seen from a *design perspective*, the game should be playable and fulfil a range of

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[53] "The Queen's round" is a formal part of a Danish parliamentary election in which the Queen consults the political parties in order to constitute and approve a new government: da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dronningerunde.

design specifications involving an online design template, robustness and opportunities for distribution. From a *teacher perspective*, the election scenario should address subject matter from the upper secondary curriculum and be adaptable to existing teaching practices. Finally, from a *student perspective*, the game environment should provide an engaging and meaningful game experience related to both the students' own values and experiences as well as the goals and knowledge forms of the educational context. As my examples demonstrate, there was an important discrepancy between the intended game goals, game elements and the realised game scenario. The teachers and students' response to particular game elements indicates that what counted as relevant was far more important than designing or playing a realistic game. Thus, the tension between the intended realism of the game design and the participants' interpretation of the realised game elements can be described as a question of *relevant realism*.

6.5. Analytical theme: Frame clashes

The aim of the second design hypothesis of this study was to explore how the game activities of *The Power Game* could be integrated with relevant video clips from the game website "Media and Politics" (cf. section 6.3). This empirical focus was haunted by teachers' lacking ICT competence and technical problems, which prevented the students from observing student use of the video clips for the first three [*sic*] game sessions. As a result, the teacher for the first game session felt so insecure about using ICT that she decided to discard the game website. Then, a faulty broadband connection made it impossible to watch streaming video in the second session. During the third session, the high level of security for the school's local firewall prevented the video clips from being shown. Finally, during the fourth game session, the students were able to use the video clips as a part of the debate game scenario. As the students' group work progressed, however, they were only marginally interested in using the video clips for their research. During this preparation phase, I asked the students what they thought of the video clips, which they described as "interesting" and "cool" [GS 4, field notes]. Nevertheless, the students spent considerable more time on discussing and finding information on the political parties' real websites to be presented later on, which was seen as a far more important goal. During the end-of-game discussion, Martin, who played a politician for the National Party, even excused his initial lack of participation by saying that he "spent too much time on watching video clips" instead of preparing his party's communication strategy and election programme [GS 4: #6]. Thus, the video clips were clearly not considered to be a *relevant* resource in relation to the students' immediate goals within the election scenario. Martin

commented on this again in the post-game interview, explaining that he wished there were more "concrete" video clips which were "good enough in themselves" [GS 4, group interview]. Anita, who played a journalist for the Socialist Party, followed up on Martin's comments, adding that the video clips were "fine", but that she did not "have the time" and "couldn't wrap her mind around it" to "play the game and then relate to the videos, which at the that time didn't ring a bell and then I would just… forget them" [GS 4, group interview]. As these comments suggest, the goal-oriented logic of the game framing made the student demands for finding relevant information more pressing than viewing video clips with experts and top politicians from a real-life parliamentary election (Goffman, 1974; cf. section 4.3.4).

Observing the fourth game session made it clear that it was problematic to integrate the website "Media and Politics" *within* the actual election scenario Thus, the game website was "mis-used" when the video clips were simply added to the students' in-game activities and goals. So before the fifth game session, I decided to change the context for viewing the video clips. Instead, the collection of video clips was to be used in *preparation* for the game scenario. More concretely, a separate module (two lessons) was arranged so that each student was given sufficient time for exploring the website and writing a social studies assignment on the relationship between politics and media based on their analysis of selected video clips. Each student was equipped with head phones and a computer, thus providing a more individual perspective than the mutual interaction of the educational role-play. The students became engrossed in browsing, viewing and analysing the video clips, and the only audible sounds in the classroom reduced mainly to mouse clicking. Nearly all the students approached the task of analysing the political presentation videos by choosing the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) as their first video. This was interesting as DF's political opinions generally receive very few votes from social studies students in upper secondary education (Bruun et al., 2003). A brief description of this particular presentation video is provided to aid in understanding the students' choice.

The Danish People's Party's presentation video from the 2005 parliamentary election is a low-budget production that cross-cuts between an opening scene where the three political leaders, Pia Kjærsgaard, Peter Skaarup, and Kristian Thulesen Dahl, present themselves as an united party, and different scenes where the individual politicians "coincidentally" stumble across "everyday people" at, for example, a bus stop or a traditional Danish sausage cart. These ordinary citizens ask the political leaders specific questions about their key political issues, which the politicians are more than happy to answer in a very staged manner. The overall impression of these

top politicians speaking with "everyman" can be seen as a remediation of the humorous or joyful approach of the somewhat dated Danish folk comedies of the 1950s. When the students viewed DF's video, many of them started laughing while watching, re-playing, pointing to, and discussing the video with their classmates. After a while, the students switched to other political parties, and eventually picked two videos that they watched several times before starting to write their analysis on the computers and posting their notes in the schools' learning management system. The rest of the assignment was completed at home or at school in preparation for playing *The Power Game* a week later.

After the fifth game session, I selected and interviewed students about their response to the game website and the election scenario. During this group interview, I was particularly interested in the students' interpretation of the video clips they had analysed in preparation for the game. My focus was both on how they perceived the video clips as an interactive audiovisual learning resource, and how the website could be used as a means of preparation for the roles in *The Power Game.* When asked about the social studies subject-related outcome of the election scenario, one of the students responded that she "learned the most" from preparing the roles by analysing the video clips on the website and from writing the assignment [GS 5, group interview]. Another student was especially pleased with how the website served a *purpose* as preparation for the game scenario. The prospect of playing a game was motivating as "an extra carrot in reading it [the website] in some way. Because you knew that you had to use it for something, where it was important to know, you know" [GS 5, group interview]. At this point in the interview, I tried to focus on the students' reflections on the overall experience of the game scenario. Instead, the students took over and spontaneously began to comment on the aesthetic form and meanings of the political parties' presentation videos:

> Lise: I really think that those presentation videos were surprisingly bad
>
> Everyone: Yes! Ugh! Ooh!
>
> Lise: They really were incredibly bad. Almost all of them. A lot of them. And not very inventive
>
> Thorkild: Maybe we can save the discussion about all those clips for later?
>
> Maria: And the acting!
>
> Katrine: Especially the Danish People's Party!
>
> Everyone: (*laughter*) ***
>
> Katrine: (*imitating voice*) "Hi Pia!"
>
> Maria: And this guy. Yeah, sure, he's sitting by the bus stop, because he uses public transportation...

Katrine: I also wrote that in my assignment in parentheses: "Well, yes, what a likely place for him to be"

Everyone: (*laughter*) ***

Thorkild: I take it that you are referring to the Danish People's Party?

Lise: Kristian Thulesen Dahl

Thorkild: Many of you chose to watch this video first. Why was it exciting to watch this one as the first one?

Jens: Because it stands so much apart from the other ones

Everyone: Yes

Marie: That video was so over-done, it was a joke

Everyone: (*laughter*) ***

Marie: It must be some very naive people who would watch that

Jens: It almost seemed like TV Shop [GS 5, group interview].

This excerpt illustrates the students' fascination with the Danish People's Party's video presentation. Even though the students strongly disagreed with the political message of the video, they clearly also enjoyed the process of watching and distancing themselves from the video's aesthetic expression (Buckingham, 2000). Thus, the students saw the crude plot, the use of an out-dated film genre and the schematic composition of the low-budget production as being involuntarily funny and far removed from the professional standards that they were used to on TV. However, when viewing videos from several of the other political parties, the students chose a far more serious approach in their attempt to analyse and evaluate the political messages.

As the examples above indicate, the students from the fifth game session regarded the video clips as meaningful and exciting, whereas the students from the fourth session mostly perceived the website as a "waste of time" in relation to the on-going game activities. Moreover, the students from the fifth session gave the website a positive review in terms of usability, layout, texts, and the actual selection of clips. The website was "great" compared to other learning resources such as books or videos shown by teachers, which easily turn out to be "boring". Furthermore, the students praised the lack of rules: "There wasn't anything you *had to do*" [GS 5, group interview]. Being able to click through the clips by following individual interests was seen as a positive feature. Simultaneously, the students also appreciated that the freedom and open structure of the website were matched by the restrictions and structure of the assignment. Julia explains:

It was also nice to have that assignment, because then there was something to aim for. Then it's not just a matter of sitting there and fooling around. And watch a little here, and yes, this is probably very

interesting. In a sense, you know, you have to discipline yourself or in some way, so that you take... Even though it's not in the class, you're still pretty serious about it [GS 5, group interview].

This quote illustrates how the assignment played an important role in structuring, supporting, and "scaffolding" the students' learning processes (Wood et al., 1976). Furthermore, it also echoes Olsen's findings on teacher and student use of the *Images of Power* website, which emphasised the importance of balancing structure and open-ended exploration (cf. section 6.1.2).

The contrast between forcing the video clips *into* the game and letting the students analyse them *before* playing the game shows how the students' experience of the same learning resource was interpreted very differently in the two contexts. Even though the students in the fourth game session were initially drawn to the video clips, they did not find them relevant in relation to the actual goals of *The Power Game*. Thus, there was a *frame clash* between the interpretive frame of the students' roles and goals within the election scenario and the Danish Broadcast Corporation's news/journalistic framing of the video clips which were not meaningful to the actual game activities (Goffman, 1974; Green & Dixon, 1994). Using Ensink' notation, this frame clash can be illustrated as follows (cf. section 4.3.4):

[election [assigned role [*finding information*]]] ← → [student [*watching video*]]

From a pragmatic perspective, this also illustrates the problematic implications of simply "adding" an extra learning resource on top of a game design without ensuring proper integration between different goals, activities and modes of representation.

Seen in retrospect, a hint of this potential frame clash was already visible in the first group interview where I asked the students to reflect upon what they *could* have learned from watching video clips at the initial phase of the election scenario. Michael's answer to this hypothetical question was that a video clip might have benefited him "a whole lot", as it "could give some *ideas* on how to argue and put forward your key issues" [GS 1, group interview]. However, my critical re-examination of the actual video clips on the different professional roles found on the "Politics and Media" website showed that the clips chiefly provide atmosphere and journalistic interviews from the 2005 parliamentary election. Thus, the actual information on "how to do it" is quite limited. This means that the video clips would have to be far more domain-specific to be of immediate relevance for the students and *directly* address the goals and debate practices of politicians, journalists and spin doctors trying to win a parliamentary election (Gee, 2003). The

social and cognitive game framing of *The Power Game* hence downplayed possible actions and available resources as irrelevant distractions if they did not support players/students' interpretations of the immediate game goals. By comparing the student responses on the use of the video clips in the fourth and fifth game sessions, it can be argued that *educational games may also constrain student opportunities for learning by focusing their attention too much toward particular or narrowly defined game goals.* Thus, attempting to design an educational game, or other types of learning resources, implies that the designer (and/or researcher) must be scenario competent in order to analyse how particular design choices are always related to different knowledge aspects (Barth, 2002).

As I was unable to conduct any design workshops prior to the game sessions, it was difficult to predict how the students would adopt *The Power Game* and the game website. However, as a designer-researcher I am still puzzled as to why I was unable to predict the "frame clash" between the student participation in the election scenario and the news/journalistic context of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's video clips. Understandably, this mismatch of different interpretive frames was not addressed by the editorial staff in the DR Education, which had limited experience with educational games and the use of their own learning resources in classroom settings. It is more surprising that the teachers, who claimed that they had explored the game website and the video clips prior to the game sessions, did not question my assumption that the game scenario and the online video clips *could* be combined in a meaningful way. This points to one of the key challenges for educational game design as designers, researchers and educators need to move beyond an essentialist fascination of game scenarios as "magic circles" or "blackboxed" worlds of their own (Huizinga, 1950; Latour, 1987; see also chapter 1). Thus, by studying interpretive clashes between different frames, it becomes possible to understand how and for what reasons game participants both *manage* and *fail* to make meaning through the "world-building activities" of educational games (Goffman, 1961a).

6.6. Design principles

The aim of this chapter has been to describe and analyse the design, use and re-design of *The Power Game* scenario and the game website "Politics and Media" from a pragmatic perspective. In order to accomplish this, I have clarified what motivated my design hypotheses, design choices and re-designs in relation to teacher and student experiences with and response to the game resources. This led to two analytical themes related to challenges that arise from *designing* educational games.

Thus, the idea of designing "realistic" educational game environments has to be carefully re-considered in relation to actual game elements and educational goals. In order to address this challenge, I have introduced the analytical theme "relevant realism", which aims to question how and for what reasons educational games should be able to imitate real world practices. Second, my findings indicate how any attempt to integrate or blend analogue game activities with computer media needs to explore potential "frame clashes". Both game scenarios and online video tend to promise engaging experiences. However, in spite of – or rather *because* of – student engrossment with each type of learning resource, it is by no means an easy task to integrate the interpretive framings of game activities and audiovisual modalities within the same context.

As these analytical themes suggest, educational game design depends upon a delicate integration between the *intentions* of the game resources and the process of *adapting* game designs within particular educational contexts. Based upon a pragmatic approach to the design, use and re-design of *The Power Game* and the "Media and Politics" website, I propose a tentative and heuristic set of design principles. Educational game design may benefit from:

- **Relevant realism:** Game scenarios are able to create a sense of "being there". However, the realism of educational game scenarios should not just involve *representational* (aesthetic) aspects. Rather, the game design should ensure that game elements and intended game goals are *relevant* to the knowledge aspects of the educational context – i.e. in relation to teacher goals, student goals and curricular goals.
- **Coherence:** Educational game design should aim to avoid interpretive frame clashes between the goals and knowledge aspects of different game elements.
- **Flexibility:** Educational games should be open for *re-design* in relation to relevant means and ends.

Moreover, the design and re-design of *The Power Game* was also based upon the following design principles, which will be explored further in the two analytical chapters to follow.

- **Emergent knowledge:** Educational game designs should not only offer pre-defined "content", but allow new knowledge to *emerge*. Thus, game participants should be able to *transform* the knowledge aspects of a game scenario in relation to both real-world phenomena and the educational context.
- **Meaningful roles and positions:** The available roles and positions should be engaging and recognisable in order to let participants take *ownership* of the game knowledge through meaningful goals, actions and contingent outcomes.

- **Support critical thinking:** Game-based learning should be supported through dialogue and evaluation (*validation*) of the game result – i.e. through teacher-guided scaffolding and shared inquiry that support critical thinking.
- **Adaptability:** Educational games should be designed to "*fit in*" with teachers and students' local practices in various educational contexts.

Even though the majority of participating teachers and students responded quite positively to the actual design of *The Power Game*, this chapter has mainly focused on the pragmatic *challenges* that arose in designing this particular educational game. Thus, the designs and the design process described in this study should not be seen as "ideal" forms of educational game design or design interventionist research. Instead, I have chosen examples and analytical themes that illustrate how designers and researchers need to reflect on the difficult task of creating knowledge-based game worlds intended to be *used* for educational purposes. This critical investigation of the mutual relationship between "ends" and "means", between what is "desirable" and what is "achievable", remains at the core of a pragmatist approach to educational game research (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; cf. sections 2.10 and 5.2). Consequently, the aim of formulating design principles is not to identify and canonise "best" practice, but accept that only "next-best" practices exist that should always be open to revision.

7. Teaching the game

This chapter describes, analyses and interprets how the teachers enacted *The Power Game*. More specifically, I explore how the election scenario challenged the teachers' everyday teaching practices and how they responded to student participation in the five game sessions. The chapter starts by clarifying my analytical approach in relation to the theoretical and analytical perspectives presented in earlier chapters. In the next three sections, I then zoom in on three particular analytical themes. The first theme describes the teachers' staging and facilitation of *The Power Game* by using one of the teachers' game introductions as a key example. The second analytical theme focuses on how the teachers authorised the student interpretations of the game results. Finally, the third theme maps the teachers' epistemological views on the students' game-based knowledge production. The chapter concludes by summarising the teachers' adaptation of *The Power Game* in relation to three different game pedagogical approaches to educational gaming.

7.1. Analysing game-based teaching practices

In order to analyse the *process* of enacting and validating the game scenario, I focus on significant aspects of the teachers' game-based teaching *practices* (cf. section 5.4.3). As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, educational gaming can be analysed as a dynamic interplay between the meaning-making processes of inquiry, interaction and discourse. Seen from a student perspective, the game-based practices involved finding information, presenting key political issues, debating, negotiation, and voting. Similarly, the participating teachers in this study had to interpret and adapt the game instructions in relation to their existing teaching practices, which included processes of preparation, realisation and evaluation (Dale, 1998; Imsen, 2006).

More specifically, the five teachers *prepared* the election scenario by interpreting the curricular "content" of *The Power Game* in relation to specific educational goals as well the students' existing knowledge of the Danish political ideologies and the rhetorical forms of appeal. As a part of their preparation, the teachers also formed student groups and familiarised themselves with the different game resources: the video clips on the game website, the websites of the real political parties and the hand outs to be distributed during the election scenario. In addition to this, the teachers *realised* the election scenario in the classroom setting by introducing game goals, educational goals, game phases, roles, rules and resources. Moreover, the teachers also had to keep track of the time frame, distribute appropriate hand outs during the various game phases, support

the students during their group work, and chair the debate phases by maintaining a speaking order and moderating the parliamentary debate. Finally, at the end of the game session, the teachers *evaluated* the outcome of the election scenario through a plenum discussion that related the game session to real-world elections and the social studies curriculum.

Many of these game-based teaching practices were quite similar to the teachers' everyday ways of teaching. Thus, giving instructions in class or keeping track of students' speaking order were both already part of the backbone of their existing teaching repertoire. However, for some teachers, *The Power Game* also marked a significant *break* with existing teaching practices. Karen from Redville School experienced the "programmed" progression of the game phases as wholly unfamiliar as it determined and re-configured her everyday teaching practices. Other teachers, in comparison, viewed the election scenario as relatively "easy to use" and even added their own features, i.e. Marianne made additional slides for her game introduction (cf. section 7.3), and Poul re-designed the procedure for constituting a new government (cf. chapter 6). In this way, teaching *The Power Game* both marked *change* and *continuity* in relation to the teachers' everyday teaching practices (Bloom et al., 2005). Thus, the aim of this chapter is to map and analyse significant teacher practices and patterns of meaning-making in order to understand the pedagogical challenges and practices of educational gaming.

Based upon a detailed analysis of the five teachers' game-based teaching practices, this chapter is structured around three analytical themes: *facilitation, authorisation* and *epistemological views*. These analytical patterns emerged after transcribing, coding and analysing video data from the five game sessions as well as the post-game interviews with each of the five participating teachers (cf. chapter 5). The themes thus each represent significant answers to the overall research question of this project, which aims to explore and understand how an educational game scenario is *enacted* and *validated* within the situated context of a classroom setting. Thus, the realisation of the election scenario involved a changed teacher role, as the teachers were not expected to teach through overt instruction but to facilitate and stage the game activities. Similarly, the available discourses of *The Power Game* scenario implied a change in the teachers' discursive authority, as the students populated the dialogical space of the classroom with a variety of different – often conflicting – ideological voices. Finally, the teachers in this study represented quite different epistemological views when evaluating the subject matter of the game scenario and the participating students' knowledge production.

A common denominator for these analytical themes (facilitation, authorisation, epistemological views) is a complex range of *tensions* between the centrifugal and centripetal logics of educational gaming (cf. chapter 3). According to the assumptions of dialogical pedagogy, the practices of teaching and learning always involve a dynamic interplay between fixed (authoritative) and more open-ended (dialogical) forms of meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). In order to facilitate, authorise and evaluate the knowledge aspects of the election scenario, the five social studies teachers in this study had to *negotiate* their own interpretation of the game goals, activities and outcomes in response to the students' participation. Thus, this chapter illustrates how the process of realising a game scenario created a wide variety of pedagogical tensions – in relation to the teachers' roles, their discursive authority and their epistemological views upon the game-based knowledge forms. Furthermore, this chapter describes the teachers' ability to "dramatically rehearse" the imaginative aspects of the game scenario (Dewey, 1922; cf. chapter 4). Simply put, the teachers had to be *scenario competent* in order to communicate the conditions and consequences of the election scenario, authorise the students' multiple interpretations of game sessions, and evaluate the value of the students' game-based knowledge production. Following the methodological approach and logic-of-inquiry discussed in chapter 5, each of the three analytical themes examined in the following aim to *foreground* and *background* the different patterns of inquiry, interaction and discourse of educational gaming that emerged when teaching the game.

7.2. Analytical theme: Facilitating the game

This section explores the teachers' facilitation of *The Power Game* by focusing on their introduction to the game scenario. As mentioned above, the game facilitation also involved a number of other tasks, i.e. distributing hand outs, keeping track of the time, guiding students in their group work etc. However, the initial introduction to the game scenario represented a crucial phase for framing and making the game "work" in a pragmatic sense. Thus, the participating students were given instructions on the basic assertions of the election scenario, and how to play the game in terms of particular goals, tasks, roles, rules and resources. As mentioned earlier, the game activities of *The Power Game* were designed to re-create the fixed progression of a real-life election campaign (cf. chapter 6). This scenario-based form of teaching marked a shift from the teachers and students' everyday pedagogical practices, which were mainly structured around classroom instruction and project work. Thus, the teachers had to *stage* the game scenario by communicating unfamiliar norms and expectations of the imagined election scenario to the students (Goffman, 1959). In this

way, the five teachers tried to provided the students with an interpretive *frame* for comprehending the meaning of the game activities (Goffman, 1974). Put differently, the teachers had to be scenario competent in order to support the students' ability to understand and imagine the possible lines of action to be realised within the context of the election scenario (Dewey, 1922).

7.2.1. Staging the game

In order to analyse how the teachers *staged* the game scenario, I will use Marianne's game introduction to the second game sessions as a key example, as it sums up important aspects common to each of the five teachers' presentations. Even though Marianne was an experienced teacher and had expressed confidence concerning the game resources during our prior meetings, phone conversations and e-mails, she was still excited now that she was actually introducing the game session. Thus, she initiated the game session by "re-assuring" herself and the students that game had been "tried on another class" previously [GS 2: #1]. In this respect, Marianne' response is quite similar to the other four teachers, who all felt more or less challenged by staging *The Power Game*, which represented an unfamiliar type of learning resource in relation to their existing teaching repertoire. After re-assuring herself and the class that the game is likely to work, Marianne turned to the first of her overheads and formally began presenting the game scenario.

While introducing the game, Marianne gave the impression of a teacher quite self-confident with her role as game facilitator. She spoke in a clear voice, had frequent eye contact with the students and did not have any long pauses or exhibit confusion. As mentioned earlier, she had also added her own overheads to the original game materials. Furthermore, Marianne included several clarifying examples that referred to the activities of *The Power Game* scenario and to the goals and practices of real life elections. Thus, as the following excerpt shows, Marianne asked a question early into her introduction that related the election scenario to both the class' upcoming visit at the Danish Parliament and an earlier visit at the school made by an election researcher from a nearby university:

> Marianne: And since we're visiting the Parliament tomorrow, you might say that this [election] is quite apropos. You are simply going to run an election campaign. And normally you would have more time for an election campaign than a single day, but uh… for today there is only one day and you might say, in relation to what Lars Andersen said the other night, that there really, really is a lot of people, who don't make up their mind about who to vote for until the very last minute. Do you remember how many it was?

Students: 25 percent

Marianne: Yes, it was 25 percent, right. And there were actually ten percent who did not decide until the actual moment they stood inside the voting box. So uh… so that is a good reason to lead a really good election campaign if you wish to win the election in spite of the fact that you only have one day [GS 2: #1].

Arguably, the point of Marianne's question is not simply to "test" the students' factual knowledge, but rather to provide them with a meaningful context for the election scenario. By suggesting that the students' opinions are likely to be changeable until the very last minute, Marianne's staging of *The Power Game* also draws upon the excitement and unpredictable outcomes of real life elections. Furthermore, Marianne also presents the students with an interpretive frame that prescribes "what is going on": what will and what will not count as valid actions within the election scenario (Goffman, 1974: 8). In line with the original game instructions, Marianne presents *The Power Game* as a "role-play". However, as mentioned in chapter 2, this game label is quite ambiguous as it can be interpreted in many different ways:

Marianne: Up here (*points to an overhead*), it says "realistic simulation", right, of the real world. You're not supposed to be doing dramatic theatre, you know, where you dress up and come up with all sorts of weird things to get attention!

Students: (*giggle*)

Marianne: On the other hand, it's also important that you identify with your role, right. Otherwise, this is going to be quite strange. If you don't, then you can't really call this a role-play. So you need to find a balance. It's not that easy. But maybe you can compare it a bit with something like flight simulation, you know, where you are *close* to reality. You *try* to recreate reality, you know. And *still* everyone knows that this is a role and that this is not the real thing. It's a bit of a challenge, but I actually do believe that you'll be able to find that balance, right. Of course, there's also a bit of theatre in it, right. Because when you are going to present your arguments and you want to appeal to people's emotions, or whatever it is you wish to do, then you need to act a bit. But it's not like just fooling around, that's not what I mean. That won't work [GS 2: #1].

By clarifying the intended realism of the election scenario, Marianne underlines that there are certain *rules* to be followed and that the idea of role-playing should not be interpreted as dramatic theatre. The students must take the game *seriously* and only use dramaturgical elements when appropriate in the pursuit of specific game goals, i.e. when appealing to the other students (voters) through pathos arguments. Marianne's interpretation of the label role-play should be understood

within the context of social studies as a school subject. Thus, when interviewed after the game sessions, she and the other four teachers would comment on how social studies had turned into a "scientific" school subject in order to legitimise itself in the upper secondary curriculum. Consequently, role-playing activities could easily be seen as mere "play". In Karen's words:

> I mean, social studies is a subject that takes itself pretty seriously and it would, it would like to be as scientific as possible and also as financial as possible and also a bit mathematical, and then you can't just fool around and play roles. That sort of destroys the image that has taken so many years to build [GS 1, teacher interview].

Similarly, Marianne's colleague Poul from the Hillsdale school was at first quite reluctant about teaching using *The Power Game* as he was "too shy" [GS 5, field notes]. However, after hearing about Marianne and Thomas' teaching experiences, he contacted me to arrange the fifth game session. In the post-game interview, Poul explained that he had initially perceived the term "role-play" like a "form of theatre", which kept him away due to his lack of experience with and interest in drama education [GS 5, teacher interview]. Furthermore, Poul claimed the general view held by social studies teachers in upper secondary education was that role-playing "is a bit superficial" [GS 5, teacher interview].

As these quotes suggest, the name of the game was quite important as it reflected an important dichotomy between *seriousness* and *play*, which is an institutionalised part of school culture (Dewey, 1916; Gee, 2003). This tension was present both in the way that the teachers perceived and actually staged the election scenario when framing the game activities within a classroom setting. Arguably, when participating in *The Power Game*, the students took part in dramaturgical role-playing, realistic simulation of an election scenario and political debate activities. However, within the context of social studies as a scientific school subject, the realism of a particular game label such as role-playing could easily be misunderstood and even prevent some teachers (such as Poul) from teaching the game at all.

7.2.2. Scaffolding through roles

When introducing the role-playing activities of *The Power Game*, Marianne tried to make the game roles quite explicit to the students. The students were expected to work independently in their assigned political groups, find key political issues, fulfil game tasks, and work out their own interpretation of what it meant "to role-play" an election [GS 2: #1]. On the other hand, Marianne

promised to assist the groups in their work and keep track of the time. In this way, she tried to re-negotiate the mutual expectations and responsibilities between teacher and students within "the interaction order" of the classroom setting (Goffman, 1983).

Seen from a pedagogical perspective, the roles and role descriptions of *The Power Game* can be understood as a resource for "scaffolding" the students' understanding of the game activities (Wood et al., 1976). However, in order to facilitate the game roles, Marianne had to be scenario competent in relation to the semiotic domain of parliamentary elections and the professional practices of politicians, journalists, stakeholders and spin doctors. Hence, she had to be able to *imagine* how the social actors of election scenarios *could* and *should* interact and then translate these norms and expectations to a student perspective. As mentioned in chapter 6, *The Power Game* represents a complex game scenario with multiple groups, perspectives, phases and tasks. Thus, it is quite interesting that neither Marianne – nor any of the other teachers – spent much time explaining the role of the politician, even though the politicians played the most dominant role in the game. When summarising the roles, she mentioned in passing that, "the politician has the main responsibility for getting the message across", but added no further description of the role [GS 2: #6]. Marianne thereby simply assumed that the students were quite familiar with the tasks and goals of a politician, so this role did not need further description. In contrast, she gave a richer description of the spin doctor:

> A spin doctor… We have spoken a bit about it, not much, but the spin doctor creates a sort of (*makes gesture with hands*) spin… creates and controls some stories, finds out how to present the public image of the party's politics. What issues are to be brought up, what issues should *not* be brought up? The order in which the issues should be brought in the media and uh… the way I see the concept of a spin doctor is that it's a group of people who know the media and know how they work. Uh… it's not the kind of people who decide what colour tie the politicians should wear or how they should have their hair cut or whatever. But they are the people who have to help the party uh… by finding out the *best* way of communicating the policies they wish to promote. And, and… in that way find the *best* way of communicating clearly to voters about what they are going to work on [GS 2: #1].

Here, Marianne presents a spin doctor as a person who is able to perform the strategic planning of political communication, a role that differs from dressing politicians up for public performances. Like her description of role-playing, this also marks an attempt to impose *seriousness* onto the election scenario. Nevertheless, Marianne's presentation of the spin doctor role is quite broad and reflects the lack of a clear-cut definition on spin or spin doctors within the field of political

communication (Femø Nielsen, 2004). Thus, her role description does not provide the students with a clear idea of what the spin doctors are actually expected *to do* within the context of the game scenario. Instead, Marianne merely concludes that spin doctors have to help politicians find the "best" way to communicate their politics in order to become clear to voters. Next, in the following excerpt, Marianne presents the role of the journalist:

> Then there has to be a journalist, and obviously it has to be a journalist who has to think critically about what happens and which also, I mean, the role of a journalist is a bit freer, eh… You might, for instance, want the journalist to go out and interview some of the other parties in order to find out what key political issues they are working on. And how, uh, if you could go in and in some way relate to some of what is taking place in the other groups. Here, you also need to be a bit creative in relation to this form of communication [GS 2: #1].

This description is more oriented towards the participants' perspective *within* the game scenario, as Marianne tries to unfold how the journalists might interview other political groups in order to find out about their key political issues. Furthermore, the journalist represents a "freer", loosely defined role, which means that the students are expected to "be creative", when they relate to the "what is taking place" in the other groups. Again, this role description is quite open to interpretation. Finally, Marianne introduces the stakeholder:

> And then there is the stakeholder. We also spoke a bit about this some time ago, not much, but a bit about doing lobbying work. That a group of people try to advance their views through the parties. We have spoken about The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, which represents the workers. The workers have some political issues they would like to push through, so they might try to influence different parties in order to take up their key issues. There also has to be a stakeholder in each political group who is allowed to influence these issues [GS 2: #1].

This description gives a brief impression of what a stakeholder is and what they do (i.e. a representative from a workers' union). Still, the intended tasks and goals of the stakeholder within the context of the gaming encounter are presented somewhat vaguely and passively.

In tune with the game instructions, Marianne (and the other teachers) did not present the game roles as dramaturgical characters, but as pragmatic or "functional" resources for framing and scaffolding the students' understanding of how to imitate professional practitioners within an election campaign (cf. chapter 6). Marianne was clearly at a loss, however, when attempting to

explain the *actual* tasks and goals that the students were expected to accomplish within the actual game session. This points to a general challenge of game facilitation, as the teachers both had to *imagine* how the election scenario would unfold and *frame* the students' understanding of "what is going on" (Dewey, 1922; Goffman, 1974). The lack of specific details in Marianne's role descriptions did not have immediate consequences for the second game session. However, some confusion arose when Karen introduced the first game session without *any* description of the game roles. Karen told the students to read about the roles "on the Internet" without providing any further information about the exact web address for the game website [GS 1: #1]. Once the groups were established and hand outs with role descriptions were distributed, the noise- and activity level increased dramatically in the class, making it difficult for Karen to provide additional information on the game roles:

> Karen: Before you choose…
> Students: (*talking together without paying attention to Karen*) ***
> Karen: Shhh… now listen. Before you choose the roles, maybe it didn't appear that clear, but you must…
> Students: ***
> Karen: (*raises her* voice) *Now, listen everyone.* Michael, Ramon, Peter… You must realise that those of you who are chosen to be politicians are the ones who get to say the most. Of course, the others are also active and have… uh a responsibility, but the politician is the one who must sit up here and phrase things. Yes [GS 1: #1].

Here, Karen tried to make up for her lack of instruction by paying attention to the overall responsibility of the politicians. But at this point, the students had already placed themselves in groups and started adapting the roles from their own perspectives. As a result, Karen spent a lot of time and effort explaining the four roles to each of the four groups individually instead of establishing a shared classroom attention that could provide the students with a common interpretive frame. Similarly, in another class, Martin criticised his teacher, Joan, for not giving sufficient instruction at the beginning of the game session:

> Martin: Yes, I think that uh… what we had to do should've been made clearer, the different roles, I mean the journalists (…), spin doctors and party leaders and, yes, stakeholders… had to do. Because in the beginning, I just sat by myself until I found out that you were actually supposed to give a *presentation*… because I was actually sitting with *my group* and that was not completely clear to me in

the beginning on… on the first briefing. So I just sat and, like, played around a bit on the website. In that way, something was wasted and I wasn't… I wasn't doing anything concrete.

Joan: I'll take responsibility for that; I didn't communicate that clearly enough to you. It *is* described in Thorkild's papers [game instructions] [GS 4: #6].

In her presentation, Joan briefly mentioned how the students should be placed in groups and play different roles. But similar to Karen, she provided *inadequate* instructions for scaffolding the students' understanding of their roles and tasks.

Conversely, the teachers also provided descriptions about the tasks and goals of a specific role that were *too* detailed or idiosyncratic. In the fourth game session, which took place in late January 2006 at the height of the Cartoon Crisis, Joan tried to make the relatively passive role of the stakeholder more interesting by referring to Danish companies that had "30 billion kroner caught in the Middle East" [GS 4: #1]. After her presentation, Joan would then guide Sana, who played a stakeholder in the Liberalist Party. However, even though Sana was inspired by the teacher's up-to-date example with the Danish dairy company Arla's lack of export to the Middle East, it was difficult for her to understand the complex conflict from a stakeholder's point of view. This became clear after the politicians' presentations, when Sana had to evaluate how they related to her "key political issue":

Sana: Well, but we have taken Arla as a case, because we think that they are being debated right now.

Joan: So you're a company? Arla?

Sana: Yes, that's what we've taken.

Joan: And what is your key political issue? What is your key political issue? Well, but it's in the media right now.

Sana: Oh, is it the debate on immigration?

Joan: *No!*

Sana: No, but… what are you asking about?

Joan: I am asking: What is your *key political issue*? What is it that you as Arla want the politicians to do for you? You are this big dairy company, Arla, what do you want them to do for you? What is your key issue?

Sana: Well…. I don't really know… I don't really have…

Joan: You want to save the relationship with the Middle East… I'll help you now… Did they [the students playing politicians in the game] do that?

Sana: I mean… So far as I've been told, then they must not, what's it called, try to boycott Danish interests… Danish products, even though the people in the Middle East have probably done the same, because then things will go wrong if people ***

Joan (*interrupts*): Were there any of the politicians who would do something to save exports to the Middle East? Were there any of the politicians you have just heard who would do that? Have you made your own party take it up as a key issue?

Sana: Uh… no…

Joan: No, you haven't either. No, and you didn't hear any of the others speak about it? No [GS 4: #3].

In this exchange with Joan, Sana fails to explain the concrete goals and key political issue of her role as a stakeholder. Thus, instead of evaluating the politicians' presentations, the game frame "breaks down" as she ends up being *tested* by the teacher. Arguably, Sana was unable to comprehend Joan's compelling but also rather complex and idiosyncratic example of Arla as a stakeholder that had to maintain its export to the Middle East. Furthermore, this example also underlines how most of the students were unable to identify with the passive role of the stakeholder, which was eventually deleted from the game (cf. chapter 6).

In summary, the teachers where faced with a *dilemma* when facilitating the election scenario. On the one hand, the game information should not be too brief as this could leave the students with only a vague idea of their roles and expected tasks in the game scenario. On the other hand, too much game information would pre-determine the ensuing events and leave few or irrelevant opportunities for independent student inquiry into the game scenario. This dilemma is also reflected in the teachers' interpretation of the actual game instructions for *The Power Game*, which intended to strike a difficult balance between flexible guidelines and a detailed game manual. According to Marianne, the game instructions were easy to comprehend and use as "the thinking had been done" [GS 2, teacher interview]. Thus, the game instructions prescribed what, why, how and when different kinds of information and tasks had to be introduced in order to make the election scenario work. By having "done" some of the teachers' preparation, the game instructions also gave Marianne more time to prepare additional overheads for the game scenario. In contrast to Marianne, Karen was far more sceptical about the idea of using written game instructions and requested quite detailed descriptions of the game activities when she read early drafts of the game scenario. Furthermore, Karen compared the fixed sequence of the game scenario with behaviouristic forms of "programmed instruction" that were promoted in Denmark in the 1960s [Redville School, field notes]. Thus, Karen feared that *The Power Game* would reduce her role as a teacher to a mere initiator of the game scenario.

The contrast between Marianne and Karen's approaches to the game instructions was also quite clear in their enactment of the game scenario. Thus, Karen's game introduction mostly

focused on the logistical or practical aspects of the game (voting, time keeping, coordination of groups, pauses etc.). Furthermore, she introduced her own role in rather pessimistic and deterministic terms: "So I hope things will run more or less like clockwork. I feel like the puppet and Thorkild; he is the puppeteer [*sic*]. That's how the roles are distributed" [GS 1: #1]. Contrary to this description of herself, Karen was quite active during the whole game session, especially during the end-of-game discussion. I subsequently only intervened in minor ways during the game session, i.e. by helping with the distribution of hand outs and by keeping track of the game phases. In the post-game interview, Karen responded more positively as she was quite relieved that the game had "worked so well" and that it was "far more simple" than she had expected [GS 1, teacher interview]. Nevertheless, she also told me that she clearly preferred traditional classroom instruction to all other forms of teaching [Redville School, field notes]. For her, the main advantage of project-based work forms was that they provided students with *variation*, which they were fond of. As these comments illustrate, Karen was not particularly interested in experimenting with different forms of teaching or online learning resources, and it seems quite unlikely that she would have tried to teach with *The Power Game* if she had not been persuaded by her colleague Joan. Thus, Karen had mainly agreed to participate in this study in order to develop her teaching competencies and gain new knowledge on spin and political communication [Redville School, field notes]. Marianne, in contrast, presented her role as game facilitator in far more positive terms:

> Marianne: A brief comment on my own role in this… [changes to overhead entitled "My role"]
> Student (*reads aloud*): "My role".
> Marianne: "My role". I also need to have a role in this uh… Thorkild has told me that I'm not supposed to teach, and he has also made it very clear that I should not be testing. I'm not supposed to walk around and find out what you really know or what your next grade will be. Today, we'll skip that. I am supposed to coach and guide, and then I have to keep track of the time, right, and make sure that things progress, you know. That's my role [GS 2: #1].

Here, Marianne explicitly "embraces" her role as a game facilitator who must coach and guide the students (Goffman, 1961b). Thus, she temporarily suspends the everyday focus on tests and assessment within Danish upper secondary education to let the students experience and play the game scenario more freely. Like Karen, Marianne also makes an explicit reference to my presence in the classroom and suggests that I have told her precisely how to teach the game. However, as her smiling expression suggests, this comment carries an ironic undertone as Marianne is quite self-

confident about how and for what reasons she wants to teach the game. Thus, her reference to me should be seen as a general response to the challenge imposed by the game scenario, which she clearly welcomed. Marianne's humorous reaction to my presence becomes more vivid with the next overhead, where she presents and positions me as an "observer", which emphasised that I as researcher also had certain norms and expectations to fulfil [GS 2: #1]. Furthermore, the students are explicitly told not to expect any "help" from me: "You are on your own, and basically you only have each other and me for this thing, right" [GS 2: #1]. In summary, Marianne did not feel overwhelmed by her changed role into a game facilitator, but took time to present and reflect on the changed norms, expectations and implications in front of the students.

As mentioned, the game instructions did not offer detailed role descriptions on what the students were expected to accomplish with the election scenario (cf. chapter 6). Thus, my design-based interventions were built on the assumption that an open-ended game design would allow me to explore and describe a *varied range of patterns* in the teachers and students' realisation of the election scenario. However, the emergent game design also meant that it was quite challenging for the teachers to reduce the wide span of possible interpretations into "fixed" role descriptions. Furthermore, all the teachers in this study were "novice" game facilitators, and this was the first time any of them had taught *The Power Game*. This lack of prior game experience posed clear limitations on the teachers' abilities to highlight the most relevant tasks of the four roles, when introducing the game. In the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews both teachers and students emphasised the role of the politicians as the most demanding and defining role in the election scenario. Arguably, all of the five teachers would give this role a richer description if they were to teach *The Power Game* again.

7.3. Analytical theme: Authorising the game

In addition to setting the scene and presenting the roles in *The Power Game*, the teachers also tried to *authorise* the students' enactment of the game. As discussed in chapter 3, the notion of teacher authority should not be understood in relation to the isolated pedagogical practices of the individual teacher, but should be viewed as a *relational* phenomenon challenged and maintained within particular classroom contexts. Thus, the notion of authority reflects a continual process of legitimising authoritative discourse through mutual dialogical positioning between teacher and students (Ongstad, 1997; Matusov, 2007). In the analysis presented below, I focus on how the teachers positioned themselves in relation to the students' game-based discourse through

negotiation of authority. According to the dialogical philosophy of Bakhtin, authority can be described as a complex tension between centrifugal (open-ended) and centripetal (fixed) forms of meaning-making (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, the teachers' discourse represented on-going attempts to navigate between *playing along* and *playing against* particular game elements and knowledge aspects that emerged when enacting and validating *The Power Game*.

The examples given here are mainly taken from the end-of-game discussions guided by the teachers. At this point in the game sessions, the "scripted" game activities had finished, and the teachers would often try to (re-)establish their sense of authority in the classroom. According to the game instructions, the purpose of the end-of-game discussion was to "relate the [game] problems to a subject-related context and create a coherent understanding of the course of the game session".[54] This purpose was intentionally formulated in very broad terms to be able to *explore* the teachers' different ways of interpreting the game events. In order to guide the ensuing discussion, the teachers had to be scenario competent by relating their own understanding of the game session with the students' game experience and other possible outcomes of an election scenario. As the game discussion followed shortly after the final voting and the constitution of a new government, each of the five participating teachers started the game discussion by commenting on the "realism" of the game results as a form of *reality check*. Furthermore, the teachers discussed the sessions by *re-playing* particular episodes that mainly concerned student motives for their political tactics and their use of the rhetorical forms of appeal. The teachers thus tried to make the students re-experience and dramatically rehearse possible lines of action, choices and consequences of the election scenario (Dewey, 1922). Generally speaking, the end-of-game discussions generated a significant amount of response from the students, who were eager to discuss "local events" from the game sessions, i.e. spectacular performances by particular politicians, how to speak "mumbo jumbo" to cover up for a lack of knowledge, blaming other groups for cheating by "fixing votes" etc. In this way, the teachers had to cater to several different interests and agendas while simultaneously trying to authorise the students' game experience.

7.3.1. *Playing against and playing along*

As mentioned earlier, Marianne found it quite "easy" to prepare and introduce *The Power Game* to the students as the game instructions had "done the thinking" [GS 2, teacher interview]. In addition to making her own overheads for the game introduction, she also prepared a brief lecture on the

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[54] The game instructions are located here: www.dr.dk/gymnasium/pdf/vejledning_rollespil.pdf.

rhetorical forms of appeal that were the key criteria when the students had to vote on the politicians who were "best" at presenting their political issues (cf. chapter 6). However, instead of presenting this "tool" at an earlier stage, Marianne waited with her lecture until the end of the game session when the students had finished all their presentations, negotiations and debates. At this point in the game session, the students were quite eager to finish off the game by voting for the best political performances. Thus, when Marianne turned on the overhead projector and began lecturing on logos, ethos and pathos, she received a somewhat negative response from the students:

> Marianne: For the last [vote], where you must try to assess how well they did, I would like to provide you with a little tool called rhetorical forms of appeal. Even though I'm not a Danish teacher in this class, you could also present it here, because it refers just as much to social studies
> Kim: We've been through that
> Marianne: Is that so? That's wonderful! (*Looks at Kim, who is sitting outside the camera*). Don't look at me with that expression on your face, because it fits perfectly well into this situation…
> Michelle (*interrupts*): Are you allowed to vote on your own party for the second vote? [GS 2: #5].

As Kim's facial response indicates, Marianne clearly "breaks the frame" of the game scenario by transforming from game facilitator into Danish teacher in front of her social studies class (Green & Dixon, 1994). Furthermore, Marianne is also interrupted by Michelle, who is not particularly interested in the teachers' overhead about the rhetorical forms of appeal. Instead, she wants to know the *rules* for the final voting procedure. This excerpt illustrates a tension between the teachers' focus on educational goals (i.e. learning about rhetoric) and the students' focus on the game goals (i.e. winning the election).

Marianne's actual lecture on ethos, logos and pathos is mostly delivered in an abstract and generalised perspective ("one could say that…") and her description of the rhetorical forms of appeal primarily addresses how they *could* be used ("you would need to…") [GS 2: #5]. In that sense, she only partially addresses the students' own experience of the election scenario. Furthermore, since her walkthrough of logos, ethos and pathos comes *after* the students' actual presentations, it also represents a somewhat authoritative interpretation of the students' political performances. Being an experienced Danish teacher, Marianne has presented her overhead about the rhetorical forms of appeal numerous times before. However, employing overt instruction at this late stage in the game session, she is arguably *playing against* the students' immediate goals within the election scenario. Even though Marianne's presentation of logos, pathos and ethos makes sense

per se, the information is not seen as particularly important as the students have exhausted the discursive repertoire of the debate and mainly wish to end the election by giving their final votes. However, if the students had been given the tool at an earlier point in the game, it is quite likely that they would have been able to incorporate it into their strategic planning and immediate evaluation of the actual performances. Ironically, then, rather than presenting a tool, Marianne presents more of a retrospective lecture on how the students *could* have prepared and enacted their presentations.

As Marianne's lapse into overt instruction illustrates, the teachers sometimes tried to re-establish their everyday discursive authority in relation to the dialogical game space. This was also the case in the first game session, where Karen tried to guide the end-of-game discussion. The game had ended with Michael (the National Party) and Dennis (the Socialist Party) constituting a new government as the two friends had made a "secret" arrangement that went against what the audience (voters) had been promised. Compared to the ideological landscape of real life Danish politics, this constellation was quite unlikely and created numerous protests in the class. Thus, Karen wanted Michael and Dennis to reflect upon the "realism" of this outcome, and how they could agree on immigration policies, where the ideologies of their respective parties were particularly "distant" from one another [GS 1: #5]. At first, Karen "approves" Michael and Dennis' controversial strategy of appealing to immigrants instead of old people, as there were no elderly but "a fair amount of immigrants" in the class [*sic*]. Still, Karen was not satisfied with this explanation as it would have fatal consequences for both parties in the world of real life Danish politics. This makes Michael provokingly state that politics is "simply a matter of selling the message". Karen then turns Michael's statement into a general question to be discussed in the class in relation to the ongoing election campaign for the 2005 municipal election:

Michael: You just have to sell the message

Karen: Yes… okay, let's say that we sell the message. Is politics just a matter of selling the message? Are there any arguments that support what you say? Let's say we follow this line of thought that Danish politics or politics as such or American politics, it's about selling the message and finding the smartest slogans and… if that's how it is. How could you argue that this might… this might be right? Try and come up with some examples from the election that is lurking around the corner, from the municipal election. Where can you see any arguments that support this here and now?

John: I'm not quite sure, I don't know how well Klaus Bondam is doing, but otherwise I should think that he is a brilliant example, if he ends up winning.

Lars: He won't!

Karen: Why?

John: I believe that he'll only get elected because he's famous. What he says, it's completely out of line

Karen: What party is he running for?

Several students: The Social Liberalists.

Karen: Yes, the Social Liberalist Party. And why is he famous?

Class: *** TV… actor…

Karen: Yes, he's an actor. He starred in *The Celebration* and a whole number of other things… and then he's also declared himself to be gay

Michael: Homo!

Karen: So he fits in fine with the Social Liberalists [*sic*]

Class: (*laughter*)

Karen: The Social Liberalist Party… you can say that there is nothing discriminating about that at all! There is also… I was thinking of another example. Now, if we look at the election poster of Ritt Bjerregaard… I simply love that one. I would like us to… that you argue how it supports the point of view Michael and Dennis brought up, which assumes that politics is just about fishing for votes and getting the message, the smart messages through. How could you argue in support of that?

Ramon: I mean… In Italy, where there's…

Karen: No, now I want to hear about Ritt Bjerregaard!

Ramon: About Ritt Bjerregaard?!

Karen: Yes! [GS 1: #5].

As an answer to Karen's question on "selling the message", John mentions the example of the Social Liberalist politician Klaus Bondam, who is well-known through his acting career. However, Karen is clearly more interested in her *own* example, which relates to the election poster for the Social Democratic candidate Ritt Bjerregaard: "I simply love that one". Thus, when Ramon freely associates "selling the message" with Italian politics, he is abruptly cut off by the teacher, who only wants "to hear about Ritt Bjerregaard". Though not shown here, the discussion continues with a lengthy series of quite specific questions and explanations from Karen that argue how Ritt Bjerregaard tries to sell herself as a "strong" alternative to the Social Democrats' weak profile on immigration policies.

As this example shows, Karen starts by turning Michael's statement into a general question for the class, but quickly decides to *impose* her own authoritative interpretation of a particular election poster, which had no direct link with the actual game session whatsoever. In this way, she "knows and possesses the truth" and "instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error" (Bakhtin, 1984: 81). Thus, instead of relating Michaels's provoking claim to the students' experience of the actual performances and ideological debates of the game session, Karen narrows

the issue of "selling the message" to particular aspects of the municipal election and goes on to *test* the students' knowledge of the Social Democratic Party's current immigration policies. Later on, Karen follows the same pattern by testing the students' factual knowledge of historical precedents to Michael and Dennis' unlikely political alliance, i.e. the collaboration between Danish parties during World War II and the alliance between the right wing Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) and the left wing Common Course Party (*Fælles Kurs*) in the 1980s. In all these cases, Karen wants the students to give her answers she already knows and which are difficult to relate to the students' immediate experience of the game session. Arguably, this form of self-positioning represents a *centripetal* approach as the teacher consistently tries to view the end-of-game discussion from her own perspective and pre-given forms of knowledge (cf. section 3.3.1). Put differently, Karen is *playing against* the educational aim of the end-of-game discussion by neglecting the students' own interpretations and reflections about the election scenario. Instead, she tries to impose a teacher authority familiar to her everyday forms of classroom instruction.

At other times, the teachers in this study would become driven by the game scenario by simply *playing along* with the game without questioning the educational value of the students' game experience. Thomas' approach to the end-of-game discussion in the third game session provides a good illustration of this kind of *centrifugal* approach to the game goals. The students from this game session were quite interested in discussing how the politicians had to use rhetoric and spin in order to win the election, especially when answering critical questions on topics they only had limited knowledge of. Thomas then asked the students what politicians do when they have to handle questions they have no idea how to answer. However, instead of letting the students answer, Thomas answers the question on his own:

> Thomas: Well, yes, they evade the subject or talk a lot of mumbo jumbo. They certainly won't say, as some of you did, that "I have no idea" or "I don't know" or ha, ha, ha. So it's something you need to learn, *to speak mumbo jumbo*. And there *really* are a lot of them, who do that ***. Lisa?
>
> Lisa: I also believe that it's been good for us to speak to for a larger audience, because when we have to take our exams we sort of need to be eloquent and… It's a good idea the thing about trying to persuade people that what you say is the only right answer. It may be that it was difficult for Tina… I actually think that she was quite eloquent…
>
> Thomas: Yes, she did quite well.
>
> Lisa: Yes.
>
> Thomas: For the last part of the discussion, where she defended… I mean, she could easily beat Pia Kjærsgaard! [leader of the Danish People's Party]

Tina: (*laughs*)

Lisa: Yes, she actually could!

Thomas: She was a hundred kilometres further out on the right wing! [GS 3: #6].

According to Thomas' interpretation, politicians are *required* to talk mumbo jumbo. He also praises Tina for being able to *outperform* the real life leader of the Danish People's Party. A few seconds later, the same issue pops up again when Tina reflects on the "realism" of the election scenario, concluding that professional politicians must be able to spin and "wrap it up":

Tina: Well, but I just think that… yes, they [politicians] talk more mumbo jumbo and they're damn professional (*laughs*) at evading the issue… As it is now, you know, we don't really know all of the party's politics; you sort of have to guess a bit.

Thomas: It's quite funny that there's a connection to examinations, one of you [Lisa] mentioned it before… It's not that I want to encourage you to talk mumbo jumbo when you're going to sit for an examination…

Class: (*laughing*)

Thomas: But there's a lot to the form also… Suppose I ask you something about the multiplier effect and you simply can't remember anything about multiplier effect… That might… It's okay once in a while to say that I really have no idea, but it's much better to try and then… For example "I'd love to get back on that… I just need to finish this bit first!", and then you find out… whether you can evade it, or gain enough time to remember something or just say the bit that you do know about it. Even though you're going to speak rubbish, right…

Thorkild: (*laughs*)

Thomas: That's also what politicians do because at the end of the day, they don't know that much. Of course, the ministers do, because they have more time to acquaint themselves with… but there's a lot them who don't know that much. Then you might say that of course they have the time to give the case to their spokesmen who have time for comprehending it. But it's clear you're expected to take on a certain… *role* when you're a politician and that was revealed in this game [GS 3: #5].

Here, Thomas links together the semiotic domains of role-playing, oral examinations and professional politics as they all require the ability to pull off verbal performances (Gee, 2003). From a dramaturgical perspective, there is obviously some truth in this thought provoking analysis of how role-players, students and politicians are required to perform through various forms of "impression management" (Goffman, 1959; cf. section 4.3.2). However, Thomas' somewhat cynical interpretation merely extends the students' experience of the election scenario and does not support alternative interpretations and the students' critical reflection, which was one of the key goals of the

end-of-game discussion (cf. chapter 6). Thus, the teacher did not attempt to analyse or question to what *degree* real life politicians actually do talk mumbo jumbo or whether they *only* play roles that can be "revealed". In contrast to Karen, who played against the students' experience of the election scenario by imposing her own authoritative perspective, Thomas simply *played along* with the students' game experience by fully embracing and generalising the assertions and implications of the election scenario to real life contexts. Even though this extension of the game result was somewhat provoking and entertaining, this interpretation did not attempt to deepen the students' understanding of the game activities – i.e. in relation to real-life phenomena or curricular goals. In this way, playing the game ended up becoming *a centrifugal goal in itself* which did not involve reflection from an outsider's perspective.

7.3.3. Re-negotiating teacher authority

In the previous section, I explored how some teachers "authorised" student participation either by playing against or by playing along with their interpretations of the game scenario. For now, I will focus on how Marianne tried to *re-negotiate* the authoritative discourse of the classroom as a part of the game dialogue between teacher and students. As mentioned earlier, Marianne presented a lecture on the rhetorical forms of appeal toward the end of the second game session, which the students were asked to use as a tool for evaluating the politicians' performances. After voting and discussing tactical motives behind the game result, Marianne returned to the rhetorical aspects of the game scenario:

> Have you thought about the different forms of communication and appeal and *why do you think* or why did things go the way they did? There was the Socialist Party, which was represented single-handedly by you (*looks at Benjamin*), and then there was Michelle and Sarah, who were represented up here, and from, what's its name, the Nationalist Party, and of course, they received help from the others, and of course, Benjamin was also helped by his group. Uh… and I would like you to answer this: Was it decisive what happened *up here* (*points to the panel*), where it was the individual people who were on stage? [GS 2: #5]

Marianne invites the students to reflect and comment on the politicians' performances by addressing the politicians who played the most demanding and significant roles in order to make them describe why and how they communicated the way they did from the "front" stage of the panel (Goffman, 1959). This strategy initiated an extended exchange between Marianne and the

students about different aspects of the politicians' use of rhetorical forms of appeal, which was driven by variations of the initial question: How did the politicians appeal to the audience, and how can this appeal be understood or explained? [GS 2, #5-6].

Seen from the perspective of dialogical pedagogy, this represents an "authentic question" as the teacher does not know the answer beforehand and refrains from imposing her own authoritative interpretation of the students' performances (Nystrand, 1997; cf. chapter 3). Marianne maintained this open perspective on the politicians' appeals throughout the end-of-game discussion and re-phrased her question several times in order to explore different aspects of their game experience. Subsequently, she asked the students to draw parallels to the trustworthiness of real life politicians, to comment on their strategic use of online quotes as an argumentation trick for exposing politicians' lack of knowledge, and to explain how the political parties might appeal to different voter groups. Furthermore, Marianne scaffolded the students when they had difficulties formulating their answers by asking them supplementary questions, i.e. "Could you describe that more fully?" or "What do you mean by that?"

By exploring a broad range of answers to her initial question, Marianne tried to bring out a wide variety of interpretations which could contribute to the *shared* construction of knowledge within the classroom (Mercer, 1995). Her response to Josephine and Sigrid from the Social Democratic Party is an illustration of this. For the first part of the end-of-the game discussion, the two girls had been remarkably quiet which can be explained by their frustration with the election results. They had worked intensively the whole day, but still ended up with zero votes – a result which was in stark contrast to the mandates of the real life Social Democratic Party, and the initial exit poll taken during the game session. When Marianne posed her initial question on the significance of the politicians' performances, Josephine replied that "a buzz of rumours" claimed that the election result resulted from "cheating" due an agreement made between some members of the Liberalist Party and the National Party to vote for each other "no matter what" [GS 2: #5]. Josephine's accusation about fixed voting was met with laughter in the class, and the alleged cheating was not taken seriously by Marianne, who was more interested in discussing the politicians' actual presentations. Since her revelation was ignored, Josephine kept quiet while the other parties, namely the Socialist Party and the National Party, discussed different aspects of the politicians' rhetorical appeal. After a few minutes, Julie raised her hand again and offered another explanation on the Social Democratic Party's lack of votes:

Marianne: Yes… Josephine?

Josephine: Well, Sigrid and I talked a little about this thing about being a Social Democrat; it's sort of more in-betweenish. And the Nationals, they are more like… they are slightly more edgy, so they have a bit more significant opinions in that respect, so it's always a bit easier to be either offended or fascinated by what is said and that's why it may also be slightly difficult to catch a certain…

Marianne: Yes, that's right.

Josephine: So that's why it may not seem so (*changes her voice*) "wow… she's really…" So when you're a centre party that doesn't have any sort of opinions that you *really* pay attention to…

Marianne: Well, I think there's some truth in that; there's something to it, right. I also think that many people have a, what should we call it, a particular opinion about the Danish People's Party, which means that, that… that you expect to hear something, right, and if you suddenly hear some other things, then it might just mean that you listen more, right? "Now, what's that?"

Sigrid: I just wanted to add to what Josephine said. I also believe that what we see now… that this election result (*points to the blackboard*)… that we did not get any votes *at all*. I also believe that this was because it was difficult for us to appear credible you know… because we didn't really… I mean it was hard… we could not really imagine how the Social Democratic Party would reply to some of the questions we got. I mean, some of the questions we had, they were…

Marianne: That's quite interesting.

Sigrid: It was very hard to improvise because we didn't quite know what we really were supposed say about it, whereas I think that if we had been the Nationalistic Party, we would have had much clearer opinions, I mean then we would… we would be *faster* at sort of knowing what we should say

Marianne: So what you're actually saying, which is quite interesting if it holds true, is that it has to do with the Social Democrats being a party that seems somewhat hazy to people…

Sigrid: Yes… it's a bit hard to…

Marianne: It's unclear… blurred.

Sigrid: Yes, it's a bit hard to find out one hundred percent what they really stand for, and you know…

Marianne: Yes… yes, that might be right… there might be some truth to that. Yes… whether that has to do with *** (*interrupted*).

Michelle: I also think it's got something to do with having a new leader, and then they change all their policies. And then they change them again, and then they don't stick to them. I mean, you don't really know what they stand for.

Marianne: That's also a part of it [GS 2: #6].

In this quote, Josephine offers a more nuanced interpretation of their lack of impact on their classmates which is backed up by her fellow party member Sigrid. Marianne clearly finds these perspectives quite interesting and supports Josephine and Signe's attempt to expand their arguments on how the students' negative attitude toward the National Party ended up being an asset in the political debates, as it was easier to provide "fast" answers by representing "significant" opinions.

Marianne is also open to the interpretation that the real life Social Democratic Party has an "unclear" ideological status which may partly explain the party's poor results within the game. Finally, this interpretation is also supported by Michelle, who represented the National Party.

As the example shows, Marianne is quite open toward the students' own interpretation of the game session. In this respect, she positioned herself *centrifugally* with respect to the meaning-making processes of the game scenario by trying to extend and elaborate the students' reflection on their game experience. However, at other times, Marianne would try to impose her own interpretation of the game events by taking up a more *centripetal* position toward the students. This was visible in her lecture on the rhetorical forms of appeal which disrupted the progression of the game scenario (see section 7.3.1), but also in her interpretation of Michelle's performance as a politician for the National Party. At this point in the end-of-game discussion, Michelle and Benjamin, who were both seen as prominent politicians and received a lot of the votes, had just evaluated and praised each others' performances. Michelle's presentation was characterised as being tough and convincing, while Benjamin, who represented the Socialist Party, had taken a softer approach by "wrapping it in". Marianne then presented her own interpretation of the game results by assuming that the relative success of Michelle's presentation might be related to her gender:

> Marianne: And that… I mean I was thinking that, that, that… do you *think* that's got something to do with the two sexes that we have here?
>
> Benjamin: (*raises eyebrows and smiles to the class*)
>
> Marianne: I mean, could you (*looks at Michelle*) have gotten away with what you did as a *man*? The way that… or do you think that it was a certain style *inextricably linked* to being a female politician?
>
> Michelle: I don't know… normally I relate being hard and direct more with a man than with a woman…
>
> Marianne: Yes… that's it… yes…
>
> Michelle: That, that I had should go in and represent some soft values, where I perhaps appeared *tougher*… then perhaps you could expect that (*changes her voice*) "I could sit and give a sweet smile", you know?
>
> Benjamin: (*gives an exaggerated smile to the class*)
>
> Michelle: But that… I don't know whether gender had a big influence; I don't think it did…
>
> Marianne: No… okay… okay… we need to hear some different… Yes, I think it was, yes. Sarah?
>
> Sarah: Well, I'd just like to say that even though I sat here right next to Michelle, right, then I'd like to say that some of it, which I think Michelle she did a super job with, was that she was simply just convincing, right. If I had been down here [in the audience], I'd just be thinking that she's simply got it

all under control, she knows what she wants and she was able to answer everything. And Benjamin also did that. But there was just something about the way Michelle, who (*changes her voice*) "Yes, I would really love to answer that" and "Now I'm gonna tell you" and you know...

Marianne (*changes her voice*): "Now, here I come!" (*laughs*)

Sarah: Yes! Which means that you really become…. "Okay, she really wants to"… I mean, she knows…

Marianne (*interrupts*): What about real life… is that also what you pay attention to when you hear politicians? [GS 2: #2]

This exchange of dialogue shows how both Benjamin and Michelle were quite surprised by Marianne's gender perspective, an issue that had not been brought up earlier in this game session. Benjamin comments on Marianne's unexpected question and Michelle responds by making funny faces to his classmates. Similarly, Michelle tries to understand the implications of Marianne's direct question by thinking aloud, a response that can be described as a form of "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981; cf. section 3.3). Thus, Michelle does not reject Marianne's interpretation until she has *questioned* it herself; i.e. whether or not it makes sense in relation to her own experience of the game scenario. Marianne reluctantly accepts this negative answer, but still tries to find other voices within the class that may or may not support her interpretation. Sarah then steps in and supports Michelle by praising her energetic presentation style. As Benjamin, Michelle and Sarah's responses indicate, the students were not willing or interested in "reducing" the politicians' performances to a gender perspective, after which the discussion moved on to other issues.

Marianne's focus on the relationship between gender and political discourse was by no means irrelevant when trying to understand how the students enacted the election scenario (cf. Tannen, 1998). During the five game sessions, the students positioned themselves in relation to the gender stereotypes of real-life political leaders several times by referring to what "he" or "she" would do in the same situation. Similarly, Michelle explicitly compared her own performance with that of Pia Kjærsgaard, the charismatic leader of the Danish People's Party. However, Marianne's question was not backed by any previous statements about the relationship between gender and politics within the context of the game session. Moreover, her question was directly aimed at Michelle's interpretation of her *own* performance instead of presenting the question as a more general issue to be discussed in the class. In this way, Marianne's question implies a rather personalised and authoritative attempt to "gender" the discussion from the teachers' own, centripetal perspective. Even though Marianne was a bit baffled that the students rejected her

interpretation, she still decided to play along with Sarah's remark and made no further attempts to challenge the students' interpretation on the topic.

In contrast to Karen and Thomas' approach to the end-of-game discussion, Marianne tried to *question* and *distribute* the discursive authority of the game session between a variety of perspectives and different explanations. Her questioning had a *centrifugal* orientation as she attempted to build upon and unfold the students' game experiences through the emerging discourses of the dialogical game space. At the same time, Marianne also challenged the students through a *centripetal* approach by confronting them with her own interpretations of the election scenario. In this sense, Marianne tried to facilitate the students' reflection on their game experience by constructing and *re-negotiating* the authoritative interpretation of *The Power Game*.

7.4. Analytical theme: Epistemological views

The third and final analytical theme in this chapter concerns the teachers' *epistemological views* on the knowledge aspects of the election scenario. In order to describe and analyse the teachers' epistemological views, I focus chiefly on how the teachers evaluated the game sessions in the post-game interviews, i.e. how they interpreted the subject matter of the election scenario, the students' game-based learning processes, and the overall status of the knowledge generated by the students. Hence, this section poses two analytical questions: What counted as valid knowledge within the context of the election scenario? And, how or why does educational gaming represent a relevant form of teaching and learning? These questions all relate to the teachers' epistemological views or their *assertions* on the whats, hows and whys of knowledge production within an educational context (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2).

This analytical theme mainly emerged by comparing how the five social studies teachers interpreted the curricular knowledge of the game sessions. In summary, Karen focused on the links between the election scenario and contemporary politics as well as historical precedents for the unlikely election result with an alliance between far left and right wing parties. Marianne mainly concentrated on student use of the rhetorical forms of appeal, and how they communicated their political messages. Similarly, Thomas emphasised the students' ability to do rhetorical performances and speak "mumbo jumbo". Joan, in contrast, was more interested in how the election scenario supported the students' overall understanding of parliamentary debate and democratic *Bildung*. Finally, Poul was mainly pre-occupied with designing a procedure for constituting a new

government, and how the students' tried to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of political ideologies.

As this broad range of interpretations suggests, it is problematic to limit the subject matter "content" of the game sessions to a narrowly defined topic. To some degree, the teachers' differing interpretations of the election scenario can be explained by their professional knowledge of different school subjects. Thus, Karen's focus on historical precedents can partly be explained by the fact that she is also a history teacher. Similarly, Marianne's lecture on the rhetorical forms of appeal reflects that she also taught Danish as a subject. In this way, the teachers' view of the game "content" was influenced by their professional knowledge of other school subjects than social studies. However, the teachers' differing interpretations of the game sessions also represented different assertions and ideas in a more general sense of what constituted knowledge within the context of the election scenario. Thus, based on an analysis of the teachers' approaches to *The Power Game*, it is possible to identify three epistemological views on the same learning resource. In this sense, the election scenario either represented a realistic *script*, an entertaining *performance* or a pragmatic form of *inquiry*.

7.4.1. Game knowledge as "script"

As mentioned earlier, Karen initially described the game as a form of "programmed instruction" when she responded to early drafts of the game instructions. Furthermore, she introduced the game scenario to the students by describing her own role as that of a puppet, and me (as researcher and game designer) as a puppeteer [*sic*] (cf. section 7.2.2). In this sense, she felt controlled or *scripted* by the game activities and pedagogical guidelines described in the game instructions which clearly differed from her everyday teaching practices. When Karen decided to participate in this study, she mainly focused on the educational goals of the election scenario and less upon the actual organisation of the game activities. Thus, she viewed the election scenario as way to learn more about political communication as well as a means for revising what the students had learned a year ago to prepare them for their final examination [Redville School, field notes]. Similarly, during her game introduction, Karen framed the end-of-game discussion in this way:

> Then at the end we will recap and see what we've learned from the game and see how you can relate
> that to previous classes and some of those things we went through last year. We need to try and see if
> we have to correct any misunderstandings and try to sort out what happened during the session, right.
> What can we use this for? [GS 1: #1]

For Karen, the end-of-game discussion primarily represented a way of *revising* the students' knowledge in relation to last year's teaching. Thus, the evaluation should clear away any "misunderstandings" that might have happened during the game in relation to the social studies curriculum and the world of real life politics. As discussed previously, Karen mainly facilitated the end-of-game discussion by testing the students' *factual* knowledge of contemporary politics and historical precedents in comparison with regarding the game results. In the post-game interview, she commented that she would have liked it if the students' "subject matter activities" had been "more challenging", and if they had "worked harder" and been given "more text" when researching their key political issues [GS 1, teacher interview]. As these examples suggest, Karen mostly viewed the subject matter knowledge of the game as a pre-given entity that the students had to learn and fully comprehend in relation to prior teaching. Thus, Karen's approach to *The Power Game* was based upon a set of knowledge criteria in which the "content" of the game had to be realistic or true in comparison with real life politics and the goals of the social studies curriculum. In this sense, the educational game scenario mostly represented a script for teaching and learning factual or pre-defined knowledge.

In order to understand Karen's "scripted" approach to the knowledge of the debate game, it should be repeated that she was quite nervous prior to the game session, which was also the first time ever that the game was played (cf. section 5.5.6). Thus, she was quite relieved that "it went so well" [GS 1, teacher interview]. Moreover, she later tried to experiment with short role-play exercises with other students at her school. Consequently, Karen quite likely would have felt less "programmed", if she had had more experience with educational games, or if she had had the opportunity to teach *The Power Game* more than once.

7.4.2. Game knowledge as "performance"

In contrast to Karen, other teachers chose a more *performative* approach to the knowledge aspects that emerged in the election scenario. Thus, Thomas and Joan mostly viewed the game as a means for letting the students perform and construct their own interpretations through various forms of *self-expression*. Both teachers praised the game sessions as an "entertaining" way of letting the students experience a parliamentary election [GS 4 & 5, teacher interviews]. In this sense, they validated the knowledge of the game using a *constructivist* set of knowledge criteria, which did not question the individual students' ability to construct valid knowledge based on their game

experience. The difference to Karen's realist knowledge criteria was quite clear in the ways that the teachers provided interpretive frames for understanding the game scenario. Thus, Karen initiated the end-of-game discussion by asking, "Was it realistic?" [GS 1: #5], which assumed that the students' game knowledge should be evaluated in relation to the authority of real life politics. In contrast, Joan initiated the same discussion by asking, "Do you feel like expressing what you think about this day?" [GS 4: #5]. In this manner, she invited the students to evaluate the game session by sharing their *personal* and *emotional* experiences. Likewise, Thomas introduced the end-of-game discussion in a rather ironic and casual manner by reading aloud from the game instructions:

> Thomas: Uh… It says here that (*reads aloud from game instructions*) "it is important for the teacher to pick up certain issues and relate them to previous teaching". And I'd like to know: What did you gain from a role-play like the one we did today? Was it good for anything? Has it been fun? Has it been deadly boring? What do you think of this form of teaching?
> Lisa: (*raises her hand*)
> Thomas: The Prime Minister… no, Lisa?!
> Class: (*laughter*) [GS 3: #6].

Like Joan, Thomas' opening question is quite broad and mainly relates to the students' emotional or immediate experience of taking part in the game. Moreover, by humorously addressing Lisa, who was the most articulate politician during that game session, as prime minister, Thomas only marks a partial transition from communicating *within* the game session to an outsider's perspective on the discussion intended to take place *after* the game. In this way, he indicates that the role-play should not be taken too seriously. When one of the students suggests that more preparation would have been beneficial, Thomas answers that a role-play should not be "too academic". Rather, *The Power Game* and role-playing as such represent a specific form of playful learning:

> [I]n a *game* like this, it's a form of playing that you take part in… and identify with… and it'll end up being too academic if you have to sit at home and prepare yourself for a role-play; you can't do that. A *role-play*, it's a form of *playing*… where you learn as it happens… I should think. And then afterwards, we can do what we're doing now and relate the issues back to something we've read in other contexts to see if they fit together. But it's *quite a special way* through which to learn something. It's a role-play; it sort of has to surprise you with something concrete, I think [GS 3: #6].

Here, Thomas emphasises the playful and surprising elements of role-playing and suggests that the game experience could be compared to previous knowledge in order to "make sense". However,

when evaluating the game session, Thomas did *not* draw any direct comparison to prior teaching. Instead, he presented a rather provoking and playful interpretation of the game by relating the students' ability to talk "mumbo jumbo" with real life politicians and student performances during oral exams (cf. section 7.3.1). In the post-game interview, Thomas concluded that "he is not that fond of role-playing", but the teaching method does "no harm" if used no more than once or twice with a class as a playful "supplement" [GS 3, teacher interview]. Even though he praised the students for being "good at playing along", "quite serious" and "engaged" in game, he would clearly prefer extended periods of project-based work designed to allow students to develop different competencies "in a more academic way" [GS 3, teacher interview]. Thus, he mostly viewed role-playing as an engaging and playful distraction in relation to everyday "academic" teaching and learning practices. As these examples suggest, Thomas' epistemological view of *The Power Game* blackboxes the election scenario as an *entertaining* but rather self-explanatory phenomenon, which is seen in isolation from other and more "serious" school activities (Latour, 1987). In this way, the "magic circle" of the role-play experience is viewed as a goal in itself (Huizinga, 1950).

As Thomas' comments suggest, he and the other teachers presented more nuanced views on the election scenario in the post-game interviews in comparison to what they expressed when they conducted the end-of-game discussions in front of the students. This indicates an interesting *knowledge gap* between front and backstage behaviour as the teachers were "forced" to give immediate responses when facing the students in the classroom, whereas they often came up with far more detailed reflections when interviewed afterwards (Goffman, 1959). This discrepancy was quite obvious at the end of the fourth game session, where the students were asked to fill in an evaluation form. Joan was clearly impressed with the students' performances and praised them for being able to *identify* with their roles:

> And while you're looking at that [evaluation form], then I'd like to say that I as your *teacher* think that it has been incredibly interesting to see how you were able to identify more and more with the roles you *have* during the day. I think that's been really interesting… better and better at arguing and playing your roles. And it sure doesn't hurt that the entertainment value has been high [GS 4: sound recording #3].

In Joan's evaluation, and the discussion that preceded it, she mostly addressed the students in terms of their *social competencies* – i.e. how they were able to "perform throughout" and "become

immersed" in their roles in an entertaining way. As the game session had formally ended, I asked Joan whether the social studies class had "worked with" spin before. She answered in a low voice, implying that she did not want the students to be interrupted by her response as they were completing the evaluating forms:

> Joan: (*lowers her voice*) Right now they're writing, but there's no doubt that the students *themselves* give the impression that they're much more in control of their party's politics. That's also what I experience.
>
> Thorkild: Yes.
>
> Joan: During the day, their insight would grow… journalists, spin doctors and, uh, politicians… their insight into the parties' politics grew during the day. They get a deeper understanding because they have to argue for it or question it or plan a strategy for it, uh… so in that way… I think that this was a great thing about it. I mean, simply getting *a deeper understanding* of the politics… what the parties stand for… And in the way they argued, I also think that financial politics came into the picture again. Christian, who kept arguing about spending money with one hand and then refusing to abolish the ban on taxes, for example, which is a quite reasonable way of looking at financial policies, right. It pops up… pops up several times during the day. So, I actually think that the subject matter, especially about politics but also finance, has been reviewed for them… and that's actually also what they express themselves [GS 4: sound recording #3].

Again, Joan praises the students' performances. However, her response to me includes a rather more detailed interpretation of the *subject-related knowledge* that was enacted within the game scenario, i.e. how the students' understanding of politics represented core subject matter in the social studies curriculum.

As these examples show, Joan mainly focused on the students ability to *perform*. But when Joan turned to answer me in a lowered voice, she changed from "front" to "back stage" behaviour and provided me with a more direct or insider perspective on how the game session should be interpreted (Goffman, 1959). Thus, she was clearly also interested in the subject matter that emerged during the game session, even though she did not articulate this aspect in front of the students. In summary, both Thomas and Joan mostly praised the students for delivering entertaining performances and only *articulated* their reflections on the "serious" or curricular aspects of the election scenario when interviewed afterwards.

7.4.3. Game knowledge as "exploration"

In the previous two sections, I have argued that the teachers' assertions of the election scenario's knowledge aspects influenced how they validated the students' knowledge production. Whereas Karen's scripted approach tended to reduce the subject matter of *The Power Game* to factual or pre-given knowledge, Thomas and Joan's performative approach mostly focused on the individual students' ability to express themselves and construct their own interpretations. Both these epistemological views differ from a third view which can be described as *exploratory*. Thus, when Marianne introduced the premises for the election scenario, she made it quite clear to the students that the game scenario was based on an unpredictable outcome:

> And when we are all the way through, we'll arrange a voting round. And in that way, <u>we, uh, think that, uh, we'll also be able to say</u> that some parties have been terrific at advancing their points of view. They'll have made a good communication strategy or something, because there really will be, <u>at least that is what we assume</u>, some votes that will have really been moved. <u>It may also be that they haven't, but then we can discuss why on earth this did or did not happen.</u> So you are also voters, all of you [GS 2: #1; emphasis added].

Marianne presents the election scenario as a contingent inquiry *to be explored* by the students. In this way, she assumes that it is neither meaningful nor possible to predict the many possible outcomes of the election scenario, which could and should be understood from a wide variety of different perspectives and hypotheses.

Similarly, Marianne asks the students to come up with different interpretations and explanations *after* the election. This game session ended in a new government formed by the Liberalist Party and the National Party which diverged from the real life Liberalist-Conservative government, where the Danish People's Party was not an actual a part of the government but merely a powerful supporting party. Thus, when Marianne opens the discussion by asking "how realistic is this government", the students quickly respond that it is unrealistic for the National Party to be part of the government [GS 2: #5]. However, instead of merely confirming the students' commonsensical interpretation, Marianne re-phrases her question by asking whether this type of government "is completely unthinkable". Michelle then moderates her answer that the result may not be unthinkable but "highly improbable". The discussion then moves on to international and historical perspectives where Marianne mentions how the Austrian voters elected a prime minister

(Jörg Haider) with a nationalistic party record, and an ideological discussion of whether or not the Danish People's Party represents a centre party [GS 2: #5].

By turning her initial question about the realism of the election result into a more general and *hypothetical* question, Marianne attempts to make the students re-think their knee-jerk reaction ("the game result was unrealistic") and imagine other possible outcomes. Thus, the teacher explores the different modalities of the election scenario by continually re-phrasing and radicalising her question – from "Is the game result *realistic*" to "C*ould you imagine* such a government" to "You believe that it's completely *unthinkable?*" [GS 2: #5]. In this way, Marianne is not merely asking the students to articulate their individual game experience of this particular game session. She is asking them to re-think and "dramatically rehearse" the contingent lines of possible action implied by election scenarios *as such* and to reflect on how differently governments *can* be constituted within a representative democracy (Dewey, 1922).

Seen from an epistemological perspective, Marianne's opening and closing of the game session represents a set of *explorative* knowledge criteria. Thus, her introduction implies a contingent set of premises for producing knowledge, which assumes that that it is impossible to accurately predict how the students will unfold the election scenario. Simultaneously, she also expects the students to complete the game and critically reflect upon why the game evolved as it did and how this result could be understood from different perspectives. Thus, Marianne's educational aim was not to let the students reproduce pre-given knowledge or merely support their self-expression, but to "discuss" different interpretations of the election scenario. Consequently, the idea is not to reduce the game activities and game results to the "right" explanations or fixed forms of knowledge to be found within other learning resources (i.e. textbooks). In the post-game interview, Marianne further elaborated on this interpretation when she described how the time limit, the roles and the progressive inquiry of the game scenario required the students to focus:

> Marianne: They need to *focus on what is important*, if they don't do that, well then they don't have what they uh need for the next phase, then it's uh… it's something we often try to… to make them *focus precisely on the task* and say: "It's this and only this", uh…
> Thorkild: Yes.
> Marianne: And, and it's a lot easier here, because they could very quickly see that it wouldn't work, if they didn't get it done. I mean, if they go out and make short periods of group work in the class and have no time to finish it, well then, so what it doesn't matter, uh. They may probably be able to follow the discussion anyway or otherwise they just look out the window, right… and that's it, right… but they *couldn't* do that here [GS 2, teacher interview].

In this quote, Marianne both identifies similarities and differences between the game scenario and everyday forms of project-based group work. Thus, the students were required to work together in groups "independently of the teacher" in order to solve a specific problems in a "responsible" way [GS 2, teacher interview]. In this way, the election scenario can be seen as *a focused and staged way of doing project-based group work, which involved creative and strategic decision making*. More specifically, Marianne saw the game scenario as a way of letting students explore what it means to do project work and "build a hypothesis":

> Here, they are *actually slowly building a hypothesis*, uh… in the way they work today, right. So that means that it [project work] would not be so foreign to them, right, that this is the way they should go about it… and, and also refer to it. Often, they're uh a bit leery when the teacher doesn't provide much control, right. So [it's] some form of recognition that that they are able to do some things on their own, right. They don't have to know exactly what they have to do, right, and we don't have to stay at that reproductive level. They can quite easily throw themselves into a variety of challenges and get started, right [GS 2, teacher interview].

By emphasising the students' ability to "build hypotheses", Marianne is implicitly assuming that the students had to be *scenario competent* in order to generate and explore problems specific to their game-based inquiry (cf. chapter 4). This perspective was further emphasised when Marianne described how the game required the students "to outline scenarios on their own" and explore "how things would go if…" [GS 2, teacher interview]. Interestingly, Marianne's view of the students' "focused" group work differed from Thomas, who mostly interpreted *The Power Game* as a "playful" supplement and generally preferred more "academic" forms of project work (cf. section 7.2.1). *Thus, instead of creating a contrast between role-playing as "fun" and project work as "serious", this suggests a closer familiarity between the two forms of teaching.* Even though Marianne is also fond of "extended periods" of project work, where the students are able to get a "deeper" understanding by becoming "absorbed" in particular problem, she also problematise how the individual groups are rarely interested in the other groups' projects [GS 2, teacher interview]. Hence, the students were more attentive and were able to "learn from each other" when playing *The Power Game* [GS 2, teacher interview].

Like Marianne, Poul also conceptualised the election scenario as an exploratory learning environment. More specifically, he viewed the game as a welcome alternative to the

theory-driven teaching tradition within social studies. Thus, *The Power Game* – and educational games as such – represent an opportunity to conduct hands-on experiments within a classroom context:

> Poul: It's obvious that some [teachers] are inclined to, to… theorise, which has probably been the strongest tradition within this school subject. And actually, I'd say that I've always thought we lacked what the biologists have when they go out into a stream with a fishing net and take some samples and fish for anything and everything. We really do lack something like that.
> Thorkild: Something which is…
> Poul: I mean some form of hands-on activity, which they also call it nowadays. I mean… because it… And I've also been quite bad at pushing this school subject more than necessary into becoming more like a brain subject, a theoretical-analytical subject, right. Uh… that does actually appeal to a some of the students we have, because they don't want to go into those streams with rubber boots on (*laughs*)! But, but, but… it may have some other aspects, you know… I mean, the computer has been highly beneficial for social studies because now you can go beyond the thing with just sitting there talking. Now you can also do other things... uh… which are relevant to the subject matter, right. And which are more like working with hands-on exercises [GS 5, teacher interview].

Poul indirectly refers to the *experimental* aspects of the students' game-based inquiry into the election scenario, which required them to use the real life parties' websites when researching key political issues. In this way, educational games represent a way of overcoming an existing dichotomy within social studies education between "theory" and "practice".

Both Marianne and Poul's post-game reflections suggest that *The Power Game* could support the students' ability to build and experiment with different hypotheses – i.e. by using their scenario competence to explore the political ideologies and possible outcomes of the election scenario. Moreover, Marianne and Poul's epistemological view was based upon the assumption that *both teachers and students had to acknowledge that the open-ended election scenario created a wide array of possible interpretations and somewhat unpredictable outcomes.* This exploratory view of the game knowledge was not shared by all the students. Some students clearly identified with particular real life parties and stayed true to their key political messages as represented on party websites, whereas other students were more inclined to adapt their assigned ideological positions for strategic purposes. This interpretive clash between *identification* and *adaptation* became clear, when Poul evaluated the fifth game session. Thus, Tasha thought it was "confusing"

that the in-game parties did not have to be identical with the real life political parties [GS 5: #6]. However, Jonathan disagreed with her:

> Jonathan: On the contrary, I think that it's great that it [the game] is the way it is.
>
> Poul: Yes… well, okay…
>
> Jonathan: Otherwise, then you could just visit the website for the party you were supposed to be, print out and then sit down and read it aloud.
>
> Poul: Yes.
>
> Jonathan: Here, you were actually given an opportunity to *think on your own*, right.
>
> Poul: Yes.
>
> Jonathan: Instead of just going in and printing something out, then I think that it was… it's *best* when it's the way it is.
>
> Tasha: But you're using that party's… I mean, you're using that party's fundamental opinions ***
>
> Jonathan: Yes, yes, *fundamental*… but you still have, you don't have to be… *exactly* as the party is in Denmark.
>
> Poul: No… it… I mean, I don't know… I believe that Thorkild has made it the way he has, obviously he knows that better himself, I mean partially in order to rationalise a bit, so you don't have to have *all* the parties represented, and partially because he, uh… he wants to give greater freedom in interpreting the parties.
>
> Jonathan: Yes.
>
> Poul: But, it has a price, as Tasha points out [GS 5: #6].

According to Jonathan, the open-ended interpretive frame of the political parties is "great" as it requires the students to "think for themselves" instead of just reproducing the content of the political parties' websites. As mentioned, this interpretation corresponded with the intentions of the game design, which assumed that each group of students should be able to critically re-construct their own version of their assigned ideological position (cf. section 6.2.1). Still, Poul also acknowledges Marie's criticism, as any design choice have a "price" in the sense that it always creates different constraints and possibilities. In the post-game interview, Poul returned to Jeannette and Jonathan's different preferences as an example of how the game related to theoretical and practical aspects of political ideologies:

> Poul: Some of them [the students] might think that we have worked a bit too much with the ideologies, but that's also *harder than you would think at first*, right, because… then they've also been into it, it's a part of the discussion… they've become very *conscious* about it, some of the things that were said were really quite clever, right. I mean, when uh… Tasha questions... "But why don't we just use the

parties?"… And Jonathan says no because that also gives us some freedom, right. And both points of view are right.

Thorkild: Yes.

Poul: I don't know whether they think of it as something they've learned, you know… but it's caused by a certain experience concerning this, right. I mean, ideologies are a type of ideal and also a very pragmatic phenomenon, which, which is negotiated in a huge variety of ways [GS 5, teacher interview].

According to Poul, the main educational value of the game sessions was based upon the students' opportunity to *link theory and practice*. Thus, he assumed that the students had acquired relevant theoretical knowledge of political ideologies before playing the game. Experiencing the game scenario would allow them to reflect on and evaluate the different meanings of "ideology", which is a complex phenomenon that has both theoretical and practical implications. For Marianne, the overall educational value of the election scenario was mainly related to the challenges of crossdisciplinary teaching. Thus, she compared the game scenario with a new crossdisciplinary subject in Danish upper secondary schools called general study preparation (*almen studieforberedelse*) aimed at introducing students to the different methodologies and perspectives of the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences:[55]

As for the subject matter … then I obviously still think that, that it [the game] uh fits brilliantly with social studies, but, but then there's the general study preparation, right, where I think that *here*… And that's something we have problems with in the basic module [with first year students], being able to create a synthesis between the subjects, right. That, that it often gets so *superficial*, right, that the teacher has dug up some problems where you sometimes think that it's *only the teacher* who sees the connection, right, uh… That the students *still* see it as two subjects, right, uh… Where I think that *here*, you're actually playing out a sort of *small-scale reality*, right, and, and everybody knows that the problems and things which arise in this kind of reality, they're not… part of the *subject matter*, you know. They don't fit precisely within the different school subjects. In that respect, they're far too artificial, right. They cut across, right, uh, and, and that's precisely what you could use this game for, and then you could really use it as a *prelude* to some things, right. Get some things articulated and into play, right, that you could then *dive into afterwards* within other subjects and say: Here, *we* could really go in and do something here, right, and here *we* could… [GS 2, teacher interview].

For Marianne, the knowledge aspects embedded in *The Power Game* scenario should not be isolated to social studies, but rather seen as an example of crossdisciplinary teaching, which could

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[55] See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnasium_(Denmark) for further information on general study preparation (*almen studieforberedelse*).

include other school subjects, i.e. Danish, philosophy, history, media education etc. In this way, Marianne viewed the game scenario as an *epistemological model* for building hypotheses and transcending the tensions between existing school subjects, which are based on institutionally and historically defined "bodies of knowledge" within the context of Danish upper secondary education (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2). In that respect, the election scenario represented a less "artificial" mode of crossdisciplinary teaching as the game-based inquiry unfolded as a "small-scale reality" that related to real-world phenomena and crossdisciplinary aims. Thus, Marianne did not interpret the election scenario as way of reproducing, but rather *introducing* topics and inquiry-based work forms that may be of use in other contexts.

7.5. Teaching with games

This chapter describes and analyses how the five teachers in this study *enacted* and *validated* the knowledge aspects of *The Power Game*. By focusing on significant aspects of their teaching practices, I have mapped three analytical themes – facilitation, authorisation and epistemological views – that emerged during the game sessions. Each of the teachers felt *challenged* by the contingent outcomes and interpretive framing of the election scenario, but they took rather different approaches for translating this challenge in relation to their everyday teaching practices.

As the analytical findings show, the teachers chose different ways of staging the game scenario and authorising the students' reflections on the game experience in relation to the centrifugal (open-ended) and centripetal (fixed) forms of meaning-making within the discursive game space. Correspondingly, the teachers' realisation of the election scenario also reflected a varied range of epistemological views or assertions for interpreting the knowledge that emerged from the game sessions. Below, Table 7.1 summarises these findings in a more simplified form as three different *pedagogical approaches* to game-based teaching:

Game as	Authorisation	Knowledge criteria	Educational aim
Script	Centripetal (fixed meaning)	Realism (right versus wrong)	Reproduce curriculum (pre-given content)
Performance	Centrifugal (open-ended meanings)	Constructivism (entertaining versus serious)	Game as an end in itself (self-expression)
Exploration	Re-negotiated (distributed meanings)	Pragmatism (construction and reconstruction)	Explore hypotheses (theory into practice)

Table 7.1: Comparison of three different pedagogical approaches to game-based teaching.

As the first column in the table indicates, the five teachers in this study chose three different pedagogical approaches to the same game scenario. While Karen mainly facilitated *The Power Game* as a *script* to be followed, Joan and Thomas focused more on the *performative* aspects of the election scenario. Thirdly, Poul and Marianne mostly facilitated the election scenario as a means to challenge and support the students' *exploration* into different aspects of the knowledge that emerged during the game sessions.

Moreover, as the remaining columns indicate, each of the three game pedagogical approaches also implied a different way of *authorising* the knowledge of the election scenario in relation to different *knowledge criteria* and *educational aims*. Thus, Karen's scripted pedagogical approach implied a tension between right and wrong forms of knowledge as when she tried to limit the interpretation of the game session to her own perspective. This also reflects how she had difficulties with "seeing herself" in the game scenario (cf. section 5.5.6). By contrast, Thomas and Joas mainly validated the entertaining aspects of the game knowledge, which suggested a contrast to the seriousness of everyday school activities. More specifically, Thomas primarily saw the election scenario as a harmless form of entertainment, which represented a goal in itself. Similarly, Joan did not articulate the subject-related content of the game in front of the students, even though she elaborated at length at this in the post-game interview. Instead, her response to the students mostly focused on how they felt about the game. Finally, by taking a pragmatic approach, Poul and Marianne attempted to re-negotiate their teacher authority through a continual construction and reconstruction of the students' inquiry-based hypotheses. Thus, instead of imposing "truths" upon the students or simply letting them play along, these teachers tried to explore different interpretations of the knowledge created during the game sessions.

Although I am inclined to view the explorative or inquiry-based approach as the most valuable way of teaching with *The Power Game* – and game scenarios as such – the point is not to debunk or exclude the two remaining pedagogical approaches as "wrong" ways to teach with games. Without understanding the script-related and performative aspects of the election scenario, it would be quite difficult to realise the game in a meaningful way. In fact, one could argue that each of the five teachers in this study *continually shifted* between these three pedagogical approaches, even though some of the teachers clearly tended to prefer some specific approaches to others. Thus, the aim of this chapter has neither been to identify different teacher styles nor to categorise teachers into Weberian "ideal types" (Weber, 1977: 139). Instead, I have sought to explore and document the pedagogical *tensions* that arise when teachers facilitate, authorise and evaluate the playful knowledge aspects of an educational game scenario.

In keeping with the pragmatic approach of my design interventions, the findings in this chapter can also be translated into "next-best practices" or *normative* recommendations for teaching with games. Thus, when adopting and adapting a game scenario, teachers need to:

- **Set the stage.** Seen from a *dramaturgical* perspective, teachers are expected to transform their roles as teachers into that of game facilitators, which to some degree diverges from everyday forms of overt instruction. Thus, teachers are expected to "set the stage" by providing sufficient and relevant game information that may help students unfold game goals, roles, rules, resources and possible lines of action. At the same time, the teacher is required to provide an outsider's perspective on the game session.

- **Re-negotiate authority.** Seen from the perspective of *dialogical pedagogy*, teachers should both be able to recognise and challenge the students' game experience by articulating different interpretations of a game session, especially during end-of-game discussions or other forms of post-game reflections. In this way, a teacher should avoid only "playing against" or simply "playing along" the students' experience of the game and be able to re-negotiate his or her discursive authority within the dialogical game space.

- **Explore game knowledge.** Seen from a *pragmatist* perspective, teachers should be able to support students in their attempts to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct relevant forms of knowledge – both in relation to the game context, curricular goals and real life phenomena. This means that the knowledge generated through educational games should neither be reduced to fixed forms of meaning nor to entertaining self-expression, which turns the game into a goal in itself. Rather, teaching with games involves building, exploring and validating different hypotheses on particular assertions or ideas about the world.

In summary, one of the most challenging aspects of teaching with *The Power Game* was to accept the fundamental *contingency* of the election scenario, as this form of learning resource implied a series of rather emergent activities and knowledge aspects. In this sense, the five teachers in this study were all faced with the virtually impossible task of *preparing for the unexpected*. Obviously, it is quite likely that the five teachers in this study would choose different approaches to the election scenario if they were to teach using *The Power Game* again, but further exploration of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this study.

8. Playing the game

As in the two previous analytical chapters, the aim of this chapter is to explore how *The Power Game* was enacted and validated – but this time from a student perspective. The chapter starts by clarifying the analytical focus of the students' game practices. More specifically, I explore different aspects of the politicians' debate practices in relation to three analytical themes. The first analytical theme describes how the politicians responded to the challenge of delivering political performances in front of their classmates. The second theme focuses on how the students positioned themselves through different voices within the dialogical game space. The final analytical theme explores how the students reflected upon the game sessions as a form of teaching and knowledge production. Finally, the analytical findings of this chapter are summarised in relation to the students' different game competencies that emerged when playing the game scenario.

8.1. Analysing student practices

Similar to the teachers, the students' participation in the election scenario can also be analysed in relation to different *game practices*. Thus, the students that participated in *The Power Game* were expected to find information on key political issues as well as present, debate, negotiate and vote for each other. These local practices involved a wide range of meaning-making processes that can be analysed as a dynamic interplay between inquiry, interaction and discourse (cf. chapters 4 and 5). Like the teachers, the students also felt challenged by the assigned roles of the game scenario. However, being a *game participant* in the mock parliamentary election clearly implied a different set of norms and expectations than the teachers' role as game facilitators (Goffman, 1961a). Thus, the students had to view the game from their assigned roles (individual perspective), in relation to their fellow party members (group perspective) and as voters (audience perspective). Moreover, at the beginning and the end of the game sessions, the participants were asked to evaluate the ideological aspects of the election scenario based on their *personal* opinions. Obviously, the emerging interplay between the different roles, practices and perspectives created a quite complex pattern of experiences and possible interpretations. In this way, the video and sound recordings from the five game sessions represent a rather rich material that can be analysed from a number of different perspectives.

As mentioned in chapter 5, the empirical work mainly focus on the students that played politicians, which was by far the most significant role in the game sessions. The analysis

presented here is structured around three analytical themes that map how these students *performed* their roles as politicians, how they *communicated* through different ideological voices, and how they *experienced* the knowledge aspects of the election scenario. Methodologically speaking, the first theme presents a dramaturgical perspective on the politicians' "face keeping practices" and their attempts to playfully expose each other (Goffman, 1967a). The second theme is based on the analytical perspective of positioning theory, which is used to identify four different student "voices" within the dialogical game space (Bakhtin, 1981; Dysthe, 1996; Ongstad, 1997). Finally, the third analytical perspective is based on a pragmatist understanding of the students' post-game reflections on the knowledge aspects and learning processes of the election scenario (Dewey, 1916; Barth, 2002). In addition to this, each of these three analytical perspectives implies a particular view of student game competencies (cf. chapters 3 and 4). Thus, the students' ability to perform as politicians demanded particular forms of *social competence*. Similarly, the students had to enact *communicative competence* in order to express themselves through different ideological voices. Finally, the students' had to be *scenario competent* in order to link their game-based inquiry with their knowledge of real-life politics and the institutionalised knowledge aspects of the social studies curriculum. By foregrounding and backgrounding these analytical perspectives, the analysis presented is complimentary to the analysis of the game-based teaching practices (cf. chapter 7).

8.2. Analytical theme: Performing politics

In order to analyse how the students engaged in their roles, I start by describing how their performances should be understood in relation to a series of different interpretive frames (Goffman, 1974; Ensink 2003). In order to participate in *The Power Game*, the students had to accept the imaginary assertions, possibilities and consequences of the election scenario. Even though the students received limited instruction on how to address each other in the debate phases, they were still able to follow and re-create many of the "shared ground rules" of formalised parliamentary debate (Mercer, 1995; Ilie, 2003). This meant that the politicians were able to maintain the speaking order of the presentation and debate phases and only rarely interrupted other speakers. Similarly, all the politicians had to present *three* (no more, no less) key political issues within a restricted time frame and were not allowed to debate with other politicians in the initial presentation round. Furthermore, most of the students addressed each other in relation to their assigned *roles* and not as *persons*, i.e. "I'm a journalist from the X-Party, and I've got a question for the Y-Party". In this way, the students respected the ideological differences between the political parties represented, and

they would, with very few exceptions, avoid personal attacks on their classmates. However, other aspects of the roles were more open to interpretation, especially the relationship between the political parties represented in the game and their real-life counterparts.

The students generally accepted the overall interpretative frame of the election scenario, even though they were sometimes in doubt about how particular game elements should be interpreted. During the debate phase of the first game session, there was a heated discussion on how to "get more immigrants jobs" [GS 1: #3]. In the following excerpt, Michael, who played a politician for the National Party, had just presented his views on immigrant unemployment as an "enormous problem, which is hard to deal with". Then Ajda, who played a journalist for the Socialist Party, followed up with a question based upon real-life politics:

> Ajda: Now, I have something (*looks at the teacher*). Are we allowed to involve something from real-life?
> Karen: Yes.
> Ajda: Okay. So the new legislation about immigration, which…
> Michael: (*nods*)
> Ajda: You made in collaboration with the Conservative and Liberalist parties in the government, right. Uh… there you state that parents or couples who both receive welfare payments must work for a minimum of 300 hours…
> Michael: (*nods*)
> Ajda: Where are those 300 hours supposed to come from [GS 1: #3]?

Before this exchange, only critical questions directly related to the content of the politicians' presentations had been posed. This explains why Ajda wanted to make sure that she was not violating the *rules* of the game by bringing in issues from real life. However, both the teacher and Michael accept this as a legitimate tactic within the context of the election scenario. By seeking approval from the teacher, Ajda stepped into her *everyday role* as an upper secondary school student. At the same time, Ajda clearly identifies with her *assigned role* as a journalist from the Socialist Party, as she is expected to ask "critical questions" that required credible answers from the politicians. Thus, her question demonstrated a tactical understanding of the election scenario as she attempted to hold Michael responsible for "his" real-life legislation on unemployment among immigrants, which represented a rather controversial political issue at the time of the game session. In this way, Ajda related herself to real-life politics, her role as a student, the imagined election scenario, her assigned ideological membership of the Socialist Party and her role as a journalist

when posing her critical question to Michael from the National Party. Using Ensink's bracket notation for frame analysis, the relationship between these different interpretive frames can be illustrated as follows (Ensink, 2003; cf. section 4.3.4):

[real-life politics [student [election scenario [party member [journalist [*asking question*]]]]]]

When Ajda addressed the teacher and made explicit references to real-life politics, she marked a shift between being *in the game* and viewing the game *from the outside*. Nevertheless, even though she stepped out of character, her temporary change of perspective did not clash with the interpretive frame of the educational game scenario. This analytical point corresponds well with Fine's study of role-playing games, which shows how the process of playing games cannot be understood as a static hierarchy of frames, but rather represents a dynamic "oscillation" between various interpretive frames (Fine, 1983; cf. section 4.3.4). Similarly, Ajda – and the other students – continually oscillated between different interpretive frames in relation to the world of commonsense knowledge of political ideologies, the world of school knowledge, the world of game rules grounded in the game structure, and the emerging knowledge produced through the fictive election scenario. Thus, the participants' *situated* experience of the game encounter was highly context-sensitive as the emerging interpretive frames continually competed, clashed, mutually supported each other and/or simply co-existed as different experiences of the same game reality.

8.2.1. Playing politician

As mentioned earlier, the roles of *The Power Game* had been designed to imitate different practices and epistemologies of the social actors in real-life elections (cf. chapter 6). This implied an asymmetric relation between the four roles in terms of responsibility and influence on the game outcome. Thus, the politician was by far the most significant or demanding role as they were responsible for presenting, defending and negotiating the key political issues of each group. The spin doctors and journalists had less responsibility as their main tasks were to *support* the politicians through strategic positioning of their ideological messages and to conduct research on political opponents. Finally, the stakeholders had by far the weakest role as their goals were unclear and they had relatively little influence on the overall game activities. It should be noted, however, that this summary of how the four roles were enacted represents a generalised and somewhat simplified interpretation of the five game sessions as the students interpreted and played their roles

in a myriad of different ways – i.e. the weaker roles, especially those of the journalists and spin doctors, were often quite influential when elaborating the parties' key political issues.

The process of distributing roles within each group often involved discussion and negotiations where the students tried to find out who would be the most *competent* at accomplishing the different tasks. Even though none of the teachers gave the politicians detailed introductions, the students often positioned themselves in relation to this role. Thus, some students were quite eager to play politicians, i.e. Lisa had hoped to play a politician for the National Party and had even taken photos of herself prior to the second game session where she imitated Pia Kjærsgaard, the leader of the Danish People's Party [*sic*]. However, other students felt *too* challenged by this role, i.e. Ajda initially agreed to play a politician for the Socialist Party, but she ended up giving the role to Dennis, who was very keen on winning the election. In the post-game interview, the teacher found this decision rather surprising as she viewed Ajda as being quite an active student [GS 1, teacher interview]. In this way, the roles of *The Power Game* both reproduced and challenged the existing social hierarchy among the students. Generally speaking, both teachers and students expected the active students who normally "spoke up" in class to take on the role of politician. Consequently, each of the five teachers decided to place one or more students in each group that they thought would or could perform as politicians (cf. examples in section 6.2).

There was no significant difference between the role of the politician and the other roles during the initial research phase when the students collaborated in groups to prepare key political issues by consulting the websites of the real political parties. Still, the different group members would gradually orient themselves towards the specific tasks and goals in relation to their roles, their fellow party members and the other political groups. Thus, the politicians started to focus on what to include in their presentations, the spin doctors tried to guide the politicians' strategic planning, the journalists began interviewing politicians from other groups and taking notes, and the stakeholders tried to get their key political issues on the agenda. Between 30 to 60 minutes into each game session, almost every student was actively engaged, i.e. in discussions with their group members, in web research and/or writing down notes on how to position themselves in relation to other political groups, etc. The different roles sometimes overlapped, for example, the spin doctors took on the tasks of the journalist by interviewing other groups. These gradual "role shifts", however, did not clash with the overall interpretive framing in or between the groups. When interviewed after the game sessions, both students and teachers emphasised "the high level of

activity" in this phase as nearly all the group members worked intensively – toward both individual and common goals.

Once the election scenario progressed to the presentation round, the game interaction changed drastically. As suggested in the game instructions, the teachers re-organised the classroom and placed two or three tables next to each other in the far back end of the room, which represented a "panel". Instead of sitting in their groups around a computer, a representative politician from each group had to take a seat in the panel. From this position, the four or six politicians had to face the rest of the class, who had now turned into an audience that both represented game participants and potential voters.[56] This re-organisation of the physical game space is shown below in figure 8.1 and 8.2 – cf. also the illustration at the cover of this thesis, which shows how the students were seated, when facing the classroom audience.[57]
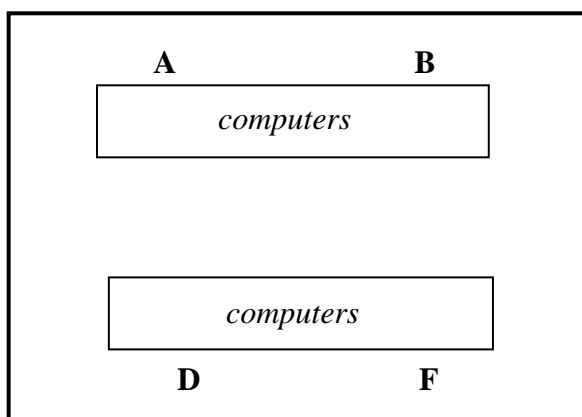
Figure 8.1: Backstage (group work).
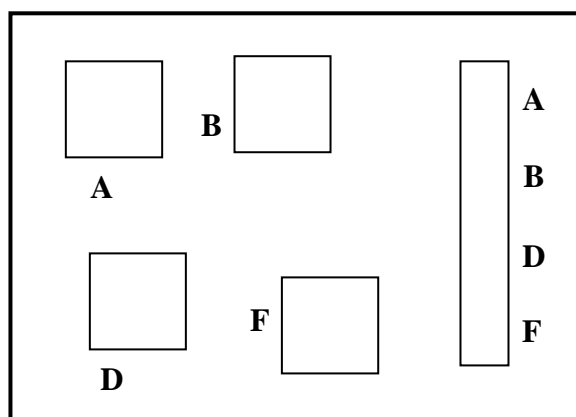
Figure 8.2: Front (public performances).

Seen from a dramaturgical perspective, this re-organisation marked a significant change for the politicians, as they had to move from the safe backstage area of their political groups to the public "front" of a parliamentary debate (Goffman, 1959). Thus, the progression from research phase to presentation phase meant more than a simple physical re-organisation of the classroom by moving the chairs and tables around, as it also introduced a more *focused* framing at the collective level of the "gaming encounter" (Goffman, 1961a). The remaining game participants and teachers then had

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[56] I use the term "audience" as a common denominator to describe the changed speaker-hearer relationship during the presentation and debate phases of the game. Thus, the students in the "audience" were expected to listen attentively, put forward critical questions and evaluate the politicians' performances through the final round of voting.

[57] Interestingly, for this game session, there were five politicians in the panel as the teacher allowed one party to be represented with two [*sic*] politicians. This form of bending the rules of the game shows how both teachers and students would freely interpret the norms and expectations of the election scenario.

to direct their attention toward the politicians' political performances in the panel. The overall social interaction in the classroom setting subsequently changed from a group and inter-group perspective toward a more *individual* focus on the politicians, who presented themselves successively after an initial draw.

From the presentation phase to the end of the election scenario, the politicians had to rise to the occasion as they were expected to *represent* and *present* the political messages of their political party by delivering a public performance on behalf of their group members, answering critical questions, negotiating and debating with politicians from other political groups. These demands involved a range of different game competencies. Thus, the election scenario required the politicians to have *social competence* in order to perform as professional politicians and follow the rules and understand the tactical aspects of parliamentary debate. Moreover, the politicians were expected to have the *communicative competence* to find and re-phrase key political issues that could appeal to the audience of the classroom by using different ideological voices. Finally, the politicians had to be *scenario competent* in order to critically reflect upon the ideological aspects of the key political issues and imagine how to could influence the possible outcomes of the election scenario. For now, I primarily focus on how the politicians' social competence and how they managed to *perform* as professional politicians in front of their classmates.

8.2.2. Doing face work

One of the fundamental premises for enacting *The Power Game* was that the students were able to identify with their roles as politicians. Thus, they were expected to imagine their role as a *generalised other* that related to the norms and expectations of real-life politicians (Mead, 1934). Moreover, the students had to do *face work* in order to present themselves as professional politicians in front of their classmates (Goffman, 1967a). As none of the classes had worked with public speaking or rhetoric prior to the game sessions, there was significant variation in the ways the individual students enacted their role as politicians. Some politicians presented their political messages by rising up from their chairs in the panel, speaking in a clear voice, stressing important issues by using body language and by maintaining eye contact with the audience. Other students remained seated in a fixed position and kept their eyes locked on their pre-written notes while they read their presentations aloud in a muffled voice, which was difficult to hear. In summary, most of the politicians gave off rather mixed impressions in their attempts to appear convincing. Thus, the

student performances continually *established* and *dissolved* their projected self-image as professional politicians.

Anders' presentation as a Socialist politician in the fifth game session illustrates the alternation that took place between formal and informal modes of address. When asked to present, Anders rose from his chair and addressed his audience in a rather direct manner: "So we're the Socialistic People's Party and our key *number one* issue, that's actually *you*, that's *young people*" [GS 5: #3]. Moreover, he presented the audience, made up of his classmates, as the future of Danish society. Anders then went on to criticise the current government, which wanted to cut down on the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (*SU*) and eliminate group exams. Here, Anders shifted to a more informal mode of address by commenting on his own criticism: "Yes, damn it, that's what they want to do!", which made some of his classmates laugh. In contrast to his *assigned* role, this meta-comment clearly reflected his *personal* (and rather negative) opinion about the current real-life government. Similarly, Anders expressed himself with rather informal body language to illustrate his points, for example, he snapped his fingers to illustrate how the current government planned to cut down on the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme if students took too many sabbatical years. Furthermore, Anders rephrased the somewhat specialised discourse of the real-life political parties and used his own words, i.e. his recurring phrase "we're not going to be part of that", when he criticised the government. His political performance thus signalled a rather informal and down to earth approach that clearly aimed to appeal to his classmates as equals. As the laughs and giggles from the audience indicated, Anders *did* manage to gain the attention and general sympathy of his classmates. However, his humorous and somewhat exaggerated criticism of the government also took up much of his speaking time. When the teacher reminded Anders to keep track of the time, he lost his footing, abruptly wrapped up his two first issues (education and immigration), and then sat down to receive a short applause from the audience before the turn to speaking moved on to the next politician.

Even though Anders' engaging speech generated positive responses from the audience, he only managed to present two out of his three key political issues. This omission was clearly seen as disqualifying by his fellow students and was later criticised by both the spin doctors and the students in their comments on the final voting ballots. Similarly, the teacher also commented on how Anders got carried away by his own performance [GS 5, teacher interview]. Thus, Anders might have benefited from spending more time on presenting his *own* key issues instead of mostly criticising his opponents and aiming for the audience's immediate reactions. As

Anders' presentation suggests, it was no easy task to have to both appeal convincingly to the audience *and* to communicate three political issues within the restricted time frame of the presentation round. Still, the politicians' initial presentations had the obvious advantage of having been *prepared in advance*. Thus, it was even more challenging for the politicians to have to answer spontaneous questions from the audience or from their political opponents within the panel. After each of the politicians from the fifth game session had presented, Anders received this question from Tasha, who played a journalist for the Social Liberalist Party:

Tasha: Uh yes, I'd like to ask Anders a question.

Anders: *Yes!*

Tasha: I'd like to ask you, how are you going to get people employed?

Anders: What?

Tasha: How are you going to get people employed… if you're not going to cut down on welfare payments, if you just give them money for doing nothing. How is it worthwhile to work if you just do *** nothing?

Anders: Well, now you're asking in relation to immigration policies?

Tasha: Yes, and just sort of generally ***

Anders: Well, it's actually not just about money… because the reason why we would like to see immigrants get jobs is that *it's the way to generation* [*sic*] or… (*speaks to himself*) "to generation?!"… to integration (*laughs*).

Class: (*laughter*)

Anders: That's the way we can integrate immigrants in Denmark. I mean, it's not just about getting a higher welfare check… I mean a higher welfare check, that's not what we see… The way we see the problem is that *if they only stay at home* then they're not integrated. If they come out and get a job, then they become integrated… How that's supposed to be done… (*laughs*)… I've no damn idea...! (*looks down in his notes*).

Class: (*laughter*)

Anders: Uh, it's going to have something to do with…

Susanne: Can I answer it?

Poul: No, you're not allowed to. I think we'll have to ***

Anders: It's going to have something to do with…

Class: *(claps demonstratively)*

Anders: (*smiles*)

Poul: Okay, shouldn't we say that…

Anders: (*leans back and throws his arms in the air*): Okay, fuck, that was stupid, man! [GS 5: #3].

Anders' initial positive reaction ("*Yes!*") to Tasha's question shows that he is quite excited about the upcoming question. Nevertheless, instead of giving a broad answer to Tasha's rather broad question on welfare payments and unemployment, Anders tried to answer more specifically in relation to immigration politics. He tries to argue for the importance of integration through employment, but ends up openly admitting that he has "no damn idea" about how that's supposed to be accomplished. Up until then, his answer to the journalist appears quite confident, as he speaks in a clear voice and supports his words with expressive gestures. Once Anders runs out of arguments, however, he simply lays himself bare to the audience, who responds with laughter. His fellow party member, Susanne, then tries to step in and answer on behalf of Anders. However, the teacher rejects this attempt as the "shared ground rules" of the parliamentary debate only allow politicians represented in the panel to speak at this phase of the election scenario (Mercer, 1995). Anders tries once more to come up with an answer but is interrupted by an ironic round of applause from several classmates, which suggests that he had had his chance. The turn then moved on to the next journalist, while Anders made a frustrated gesture and commented on his own inability to answer the question: "Okay, fuck, that was stupid, man!"

As his final remark shows, Anders was well aware that he had failed to meet the expectations raised by his assigned role as a politician. Not only was he unable to answer Tasha's question, he also openly *exposed his lack of knowledge*. In this way, Anders lost *face* as a professional politician in front of his classmates, who evaluated his performance through the eyes and ears of a political audience (Goffman, 1967a). Similarly, Anders' fellow party member Susanne 's attempt to answer instead of him can be seen as a form of "face-saving practice" that aims to avoid the negative consequences of Anders' inability to answer as a politician (Goffman, 1967a: 27). Correspondingly, in the post-game interview, Poul criticised Anders for "getting carried away" by his own performance [GS 5, teacher interview]. Anders' performance and reaction to losing face was generally more outspoken than most of the other politicians in the five game sessions. Most of the politicians generally stayed within their roles and would seldom comment directly on their own inability to perform or answer questions. However, *after* the election had ended, both teachers and students often commented upon the politicians' performances as being the most "demanding", "exciting" and "challenging" role of the election scenario.

Finally, Anders' performance as a politician points to the role of *laughter* and *applause* in the game sessions. During the "public" phases of the election scenario – i.e. when the politicians presented, debated and answered questions – laughter and applause were a rather

frequent and important form of response from the classroom audience. Seen from an interactionist perspective, a valuable distinction can be made between "laughing at" and "laughing with" (Glenn, 2003: 112-121). Thus, when Anders made a personal and humorous comment on the government's plans to cut down on the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme, the audience laughed *with* him. However, when he was unable to answer the journalist's question and lost face as a professional politician by exposing his lack of knowledge, the audience laughed and applauded *at* his failed performance. Arguably, the laughter from the audience was not directed at Anders as a *person* but at his *assigned role* within the election scenario. Nevertheless, the process of losing face was not without consequences as it was difficult for Anders to regain credibility in the debates that followed, and he received rather few votes. Thus, Anders and the other politicians had to be socially competent in order to understand what *counted* and what did *not count* as valid performances for a professional politician within the domain-specific context of parliamentary debate.

8.2.3. *"Wrapping it in"*

As the title of *The Power Game* suggests, the election scenario was staged as a game, where the competing political parties were expected to seize power through tactics and persuasion (cf. chapter 6). Anders' (lack of competent) performance indicates how the challenge of playing a politician implied a constant *risk* of losing face, which could influence the outcome of the game session. In this way, one of the most frequently recurring debate practices among the students were their attempts to *playfully expose* each other in order to win the election. Most of the groups from the five game sessions planned and carried out tactics aimed to avoid exposure of their own weaknesses and conversely aimed to deliberately expose the weaknesses of their political opponents. The debate phases hence represented a tactical *knowledge game*, where the participants hoped to win the sympathy of the audience and confront ideological opponents with compromising questions through various forms of "strategic interaction" (Goffman, 1969). To use the students' own words, the politicians had to both "wrap their message in" and avoid "being butchered".

The need for avoiding exposure was particularly pressing for students from the National Party, as they by far represented the least popular party in all of the five game sessions.[58]

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[58] There is significant variation in the political opinions among students in the four different "branches" of Danish upper secondary education. Statistically, the opinions of the students in this study correlate well with the entire group of students in general upper secondary education (stx) who have the most sceptical opinion of the Danish People's Party (DF), cf. the national "youth election" held among 17,775 upper secondary students in 2007 (www.undgomsvalg.dk). The general unpopularity of DF in upper secondary education has even resulted in complaints from students who feel

Consequently, the National Party was often exposed to heavy fire in relation to their key political issues, and they became a favourite butt for critical questions from oppositional journalists and politicians. Conversely, the members of the National Party were painfully aware of their ungrateful task of representing and defending unpopular political views – especially in relation to their "immigration politics", a recurring topic throughout each of the five game sessions. Similar to real-life Danish politics, there would often be significant differences among the political parties in relation to this topic, which tended to generate heated debate. In Lisa's words:

> I also think that young people tend to seek that conflict between the parties because it is easier to take a stand when the parties have radical opinions, when they represent something entirely different. Because then it's easier to say that I agree with this instead of that over there, because I simply can't relate to that… It's easier instead of looking at how their homecare policies or their environmental policies or their… I mean, there's more… On those issues, where they disagree more, I'm better able to find out, you know: Well then, that's the party I'll vote for [GS 3, group interview].

As Lisa suggests, several politicians referred to the National Party's immigration policies in order to *position* themselves strategically within the ideological landscape of the election scenario (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 1997). In this way, many students tried to distance themselves from the perceived opinions of the National Party, which formed an important *ideological reference point* in the five game sessions.

In order to avoid negative attention, the most common strategy of the National Party was to tone down their views on immigration or simply try to avoid the topic. In this manner, the members of the National Party hoped to create a political *image* that could run counter to the audience's negative expectations of their overall ideological position (Bakhtin, 1981; cf. section 4.4.2). Thus, Michael did not mention immigration in his presentation, but promised a "better and more independent Denmark" by "getting out" of the European Union, "stricter punishments" for rapists and violent offenders, and a "focus on education" by "sanctioning" parents if they are unable to send their children to school [GS 1: #3]. Similarly, Michelle and Tina both tried to present themselves as a reasonable guarantee for ensuring "safety" and "security" among Danish citizens. Thus, they promised to "help the weak", especially "the elderly" and "the animals", and defend Denmark from outside threats such as uncontrolled "immigration, the EU, and terrorism" [GS 2: #3, GS 3: #3]. In order to win the sympathy of their classmates, Tina and Michelle also used somewhat

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harassed by their teachers and classmates due to their membership of the Youth of the Danish People's Party, *Politiken*, 26-09-2007).

extreme examples to support their arguments, i.e. the violent reactions in the Middle East in the wake of the Cartoon Crisis and moral issues related to "animal cruelty" and "sex with animals" [*sic*].

In the post-game interviews, the students often used the phrase "wrapping it in" (*pakke det ind*) to describe how the different political parties had tried to prepare and sell their political messages. Thus, being able "to wrap it in" mostly referred to the spinning or *strategic planning* of the students' key political issues (Femø Nielsen, 2004). When asked, Tina and Bettina gave the following description of "how to wrap it in":

> Thorkild: What… how… you talk a lot about wrapping it in. How do you wrap something in?
> Tina: I think that you make it sound as humane as possible…
> Bettina: (*laughs*) Try to rephrase it a bit.
> Tina: Try to rephrase it, so, yes, maybe it's not the whole truth you try to hide (*laughs*).
> Bettina: Yes, the Danish People's Party would not say (*changes her voice*) "we don't like immigrants, because they're just ugly and stupid and they don't earn shit". They say, "That's because they commit crime, they don't know how to manage themselves in Danish society".
> Tina: "And they take our jobs and…"
> Bettina: Yes, yes… They won't say it directly, because then they know that they won't get any votes. Because even the old people, they don't want a Prime Minister who would smear people. But the elderly, they (*changes her voice*) "Well, I do see that it's quite bad if our little daughter can't get a job, because somebody could do this and that". I mean, they really really wrap it in [GS 3, group interview].

As the above dialogue illustrates, most of the students were quite sceptical about real-life politicians, especially ones from the Danish People's Party, who presumably "rephrased" their *real* opinions into a language that sounded more appealing to a larger group of voters – i.e. older people. Similarly, the students that represented the National Party would rephrase and "wrap in" their key political issues in order to appeal to the classroom audience. However, once the election scenario progressed from the presentation phase to the questioning and debate rounds, the politicians found it quite challenging to maintain their "wrapping". Thus, instead of delivering a prepared presentation, the politicians had to give improvised and convincing answers to the audience *in situ*, cf. the example with Anders' failed attempt to keep face in the previous section. In the words of Bettina, the National Party gave a "damn good" performance "until questions were asked, because then you could find the dark sides, right" [GS 3, group interview].

8.2.4. "Being butchered"

In contrast to "wrapping it in", the students often described the deliberate attempts to expose politicians as "being butchered" – an expression they also used regularly in relation to their oral exams. Thus, when evaluating the fourth game session, Anita, who played a journalist, said that she was "glad" that she did not "end up there [in the panel]" as a politician, because then she would "have been slaughtered like a beast" [GS 4: #6]. Conversely, Michael, who played a politician for the National Party, was quite fond of being challenged. For him, "the most fun and the most exciting part" of *The Power Game* was the debates, where he was "completely butchered" since his position as a right wing politician required him "to represent some of the more controversial opinions" [GS 1, group interview].[59]

During the five game sessions, there were frequent attempts to "butcher" politicians from the National Party in relation to their "immigration politics". However, the politicians responded quite differently to this challenge, which can be illustrated by two examples from the second and third game sessions, where Tina and Michelle were asked the same question. When giving their political presentations, both politicians avoided overtly negative views about immigrants. However, their political opponents had inspected the website of the Danish People's Party and then used Tina and Michelle's "own words" against them to expose their "real" opinions. Thus, Josephine from the Social Democratic Party posed this question to Michelle:

> Josephine: Yes, but we have a question for the National Party. We paid a visit to your home page and read something about the "*re-education*" of immigrant parents or something to the effect that they have to learn about Danish culture, language and legislation. And, there's this quote: "If they refuse, their welfare payments should be reduced without further notice". Now, we would like to know: If you reduce their welfare, isn't it likely that the immigrants will only get worse and be drawn into… into for example crime?
>
> Marianne: Yes, I don't know, who would like to answer from the National Party?
>
> Michelle: Well, but I am terribly glad you asked that question, I've been waiting for that all day!
>
> Class: (*laughter*) ***
>
> Michelle: I tend to agree with you that "re-education" is a strong word, but *that's what's happening*. We need to teach Danish norms to immigrants. If their welfare is reduced, then you have to say, "Now you have to get your act together". They *can* do things on their own. They have a personal

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[59] Interestingly, the students' graphic term for describing the challenge of being exposed as a politician is somewhat similar to Goffman's provocative description of a party as a "status blood bath" since the participants risk being both "levelled up" and "levelled down" (Goffman, 1961b: 75).

responsibility to become integrated into Danish soc… iety. We don't have to go out and *push* them in, then they should stop coming to Denmark, if they don't *believe* they can become integrated.

Josephine: Do you provide any help by reducing their welfare payments?!

Michelle: They received the welfare payments; and then they couldn't handle that, and now we need to reduce it for them…

Class: (*laughter*) ***

Michelle: That… I can't see… They… they had their chance. Then they must… If the help didn't provide any assistance, then less help must be another possibility! [GS 2: #5].

According to the exit poll in this class, the students had little or no sympathy towards the Danish People's Party's immigration politics. Thus, Michelle was presented with a rather difficult task, when having to defend the statement about reducing welfare payments that Josephine referred to. However, instead of losing face, Michelle handled Josephine's question by being energetic and full of get up and go. By giving a somewhat ironic answer ("I am terribly glad you asked that question!"), she managed to turn the audience's negative expectations into sympathy as they were clearly laughing *with* her (Glenn, 2003). Through this creative form of "playful talk", she managed to stay within her role as a politician while simultaneously indicating how she felt challenged by the question on a personal level (Wegerif, 2007; cf. section 3.2). Although the members of the audience did not sympathise with the ideological content of the quote, they clearly appreciated Michelle's ability to *communicate* as a convincing and *competent* politician. In order to legitimise her answer, Michelle at first tried to moderate the term "re-educate" as it has obvious negative connotations. However, when asked again about why she wanted to reduce their welfare payments, Michelle answered by being true to the original quote. Again, Michelle's provoking rejection of the immigrants' problematic situation made the class laugh as this "tough" answer was far beyond her own political opinions. A short while later, Michelle is confronted with another quote from the same website:

Josephine: Yes, but there's actually a question. And I think that it might have a very short answer. It's about residency… about residency… it's aimed at the National Party and it's about residence permits after ten years. And another quote from uh… the National Party: "Foreigners from Third World Countries should not have the right to vote. Only foreigners from the Nordic countries and the EU should be allowed to vote in municipal elections in Denmark. Voting rights for general parliamentary elections should continually be restricted to Danish citizens". Now, we would like to hear, isn't this simply differential treatment?!

Michelle: (*pause*) Yes!

Class: *(laughter)* ***

Michelle: And I should like to give the *reasons* for that. We believe that the people of Scandinavia have a culture that is more like ours and that it is… for that reason not necessary to, if we take the quote from my own website, to "re-educate" them. That's why I believe that they should be permitted to vote in municipal elections, while asylum seekers have perhaps been used to a slightly *different* culture, and for that reason, they don't have *quite* the same background, *quite* the same norms. For that reason, they should have longer time to adjust to the system before they can make decisions like a Dane.

Josephine: But doesn't this give a xenophobic impression of the National Party if you are forced to differentiate between different nations ***?!

Michelle: Clearly, I cannot say how it seems to others, as that's not the way it is meant.

Josephine: How is it meant then?

Michelle: Well, it is meant as a form of protection for the Danish, uh… that there's not a lot of people coming in with a different culture and then they take over Denmark in that way. I must say that there are Danes and Danish citizens, and then we have our Scandinavian brothers and sisters, which we also must take into consideration, and their culture is more similar to ours, that's why it should be permitted [GS 2: #5].

Once more, Michelle had to defend controversial opinions from the Danish People's Party's website. This time Josephine rhetorically asked whether denying Third World immigrants their right to vote "isn't simply differential treatment". Stephanie dodged the thrust of Julie's attack by pausing and then simply agreeing with her, which again generated laughter from the audience. Like the former example, Michelle then re-phrased the political content of the quote by using her own words and defended the somewhat controversial suggestion that immigrants should be given different voting rights according to their country of origin – i.e. Scandinavian versus Third World countries. Even though Josephine followed up on her initial question by blaming the National Party for being xenophobic, Michelle's creative and humorous use of playful talk clearly saved her from "being butchered".

A similar exchange took place in the third game session when Tina was asked roughly the same question by a journalist from the Socialist Party.

Nana: Yes, it's for the Nationals. You're planning to implement… immigrants from Third World countries, they should not have voting rights when they reside in Denmark…

Class: *(laughter)*

Nana: *But* immigrants that come from the Nordic countries and the EU, they are allowed to vote. Why this differential treatment?

Tina: Yes (*laughs*)… uh… I mean… I mean, but I simply think that when you come from (*laughs*) the Third World, then you have so many other values than what we have here in the West, so in that way, I simply think that when you come from the West, then your attitudes are *more alike* and that's why they are uh… better at acquainting themselves with… (*laughs*). I don't know! Give me a party I can relate to!

Class: (*laughter*) [GS 3: #4].

As this example shows, Tina was "butchered" by Nana's question as she was unable to adopt the ideological language of the Danish People's Party and keep a straight face when confronted with the proposal for nationally and culturally based restrictions on voting rights. In this classroom, merely mentioning the National Party's controversial proposal caused the audience to break out in laughter, making it even harder for Tina to give a convincing answer. Laughing nervously, she tried to defend the opinions she was assigned by referring to different "values" in the West and in The Third World, but then she gave up and breaks the game framing by laughing and rejecting her own political party. However, after being exposed, she resumed her role within the debate and managed to give convincing answers to critical questions relating to "freedom of speech" and "the Cartoon Crisis" [GS 3: #4]. Thus, even though she was unable to give a convincing answer to Nana's question, Tina stills ended up being praised by her teacher and her political opponents for delivering a "good" performance that "could easily beat" the real-life leader of the Danish People's Party (cf. example in section 7.3.1).

As these examples illustrate, the politicians responded quite differently when political opponents tried to "expose" them. Michelle clearly succeeded in maintaining her professional self-image and did not "fall out" of her role at any point during her presentation or the ensuing debates. However, both Anders and Tina were butchered, as they had to step out of their roles when faced with questions that were too difficult. Nevertheless, Tina managed to regain her credibility by defending "the freedom of speech" in relation to "the Muhammad drawings". As the variety of responses shows, *the students both accepted "being butchered" (exposure) and being able "to wrap it in" (avoiding exposure) as playful and relevant aspects of the election scenario.* Consequently, Anders, Michelle and Tina accepted the norms and expectations created by the parliamentary debate.

Obviously, it was quite demanding for the politicians to improvise answers on issues for which the politicians only had limited knowledge, especially when faced with website quotes from the real-life political parties. Still, when asked to evaluate their experience of the game

session, both Benjamin (the Socialist Party) and Michelle (the National Party) emphasised this challenge as a positive aspect of the game sessions:

> Benjamin: I think that I got a kick out of being a politician, you know, in the *debates*, right. They were insanely fun and exciting. I mean you would be sitting… At least *I* was sitting there about to shit my pants [*sic*] before we started on that…
>
> Class: (*laughter*)
>
> Benjamin: Because I thought that *you don't know much about this*. But then we got started, and then you just sort of take it as it comes. I mean, I really think that this was the climax of this [the game], at least for me. That was the debates.
>
> Thorkild: Yes… yes, anyone else? Speak up… yes.
>
> Michelle: Well, it's the same, you know, because suddenly when I was asked, for example, about early retirement benefits, and you've read *absolutely nothing* about early retirement benefits, and then you suddenly have to scrabble about to find to it. Then you become sort of quite *excited* and you have to ask the others what it is. At that point, I think I got really involved in it, and it was really fun because you had to answer about something *completely unexpected* and had to *debate* something you *didn't know so much* about (*laughs*).
>
> Thorkild: And where the others might even know more than you do yourself?
>
> Michelle: Yes, that's, that's actually quite annoying (*laughs*)! [GS 2, group interview].

As Michelle and Benjamin's game reflections suggest, they clearly enjoyed being challenged in relation to their (lack of) knowledge about their assigned political parties. However, the game sessions also demonstrated a *limit* to the politicians' ability to give meaningful answers to the "knowledge game" of the election scenario, especially in relation to questions that concerned "financial politics". Thus, most of the politicians were able to argue for or against particular aspects of financial politics at a very general level, but it was quite difficult for them to provide arguments that are more detailed. In the final debate of the fifth game session, the three left-wing parties were asked how they would "finance" their election promises since they refused to "raise taxes". This triggered the following response from Julia, who played a politician for the Socialist Party:

> I'm not going to answer that, but I just think that we are moving a bit away from what… I mean, it doesn't make any sense that… We have had a few hours to do this… But you can't expect us to have discussed everything and been through everything, *we have simply not had enough time*… I think you sort of start on some things that have nothing to do with what the parties stand for *right now*… It may… It may be that the parties in the real world have a lot of attitudes and opinions, but you can't *expect* us to have had time… *none* of us has acquainted ourselves with it, so I simply think that you should stick

> to what is *said* and not to all sorts of other things. I think that's a bit… stupid. I mean, I really think it's a good game, but I just think it's a shame that you start… on such things… [GS 5: #4].

Julia rejected the question claiming she had not had "enough time" to "prepare" for it. Moreover, she thought the question was "stupid" as it did not "stick to" the politicians' actual presentations. As it is difficult to come up with a technical or precise answer, Julia blamed the questioner for breaking the frame of the game by *exceeding the expectations of what the politicians should be able to answer for*. At the same time, politicians from other classes, especially those who had worked with financial politics prior to the game session, were able to come up with answers to the recurring question on "how to finance their politics".

The main point here is that *the politicians responded rather differently when confronted with the limits of their existing knowledge*. Moreover, Julia's rejection of the question on financial politics also points to the problematic assumption of being able to create a "realistic" game design. As mentioned in chapter 6, *The Power Game* was deliberately based on a rather open-ended game design that mainly focused on the students' ability to *debate* and understand the overall *process* of a parliamentary election. Thus, the game design was intended to re-create the complexity of real life elections, where politicians have a certain tendency to neglect or be unable to fulfil election promises after the votes have been given and a new government has been constituted (Bro et al., 2005). In this respect, the details of the students' budget proposals were seen as secondary to the overall educational goals and game activities. In the wake of Julia's comment, students argued both for and against this "open-endedness" of the election scenario. Thus, Robert clearly preferred more "finance in the game" in order to prevent politicians from "promising everything" [GS 5: #5]. Other students strongly disagreed with Robert since it "could take several months" to plan a financial budget and this would "not work" within the context of the game scenario [GS 5: #5]. In this sense, it would be both difficult and ultimately "unrealistic" to attempt to integrate a detailed understanding of financial politics within the open-ended debate scenario of *The Power Game*.

In summary, the students' playful exposure covered a rather broad range of issues and responses. Often, the questions targeted the "real" opinions or "the dark side" of the National Party's immigration politics. At other times, the critical questions were directed at more technical issues (i.e. financial policies), which required difficult and specialised answers. Either way, the students had to use their existing knowledge and social competencies – in order to *expose* and *avoid exposure*. Thus, the students' playful exposure turned the election scenario into a challenging and

meaningful form of a strategic knowledge game resulting in a rich variety of different responses and unpredictable outcomes from the politicians in question.

8.3. Analytical theme: Student voices

This section explores how the students had to enact *communicative competence* in order to play with the political discourse of parliamentary debate. More specifically, the focus is on how the same politicians positioned and expressed themselves in relation to the emerging *voices* of the election scenario. As mentioned earlier, Bakhtin's term voice refers to the students' "speaking personality", that is the verbal-ideological perspective expressed within a particular utterance (Bakhtin, 1981; cf. section 3.3.3). Thus, seen from a dialogical perspective, the students' voices represented neither "authentic" expressions of their individual identities nor expressions of a hegemonic "discourse system". Instead, the student voices represented "the projection of figures in discourse" that emerged as a *relational* property of the available discourses (Prior, 2001: 62). This means that the students continually oriented and re-oriented themselves toward the various discursive roles or "speaking images" of the dialogical game space.

8.3.1. *The dialogical space of The Power Game*

In many ways, *The Power Game* marked a significant break with the students' everyday classroom practices as the participants had to play roles as election professionals, make communication strategies and debate politics in order to win the votes of their classmates. At the same time, teachers and students frequently compared the politicians' ability to give oral presentations from "the panel" with common ways of giving classroom presentations. During my field observations before and after the game sessions, students were regularly asked to do project-based group work that concluded with "group presentations" in front of the class, where they presented their "thesis" and their "findings" [Redville School, field notes]. Hence, there were striking similarities between the task of giving group presentations and the politicians' task of presenting three key political issues on behalf of their political parties.

Nearly all the teachers and students in this study were fond of project-based group work and group presentations as they represented a welcome reprieve from overt instruction. Still, teachers and students also criticised this form of activity since many students did not feel obliged to *listen* to other students' arguments or presentations. To repeat Marianne's phrase, several students would "just look out the window" when they or their group were not in focus [GS 2, teacher

interview; cf. section 7.4.3]. Similarly, Christian, who played a spin doctor in the fourth game session, criticised the ordinary way of doing group and project presentations because:

> Then you just go up, talk and do something and then you sit down again, and then everyone has forgotten about it anyway, because no one was listening (…). Like when you show a PowerPoint presentation you read what it says, but the others are looking down at their computers, talking and doing all sorts of different things [GS 4, group interview].

In contrast to this, Christian praised the game dialogue as there would be "things happening all the time back and forth between the audience and those who speak" [GS 4, group interview]. Thus, when participating in *The Power Game*, the students would not only be attentive to the key issues of their own political groups, but also to the *relationship* between the presenters and the classroom audience. Similarly, Anita claimed that *The Power Game* made her and the other students "observe" and "pay attention" to what was going on:

> You listen to other people talking, you take it in, in a different way, uh… and you have an important role *yourself*, you're not just sitting there like you sit at the black board, where you sit and look out the window for five minutes and such, you're *into it* all the time, you need to take part (…). It's also a way to get those involved who normally just sit… and sleep a bit and so on [GS 4, group interview].

As the quote shows, Anita became quite involved in her own role and the many different perspectives that emerged during the election scenario. She and other students *actively* oriented and positioned themselves by speaking and listening to fellow group members, the other political groups and the real-life political parties. Hence, the game sessions introduced a different form of *speaker-hearer relationship* than the dialogical space of everyday classroom talk, as the election scenario required the students to be active and mutually responsive (Bakhtin, 1986; Gee & Green, 1998). In this way, the students' perceived the debate game as a more *staged* and *focused* form of delivering verbal presentations in extension of project-based group work – an observation, which corresponds well with several of the teachers' post-game reflections (cf. section 7.4.3).

Not surprisingly, the students chose widely different approaches to the open-ended discursive arena of the election scenario. By analysing the spoken discourse of the students who played politicians, it is possible to identify four different voices that emerged within the dialogical space of the game sessions. Thus, some politicians spoke through *reproductive voices*, which mainly oriented toward the institutionalised demands of classroom talk and the "official" language

of the real political parties. Other students adopted *professionalised voices* to imitate and perform through the speech genres of professional politics. At other times, student utterances mainly represented *personalised voices* as they infused their political discourse with personal beliefs and life experience. Finally, some students preferred to adopt *parodic voices*, which represented a tension between their own intentions and their assigned ideological positions. By using positioning theory, it is possible to characterise the differences between these four voices in relation to three different communicative aspects: referentiality ("content"), expressivity ("form") and addressivity ("speaker-hearer relationship") (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 1997; cf. chapter 4).

8.3.2. Reproductive voices

As the students only received limited instruction on how to perform as politicians, they frequently addressed the audience by adhering closely to everyday norms and discursive practices for doing group presentations. For a number of students, for example, the task of presenting key political issues was mainly interpreted as an *assignment* they were expected to complete by presenting their findings from the websites of the real-life parties. This meant that some politicians presented their key political issues by reading their notes aloud, only occasionally directly addressing the classroom audience. Seen from the perspective of dialogical pedagogy, these students expressed themselves through *reproductive voices* as they more or less duplicated the authoritative words and the factual knowledge from the websites of real-life political parties. In this way, the reproductive voices reflected a "passive understanding" of the political ideologies which only introduced few new meanings to the discursive game space (Bakhtin, 1981: 281).

During my classroom observations before and after the game sessions, the students would regularly read aloud from an authoritative source (i.e. a textbook or a website) when making presentations or answering questions from their teachers. Thus, these reproductive practices were a recurring part of "doing school" (Wenger, 1998; cf. chapter 3). Even though both teachers and students were critical of students that simply read aloud and merely reproduced existing content, this approach was still *accepted* as a legitimate discursive practice. However, within the context of *The Power Game*, the students' reproductive approach was generally not recognised as a *competent* practice. When part of the panel, the students were no longer expected to maintain their speaking "images" as upper secondary students but to speak as professional politicians (Bakhtin, 1981: 347). Similarly, the politicians would not address the audience as fellow classmates but as critical and

influential *voters*. Hence, the students' political performances could easily be disqualified if they relied on a reproductive voice within the context of the election scenario.

To illustrate how the reproductive voices emerged in the game sessions, I will start by analysing Jacob's political presentation. Jacob opened his political presentation by saying, "I represent Denmark's Liberal Party and uh…. (*looks down at his notes*) we have taken the following three key political issues" [GS 5: #5]. As this quote suggests, Jacob was slightly nervous about his presentation and was unable to live up to the norms and expectations of a political performance; he spoke rather slowly, avoided eye contact, made several pauses in order to read his notes and then finished off abruptly. Moreover, Jacob chose to *tell* about his key political issues ("we have taken" or "then we have something on") instead of *showing* what he stood for by using his own words. Thus, Jacob's opening line subsequently marks a sharp contrast to Anders' presentation, which directly addressed the audience as potential voters: "So we're the Socialistic People's Party and our key *number one* issue, that's actually *you*, that's *young people*" [GS 5: #5; cf. section 8.2].

Later on in the game session, the students and the teacher gave Jacob's presentation a rather negative evaluation. One of the spin doctors blamed Jacob for being "unprofessional" because he "reads aloud from his notes so much" [GS 5: #5]. Likewise in the post-game interview, the teacher, Poul, was quite "disappointed" with Jacob's presentation as he was unable to bring his "subject-related knowledge and skills" into his presentation [GS 5, teacher interview]. In the group interview, the other students giggled when I asked Jacob to reflect on his presentation, which he even criticised: "You know, I'm just lousy at presenting these kinds of things. I had a whole lot of things I wanted to say, but then I happened to skip them and forgot to expand on them… and then it ended up being very very short" [GS 5, group interview]. As these comments suggest, Jacob was not comfortable with giving presentations in front of the authoritative interpretation of the classroom audience. Thus, even though he did present three key political issues, the minimum requirement of his *assignment*, his actual presentation did not fulfil the audience's expectations of a political *performance*. Like Jacob, many of the other students playing politicians presented their key political issues using diction such as "taken" or "chosen", which indicates the same tension between *presenting as a student* and *performing as a politician*.

When expressing themselves through reproductive voices, the students often referred to the opinions and plans of real-life politics as *knowledge claims* that represented self-evident assertions and ideas about aspects of the world (Barth, 2002: 3). However, there was no guarantee that the student attempts to borrow authority from real-life political parties would ensure their

appeal to the classroom audience. Instead, the student attempts to reproduce the "authoritative voice" of the real-life political parties could easily disqualify their political presentations and overall performances (Bakhtin, 1981). Josephine's political presentation of the Social Democratic Party in the second game session illustrates this point. In contrast to Jacob, Josephine was not particularly nervous about speaking in front of the class. Instead, she made a head start and gave a straightforward presentation of her party: "Yes, we are the Social Democratic Party and our three key issues are early retirement benefit, integration and 'Made in Denmark" [GS 2: #4].[60] For the rest of her presentation, Josephine read aloud from her notes and gave a rather detailed description of the political values of the Social Democratic Party, especially in relation to welfare politics and early retirement pension. Even though she read at a relatively fast pace and shifted her focus between three different pieces of paper, Josephine still managed to smile self-confidently and establish frequent eye contact with her classmates. However, the actual *content* of her presentation only partially addressed the interests of the classroom audience. Thus, she used rather generalised language to introduce the Social Democratic Party:

> Politics are about values. Values that decide what is right and wrong. What we want to change and what we want to preserve in the world we live in. The Social Democratic values are freedom, equality and solidarity. But the world is changing and that's why we need to find new answers for new times [GS 2: #4].

As this quote shows, Josephine mainly presented her party using rather general terms with quite abstract and anonymous content ("Politics are about values"). At the same time, she also presented rather technical details, e.g. when she promised to raise the early retirement benefit age by two months per year from 2015 to 2026 [GS 2: #4].

As mentioned in section 7.3.3, Josephine and her fellow party members received no votes for their political performances. This was quite surprising and frustrating for the group, which had worked intensely during the whole election scenario. In the end-of-game discussion, Josephine blamed the other parties for "fixed voting", which the other students laughed at and rebutted in the post-game interview. Josephine and Sigrid then tried legitimising their disappointing results as being a consequence of playing a "centre party", which had no "significant opinions" in comparison to the National Party (cf. section 7.3.3). This point was also made by students from other game

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[60] "Made in Denmark" refers to the Social Democratic Party's comprehensive plan for managing global challenges on the labour market, which was a core issue during their 2005 election campaign (The Social Democratic Party, 2005).

sessions who claimed that it was difficult to represent the "middle" position of the Social Democratic Party. Nevertheless, Rikke and Annika also managed to receive a substantial amount of votes for their convincing performances as Social Democratic politicians during the fourth and fifth game sessions. Another explanation about why Josephine failed to appeal to the classroom audience was her recurring use of abstract political issues and technical terms. As Lisbeth argued in the post-game interview, the Social Democratic Party received no votes as they had "problems with coming across with their *own policies* because they did not quite know what they really stood for" [GS 2, group interview]. When comparing Josephine's presentation to her original sources, it was clear that except for her very first sentence, she presented three passages verbatim from the Social Democratic Party's campaign material for the 2005 election.[61] Instead of using her own words, Josephine had simply replicated existing content by reading aloud a series of quotes from three different places in the "official" political programme.

During the game session, neither the teacher nor the other students commented directly on Josephine's word for word reproduction. However, teachers and students from the five game sessions often criticised this reproductive approach as an illegitimate way of finding and presenting key political issues. Jonathan thought, for instance, that the political parties should not solely represent real-life parties as this allowed students to "just visit the website for the party you were supposed to be, print out and then sit down and read it aloud" [GS #5: 6; cf. section 7.4.3]. The game participants should be required to "think on their own". Similarly, all the teachers commented on how the students should have to speak in their "own words" instead of just "reading aloud" [GS 1-5, teacher interviews]. Marianne also criticised her students' use of the Internet as they would often refrain from reflecting on the quotes they found: "Sometimes they think that they are pretty smart because they use some of the phrases available on a website, you know. But they have no idea of what they actually mean" [GS 2, teacher interview]. As these comments indicate, Josephine and her fellow party members were unable to give a convincing presentation because they failed to *interpret* and *transform* the abstract and technical language of a political programme into political messages that resonated with the classroom audience. Put differently, Josephine and her group had taken the assignment of finding key political issues too literally without questioning the authority, content or expressive language found on the real-life Social Democratic Party's website. Paradoxically, then, by loyally *reproducing* the "authoritative voice" of the Social

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[61] Josehphine's original sources can all be found at the Social Democratic Party's website: www.socialdemokratiet.dk.

Democratic Party's official programme, Josephine's political utterances *lost* the authority of the original source and ended up disqualifying her political presentation (Bakhtin, 1981).

At a glance, Jacob and Josephine delivered quite contrasting performances – i.e. Jacob was obviously nervous about presenting in class, whereas Josephine smiled and appeared self-confident. However, their performances were also quite alike as neither of them enacted communicative competence that could *persuade* the classroom audience. From the perspective of positioning theory, Jacob and Josephine's presentations lacked appropriate *expressivity* as they were unable to adopt the social language of professional politics (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 1997). Moreover, the presentations were reproductive as they mostly *referred* to pre-given content and topics "taken" from the real political parties. In this sense, the students failed to reflect upon or live up the demands of the expected *addressivity* of the dialogical game space. Thus, Jacob did not address the audience as voters but as teacher-and-students, whereas Josephine simply echoed the content and intentions of the Social Democratic Party's political programme. In summary, both students primarily addressed a rather *passive* or "universal" audience, which did not appeal to the "particular" classroom audience (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969).

8.3.3. Professionalised voices

The students' ability to "keep face" was an important prerequisite for being able to deliver a convincing performance as a professional politician (Goffman, 1967a; cf. section 8.1). However, the students' appeal to their classmates was also crucially dependent upon their ability *to master the social language of professionalised political discourse* (Bakhtin, 1986). The negative responses to Jacob and Josephine's reproductive performances illustrate how they failed to persuade the classroom audience. Thus, *the politicians were expected to perform and express themselves through a professionalised voice by adopting the speaking "image" of a professional politician* (Bakhtin, 1981). Neither the game instructions nor the teachers provided any detailed guidelines on how to perform as politicians. This meant that the students were more or less left on their own to individually interpret how to imitate the discursive practices of professional politicians, i.e. by adopting a smiling face, using expressive body language, changing voice pitch and intonation, using particular rhetorical phrases etc. Consequently, most of the students ended up speaking as "novice politicians" as their political discourse represented a motley mix between everyday forms of classroom talk and the speech genres of professional politicians.

In order to understand how the students tried and were expected to speak as professional politicians, I will focus on Lisa's presentation from the third game session, which both teachers and students regarded as a *competent* performance. The students generally agreed that Lisa was quite "persuasive" and she received the highest number of votes in the election. After the game session, the teacher, Thomas, also praised Lisa's ability to "make a lasting impression" as she "dared" to perform [GS 3, teacher interview]. As these remarks illustrate, the teachers and students agreed that Lisa fully mastered the communicative competencies needed for presenting as a politician within the context of *The Power Game*.

During her presentation, Lisa managed to present not three but four key political issues: environmental policy, welfare policy, equal rights for men and women, and immigration policy [GS 3: #3]. All of these topics had been chosen for strategic reasons as Lisa assumed that they might appeal to her classmates. More importantly, Lisa presented these key political issues by using expressive means that imitated the professionalised voice of real-life politicians. She communicated with energetic body language to stress important issues and her smiling face indicated how she clearly enjoyed being able to perform as a politician in front of her classmates. Furthermore, as the following two excerpts indicate, Lisa mainly used *colloquial language* when presenting her key political issues:

> The environment we live in today, it's simply not good enough. Uh… *we're* all for a *greener environment* (*looks down at her paper*), we're all for focusing on the development of the global world (…), it's guaranteed to be an expensive solution in the first place, but we'll live *longer* if we get this, uh, good ecological solution… yes (…)

> Those of us from the Socialists have been extremely dissatisfied with, with how the Liberalists and the Social Democrats have brought the welfare policy into a mess (…); that's why we're all for taking some more money from the *rich* and giving them to the *poor* (*smiles*). It's simply the Robin Hood approach [GS 3: #3].

As these quotes show, Lisa drew rather freely upon phrases from her everyday language and focused on vivid images instead of technical details, i.e. "not good enough", "greener environment", "the Robin Hood approach" etc. Her political discourse clearly differed from Josephine's verbatim reproduction of an authoritative political source. Instead, Lisa's presentation had the same convivial and straightforward tone as Anders' presentation from the fifth game session (cf. section 8.2). Obviously, Lisa and Anders' informal language was rather different from real-life parliamentary

talk between professional politicians, which is often expected to be far more precise and "objective" (Ilie, 2004). Thus, many politicians within would try to *balance* their everyday talk with the genre-specific norms and expectations of political discourse without "getting carried away" by their own presentations as Anders did in the fifth game session [GS 5, teacher interview; cf. section 8.2].

In addition to using colloquial language, Lisa also *addressed* and appealed to the classroom audience as potential voters. Thus, when presenting her key political issue on equal rights, she addressed the listeners as *active* respondents, which could and should be able to take action by voting for the Socialist Party:

> In addition to this, I'd like to tell a bit about *equal* rights, because when we say equal rights in Denmark, then we think, "Yes, yes, we already have that". But, actually, we don't! The thing is that, that in Denmark, a *man* might earn 100 kroner per hour, but a woman only earns 89 kroner per hour. And is that good enough? *No!* As members of the Socialists, we don't think that's good enough at all. Women and men should earn an equal amount of money. Uh, at least that's what we stand for [GS 3: #3].

By presenting an obvious example of inequality among men and women, Lisa tries to appeal to the ethos of the classroom audience, i.e. their sense of morality and righteousness (Ilie, 2004). Moreover, Lisa frames her presentation as a *dialogue* between her professionalised voice ("As members of the Socialists") and the audience, which represent potential voters. Thus, she tries to identify with and challenge her fellow classmates' preconceived opinions of equal rights in order to overcome their bias: "Then we think: 'Yes, yes, we already have that'. But actually, we don't!" In this way, Lisa not only tries to imitate the voice of a professional politician but also to establish a political dialogue with the classroom audience as a public audience, which has the capacity to *respond* to her presentation by voting on her political party.

As the examples above show, Lisa expressed herself in a professionalised voice through appropriate self-positioning that included choice of topic (referentiality), persuasive language (expressivity) and relevant modes of addressing the audience (addressivity) (Bakhtin, 1986; Ongstad, 1997). More specifically, Lisa *strategically* selected relevant key political issues, managed to *imitate* the expressive speech genres of parliamentary discourse and addressed the audience as a responsive *public*. As mentioned, both teacher and the students agreed that Lisa delivered a *competent* performance. However, Lisa – as well as the other students – also had trouble with "appropriating" the social language of professional politics (Bakhtin, 1981: 341). One example

is the way she mixed up the abstract terms "economical" and "ecological" in her presentation: "We think that we should aim for an economical world [*sic*], uh… *ecological*, where you say that it's something we are united on in this world" [GS 3: #3]. As quoted earlier, Anders had similar difficulties when he mistook "generation" and "integration" (cf. quote in section 8.2). A final example is the way Martin confused "student" and "citizen" when addressing the classroom audience: "A society is only as strong as their weakest students [*sic*], uh, or as their weakest citizens" [GS 4: #3]. These three examples indicate how the students regularly failed to make particular words "their own" when trying to speak as professional politicians. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this can be described as a dialogical tension between the students' "own words" and the "foreign words" of political discourse. Thus, when the students quoted and referred to the social language of professional politics, they experienced how, according to Bakhtin, "many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks for them" (Bakhtin 1981: 294). Consequently, the students' professionalised voices represented a *dialogical tension* between the intentions of their own words and the connotations or intentions that accompanied the "foreign words" of political discourse.

8.3.4. *Personalised voices*

In addition to the authoritative and professionalised voices, the students also expressed themselves through *personalised* voices. When giving their presentations, the politicians often directly or indirectly communicated their personal opinions of their assigned political positions. Many of the students tried to merge the "official" opinions of the real political parties with their *own* norms and values. Seen from a dialogical perspective, the students' personalised voice echoed their "internally persuasive discourse", i.e. how they developed "new ways to mean" by questioning, exploring and connecting the interplay of different ideas and voices within the dialogical space of the election scenario (Bakhtin, 1981: 345-6). More concretely, the students' personalised voices expressed an *on-going, critical dialogue between their assigned ideological positions and their own personal beliefs*.

Like the authoritative and professionalised voices, the students' personalised voices also emerged in a number of different ways during the five game sessions. In order to illustrate this variation, I will use Henrik's presentation as a key example and then make comparisons with presentations by other students. Henrik, who played a politician for the Socialist Party, delivered a long presentation (nearly five minutes), where he mainly read aloud from his notes in a rather low

voice. In spite of this underplayed performance, Henrik's political messages still managed to create a significant impact on his classmates as he mentioned several alarming political cases, which called for immediate action. Thus, for Henrik and the Socialist Party, it was "imperative" to "increase the development aid" in order to "fight hunger and famine" [GS 4: #3]. Henrik then referred to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) recommendations and argued how increased development aid might help Third World countries prevent terrorism, public unrest, extreme poverty, the collapse of societies, war and the death of approximately six million children.[62] Moreover, Henrik claimed that, "those of us in rich countries have a moral obligation to help the poor countries". When presenting his next issue on better welfare, Henrik likewise argued that he promised to "help the poor" and "the weak", who represent "9.2 per cent of the Danish population". The Danish state should also "employ more people" to prevent "horrible things" such as parents that "sell their own children into prostitution". Moreover, the "early retirement benefit" should be aimed at those who have a "shorter education" and "hard jobs" as they "wear out faster". Finally, Henrik suggested that we should "change our *way* of thinking about the environment" and not "destroy nature" because it will affect "future generations". Thus, polluting factories "should pay for making things good again" [GS 4: #3].

As these quotes show, Henrik's presentation represented a global alarm call, which included an impressive list of heavy political issues such as poverty, famine, war, terror, prostitution, child abuse, welfare benefits and pollution. He made both emotional (pathos) and ethical (ethos) appeals to the classroom audience. Thus, even though his physical presence was rather underplayed, the spin doctor, Christian, still praised Henrik and the Socialist Party for being "good at coming across" and able to "explain" the key political issues of his party: "I thought the ways in which they wanted things changed sounded like a good idea" [GS 4: #3]. This positive evaluation of Henrik's performance was generally shared by the teacher and the other students in the class.

One of the main reasons why Henrik was praised for his performance was that he represented a high degree of *seriousness*. Thus, in the post-game interview, Henrik mentioned how he "more or less agreed" with the ideologies and opinions of the Socialist Party, and that he was "engaged in politics in his leisure time" [GS 4, group interview]. As a result, it was relatively easy for Henrik to merge his personal beliefs and political experience with his assigned ideological position within the election scenario. Furthermore, Henrik mentioned "seriousness" several times as

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[62] These examples come from the UNDP report *End Poverty 2015* on www.endpoverty2015.org.

an important prerequisite for playing *The Power Game* and educational games as such. Thus, even though Henrik praised his friend Martin from the National Party for "getting himself heard" and "being funny", he also remarked that "nobody" would take Martin's performance "seriously" in the world of real-life politics [GS 4, group interview]. Ironically, Henrik's serious approach also created humorous responses from the audience. In the following exchange, Henrik has just been asked by the Social Democratic Party to explain how he and his party intend to finance their election promises:

> Henrik: Well, the funny thing is that… in Denmark, we all talk about how we need to *save* money when we have never been *richer* than we are now… Actually, it's not that long ago since they found 15 billion unused kroner in the Prime Ministry. So, I think it's *silly*…
> Class: (*giggle*)
> Henrik: To say that we can't afford, uh… those things in society… What are you laughing at?!
> Joan: It's your persuasive manner!
> Class: (*giggle*)
> Henrik: Okay, I'll try to… easy now!
> Joan: It's not because you're making a fool of yourself, that's for sure! [GS 4: #4].

As this excerpt shows, Henrik clearly became distracted by his giggling classmates and tried to figure out *why* they were laughing at him. Later on, when there was a break, the teacher Joan tried to explain to Henrik that some students giggled because "you spoke with *great* conviction" [GS 4: #4]. This was followed up by a comment from Martin, who emphasised how Henrik's political performance differed from his "normal" way of talking. As these examples indicate, Henrik's "serious" approach to the game was somewhat surprising and comical to his classmates. Thus, the audience would sometimes giggle at his *personalised voice*, which was based largely on his own convictions and ideological values. Even though this playful response from the audience made Henrik slightly nervous about his self-appearance, it mainly represented an attempt to "laugh with" him as the response did not disqualify his performance (Glenn, 2003).

Similar to Henrik, many other politicians drew upon their own opinions when presenting key political issues. Thus, even though Lisa would "not view herself as a Socialist", she had tried to "pick" key Socialist issues that she sympathised with for her presentation, i.e. environmental policies and equal rights [GS 3, group interview]. Similarly, Michael tried to "sell the message" of the National Party by drawing upon his own experience and opinions as a member of the Conservative Youth Party [GS 1: #3; cf. example in section 7.3.1]. One of the main political

differences between the real-life Conservative People's Party and the Danish People's Party is their opinion toward the EU, which can be divided into "pro" and "con", respectively. Thus, on a personal level, Michael was generally quite sympathetic toward the EU and would readily defend this position in political discussions. However, when presenting his key political issues within the game, Michael came up with a lot of reasons for "getting out of the EU" – i.e. in order to "keep our sovereignty", prevent "cheaply paid Polish workers" from "harming Danish workers", and to maintain the current level of welfare by avoiding "paying for" new membership countries from "Eastern Europe" [GS 1: #3]. When interviewed after the game session, Michael described how he had simply taken his political opponents' arguments and used them against them:

> I think that it's funny that you get to… some of the people you usually discuss with, you get to take some of their viewpoints and advance them. The idea that we can easily stay outside the EU because that's what Norway and Sweden do, it's one I hear often when I discuss the EU. So, you know, to take that one and try to discuss it with others, I think that was quite entertaining [GS 1, group interview].

As this quote suggests, Michael was able to "appropriate" the critical voice of his everyday political opponents and use their own arguments against them for strategic purposes (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, Michael had to defend the National Party's unpopular view on immigration. Like other politicians that represented this party, Michael and his group tried to "wrap in" their immigration policies, but still had to answer several critical questions on the subject. In the post-game interview, Michael described how he had tried to defend his assigned ideological position "for the sake of the game":

> Michael: You felt as if you were really on the hot seat, you had to sit there and try to defend some opinions you didn't really believe in. But for the sake of the game, you had to try and defend them.
> Thorkild: How was it then… How was it to have a different opinion on something?
> Michael: Well, I think it was fun because it does result in… some knowledge about what's on the syllabus when you see things from a different point of view. It's as if you step completely out of yourself when you have defended those things. That's what I did, because it's not as if I really believe those things about immigration [GS 1, group interview].

This quote demonstrates how Michael was unable to match his own views with the assigned political views in the same way as Henrik, who "more or less agreed" with the opinions of his in-game political party. Still, both Henrik and Michael spoke using a personalised voice in the sense

that they actively imagined, questioned and modified the opinions of their assigned parties in relation to their own opinions. Thus, both students engaged in a dialogue with themselves *and* their classmates by creating "internally persuasive words", which were half their own and "half-someone else's" (Bakhtin, 1981: 345). Consequently, *the students' personalised voices did not represent their "own" ideological beliefs in any essentialist sense, but reflected an engaged dialogue between their political opinions and their assigned ideological positions.* Translated to the vocabulary of positioning theory, the students' personalised voices mainly *referred* to their personal beliefs by *expressing* "new ways to mean", and by *addressing* the classroom audience via an engaged dialogue.

8.3.5. *Parodic voices*

As the preceding sections have indicated, the interplay of the students' different ideological voices was quite complex. The students appealed to their classmates by drawing upon their everyday language, their own political opinions, phrases from the political parties' websites, and the speaking "image" of professional politicians. In this way, the students' game-based discourse was *double-voiced* as it was directed both "toward the object of speech, as in ordinary discourses, and toward another discourse, toward someone else's speech" (Bakhtin, 1984a: 195). The students' utterances hence represented an assorted mix between their own words and "someone else's" speech as they continually constructed and re-constructed the different ideological voices within the dialogical space of *The Power Game*. Moreover, some students also chose to deconstruct the political dialogue of the election scenario by speaking in a *parodic voice*. According to Bakhtin, a parody adopts someone else's discourse but "introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one", the second voice clashing with the first and creating "an arena of battle between two voices" (Bakhtin, 1984a: 193). Thus, the students' parodic voices expressed *an ideological tension between their own political beliefs and their assigned ideological positions.*

Dennis' presentation in the first game session illustrates well how the parodic voice distorted the political dialogue of the election scenario. Together with fellow Socialist Party members, Dennis selected three key political issues that might appeal to his classmates, a lower unemployment rate, better integration and improved education for young people [GS 1: #3]. At the same time, Dennis also chose a rather ironic and sarcastic approach to his assigned ideological position and his primary incentive for participation was *to win* the election. Thus, he made a "deal" with his friend Michael from the National Party to share the power and constitute a new government

if the two of them received sufficient votes in spite of the fact that their political parties represented opposing ideological positions (cf. section 7.4.3). Dennis' presentation was not primarily directed at the classroom audience, but rather at Michael, who was also part of the panel of politicians:

> Dennis: (*reads aloud*) The Socialist Party wants to take focus away from the problems of our surroundings and look at our own. For far too long, we have been watching our poor fall further and further down the *** (*laughs and looks at Michael*).
>
> Michael: (*smiles back, but then looks away*)
>
> Class: (*laughter*)
>
> Dennis: We must put an end to this! The redistribution of goods is essential for a more dynamic Denmark. We need everyone in order to secure the future of Denmark (*knocks demonstratively on the paper with his hand and laughs*).
>
> Class: (*laughter*)
>
> Dennis: Wait…!
>
> Michael: (*looks at Dennis*) You *do* believe in it, don't you?!
>
> Dennis: A lack of and lost workforce is already a problem now. That's why we must not leave the immigrants behind. The immigrants are a workforce that must not be lost in the fe… in the fear of the unknown. We cannot let anxieties or fear… (*looks down in notes*) ***
>
> Class: (*laughter*)
>
> Karen: *** (*looks at Dennis and points toward the classroom audience*) [GS 1: #3].

The exchange of glances, smiles, gestures and laughter indicate that Dennis was clearly unable to "keep face" as a politician, since he primarily tried to capture the attention of his friend Michael. At first, Michael responds by smiling back but then looks away in order to maintain *his own* political face. When Dennis starts laughing again, Michael breaks the frame of the game by ironically asking Dennis whether he actually "believes" in what he is saying. Next, the teacher, Karen, points toward the classroom audience to signal that Dennis should address them instead of Michael, who is in the panel. Further on in his presentation, Dennis promises to ensure a "future society" through the "best possible education" for young people to be financed by taking money from the elderly through "an economic down grading of those individuals who, according to certain age-specific parameters, can no longer be… uh… support Danish society [*sic*]" [GS 1: #3]. The idea of simply re-allocating money from the elderly to the young is an attempt to appeal to the classroom audience that is almost too obvious and the controversial proposal makes the class laugh again.

      As this example shows, Dennis' presentation was clearly *double-voiced* as he both attempted to speak as a socialist politician, but also tried to meta-communicate his own ironic

stance toward his assigned ideologies, for example, by demonstratively knocking on the table or by smiling to his friend Michael. Furthermore, his solution for financing young people's education by taking money from the elderly is rather grotesque compared to real-life politics. Thus, by distancing himself from the words of his pre-written speech through ironic smiles, laughter and a lack of eye contact with the audience, he expressed himself through a *parodic voice*. By simultaneously trying to appear as a professional politician *and* subverting the meanings of his elaborate political speech, Dennis ended up giving a rather unconvincing performance criticised by his friend Michael and the teacher.

In order to illustrate the variation of parodic voices, I will now turn to a second example taken from the fourth game session, where Martin agreed to play a politician for the National Party. In contrast to Dennis' parodic performance, Martin managed to express himself parodically without stepping out of character. An obvious explanation for Martin's more competent performance is that he has had a lot of experience with political discourse. In the post-game interview, he described how:

> Growing up in a home where politics have always been on the agenda, that's basically what you talk about around the dinner table and my big brother has done volunteer work, and I'm going to do volunteer work for, for some student political organisations and the like. So, in that way we've always… I mean, politics is really, really, really important for us [GS 4, group interview].

Even though Martin did not identify himself with a particular political party, he was generally more sympathetic toward left-wing ideologies, which he also signalled by wearing black t-shirt, Mohawk haircut and a pierced eyebrow. Consequently, Martin felt quite challenged when asked to play a politician for the National Party, which clearly represented values opposite his own ideological beliefs. Thus, early into the game session, Martin responded ironically to his assigned ideological position by sending a "Sieg Heil" [*sic*] salute to the camera [GS 4: #1]. This provoking gesture shows how Martin quickly decided to turn his performance into a political self-parody.

As the earlier quote indicates, Martin was undoubtedly familiar with and interested in expressing himself through the speech genres of political discourse. Thus, when presenting the National Party's politics, he tried to appear trustworthy by speaking in a clear voice, establishing eye contact with his audience, using body language to support his points and by refraining from reading aloud. In this way, he delivered a rather eloquent presentation of his three key political issues: immigration, health and the EU [GS 4: #3]. Similar to the other game sessions, politicians

and journalists from the opposing political parties then tried to "butcher" Martin by playfully exposing his "real" political views (cf. section 8.1). Thus, Nezama, who played a journalist for the Liberalist Party, asked Martin to explain how immigrants could be "beneficial" for Danish society [GS 4: #4]. Martin answered that "some immigrants" were "imported" because Denmark lacked the necessary resources, whereas other immigrants were "fugitives" that needed to be integrated "quickly":

> Martin: If those fugitives who have been exposed to torture or threats about this are able to integrate themselves *and*, uh, create their own economy, which makes them self-sufficient, well, then they are, in principle, welcome. Then they can contribute a whole lot, also to a certain kind of cultural change, also here in Denmark. But not in the way that we see now with ghettoification and what else follows these, these… filthy initiatives [*sic*].
> Class: (*laughs*)
> Joan: Was that an answer to your question, Nezama?
> Nezama: Yes, well I have to… if that's his opinion, then… [GS 4: #4].

The rhetoric of Martin's last remark, where he links "ghettoification" with "filthy initiatives", is clearly exaggerated and makes the whole class laugh. Martin speaks with two tongues as he tries to maintain both a professional, credible self-image and to *subvert* the ideological meaning of his assigned ideology through self-parody. Similarly, Martin used self-parody when he described how to "send those immigrants back", who "don't contribute to our nationalistic idyll [*sic*]" [GS 4: #5]. Again, Martin's form of playful talk humorously exaggerates his assigned "nationalistic" ideology in order to communicate his own ideological distance toward the National Party. In this way, Martin not only delivered competent face work as a professional politician, but also saved his own face as a *person* by turning his performance into a self-parody that created an ironic distance to the opinions he expressed.

After the game session, the teacher, Joan, and the students praised Martin as a competent performer, since he was both quite eloquent and "entertaining". But Martin's parodic approach also created a conflict with other ideological voices by simultaneously *distorting* and *deconstructing* the parliamentary dialogue of the election scenario. This conflict between voices was particularly clear in Martin's recurring exchange with Anita, who played a journalist for the Socialist Party. In contrast to Martin, Anita had rather limited experience with politics and political discourse, but was still able to see how the election scenario related to other semiotic domains: "I'm not particularly political when I'm not in school and so on, but I still think that I could use a whole

lot of it [the game] when at home" [GS 4, group interview]. As quoted earlier, Anita was fully engaged in her role as a journalist, as she was "*into it* all the time" (cf. section 8.2.1). When it was her turn to ask critical questions, she confronted Martin with a real-life case about an 18-year-old girl who was about to be expelled from Denmark and sent to Russia, where she was likely to end up earning a living as a prostitute like her mother:[63]

> Well, then I'd like to ask the National Party a question. Uh… you mentioned immigrants a lot and say that they are only on *loan* and that we should only keep them if they are beneficial to our society. Then I'd like to know how come (…) we, for example, have somebody in Helsinge, an 18-year-old *upper secondary student* who came here because her mother sent her here. She [the mother] is a prostitute, and if she [the daughter] stayed in Russia, she would also end up as a prostitute. She came here to this country. She lives with a Danish foster family *for free*. Our State does not pay her anything; she lives there for free. And the teachers predict she'll have a good GCSE[64] and everything. But you still want to send her back. How can that happen? [GS 4: #4].

As the quote shows, Anita obviously sympathised with the girl who was about to be expelled from the country in spite of the fact that she was a well-functioning upper secondary student like Anita herself. Anita's question represents a *personalised voice*, as she was deeply involved in the moral aspects of the case. Thus, her actual question ("How can that happen?") was narrowly related to the Russian girl's particular case. Instead of giving a direct answer, Martin provided a whole series of tactical and parodic answers that each attempted to evade the question. Initially, Martin blamed his "dear colleagues" in the Liberalist Party for the existing "holes" in the "legislation" concerning immigrants. Then he moved on to argue how "education" is "never free", and that the girl is actually an "expense" for the Danish state. To prove his point, he mentions a fictitious "survey from '94" documenting "how much immigrants wore down our pavements and road system [*sic*]". Since the immigrant girl does not "contribute" to Danish society and "her life is not in imminent danger", she should be "sent home". Martin rounds off by patronising Anita, as the girl's foster parents would "pay taxes even if she wasn't there, so there are some aspects, which you have not yet fully understood" [GS 4: #5].

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[63] The story of the girl about to be expelled to Russia had appeared in the Danish news media before the game session that documented how she was quite likely to end in prostitution to be able to pay off her father and mother's debts. Concurrent with the game session, more than 600 people demonstrated in front of The National Danish Parliament in favour of the girls' right to become a Danish citizen (*Politiken*, 13-01-2006). Many of the demonstrators were upper secondary students from the girls' school, Helsinge Gymnasium, an institution quite similar to Anita and Martin's.
[64] General Certificate of Secondary Education (*Studentereksamen* or *stx*).

Martin's parodic answer distorted the *realism* of the game dialogue by referring to fictitious surveys and by patronising his political opponents, but his answer was still accepted within the interpretive framework of the election context. However, later on in the game session, both Anita and Martin transgressed the unwritten rules of the parliamentary debate by using vulgar language. Anita criticised Joakim from the Liberalist Party for agreeing with Martin on all points, because it made his party appear as though he was "a tick in the bottom [*sic*]" of the National Party [GS 4: #5]. Martin responded promptly to Anita's comment by evading her actual criticism and pretending to be insulted: "Now, I've got no idea what newspaper you come from, but I have to say that that was… you've got quite some nerve!" and "It would be nice, if you would please speak to me in a proper language" [GS 4: #5]. In the heated discussion that followed, Martin defended his alliance with Joakim and ironically referred to the girl about to be expelled as "the Russian whore" [*sic*]. This vulgar expression was rather abusive and raised a number of protests from Anita and the rest of the class, as it clearly transgressed the "shared ground rules" of the debate (Mercer, 1995). Thus, the teacher Joan tried to interrupt the debate as the game session was about to end anyway: "Now, I think it's time to stop the debate… in spite of its entertainment value" [GS 4: #5].

When discussing the game session, many of the students commented on Martin's vulgar remark. The spin doctor, Christian, criticised Martin for contradicting himself when he demanded that Anita "speak properly" when he himself referred to the immigrant girl as a "Russian whore" [GS 4: #5]. Similarly, Rikke, who played a politician for the Social Democratic Party, also criticised Martin for his "exaggerated" performance:

> The things that Martin said, they seemed a bit like… because it would never ever *happen* if that really was your opinion, what Martin said there; then you would never say it in the way it was presented there. So in that way it was a bit hard for me, at least to, I don't know, to argue against it because we were already so far out on a sidetrack, so I was thinking, how the hell will I ever be able to reach over, so that it becomes an opinion where *my* party… It was quite hard for me because it was led so far away that it was difficult to, I don't know… lead it back again. I mean, it was quite hard… so *exaggerated*, I think… on those points [GS 4: #5].

As Rikke argues, Martin's parodic voice *distorted* the debate as his language and opinions were unrealistic compared to the professionalised discourse of real-life politics. In this way, she was unable to "reach over" to Martin's "exaggerated" opinions. Joan then praised Martin's performance, since among all the politicians, he was the one "who had to defend some opinions that were the furthest away from what he actually believed in" [GS 4: #5]. Martin followed up on this by

claiming that, "It is incredibly hard for me to be a balanced racist [*sic*]… uh… I mean, it's two aspects that simply cannot be united" [GS 4: #5].

As these quotes show, Martin's affiliation with the ideological left wing made present a parodic interpretation of the National Party as a rather arrogant and "racist" party. Martin's initial comment after the game session shows how he undeniably found this challenge exciting: "It was great… it was scary; so, so much that you suddenly found yourself living out the role. I've never tried that before, uh, and… I totally disagree *with every single point of what I said for one and a half hours*" [GS 4: #5]. Similarly, Anita and the other students were provoked by Martin's parodic performance, but none of them were offended on a *personal* level. As Anita mentioned in the post-game interview, there were certain "rules" within *The Power Game* specifying how the politicians should be "evaluated" that prevented the students from taking Martin's insults personally [GS 4, group interview]. Consequently, the game session created an *outsider's perspective* in relation to the students' personal beliefs, their actual performances and their in-game evaluation of the politicians' performances (Bakhtin, 1986; cf. section 3.3.4).

When interviewed after this game session, the students discussed general principles for what could and what could not be debated in *The Power Game*. As the game session had taken place during the height of The Cartoon Crisis, I had anticipated that this topic might emerge in the debate. However, Martin was quite insistent that that this was a topic ill suited for a debate game: "I deliberately chose not say a damn thing about it, because it is a very touchy subject eh… and that would completely ruin the atmosphere [of the game]" [GS 4, group interview]. Martin further argued that he and the other students at Redville School had the "general opinion" that you "should talk with great respect about religion" and avoid "hurting people". So whenever he and his classmates discussed the Cartoon Crisis as a part of their social studies classes, they had to "tread carefully". The following comments by Anita show that bringing up this topic would be too risky when playing *The Power Game*:

> Anita: I also believe that this kind of topic should not be brought up in a game where people maintain a facade, because then Martin might bring himself into something and have to say something that people eventually might take personally that Martin did not mean at all, uh… So I think this kind of discussion has to take place in class and be completely serious.
>
> Thorkild: Mmm.
>
> Anita: Because for some [students], their faith is simply everything, and if you criticise their faith, well that's worse than killing a member of their family. There really are people who feel that way, so I don't think that… that this kind of… topic should be brought up in game… that's too… it shouldn't...

Martin: I mean, just for this session, Christian said he got a headache afterwards because he was so annoyed with me being so provoking! [GS 4, group interview].

As these quotes illustrate, Martin and his classmates were highly aware of what topics they could and could not debate within an educational game. Since Martin had chosen to give a parodic interpretation of his assigned ideological position, he was allowed to use vulgar language, mention fictitious surveys and patronise his political opponents to ridicule the perceived "racist" ideology of the National Party. After the game, Martin was generally praised for being "entertaining" and was seen as being quite a *competent performer*. However, even though Martin's approach created general amusement in the class, the quotes from Anita, Christian, Rikke and Henrik also show how Martin's parodic approach was criticised for *distorting the realism* of the election scenario at the expense of a more balanced and "serious" political debate.

Two months after the fourth game session and group interview, I observed the same group of social studies students carry out project work in which one of the topics was the Cartoon Crisis. When asked about their opinion on the topic, several students responded that by now they were already "fed up with it" [Redville school, field notes]. This response indicates that the controversial aspects of the Cartoon Crisis had been so extensively discussed in and outside school, that the topic had become a *naturalised* part of their everyday discourse (Schütz, 1962: 212). Interestingly, Ishmael and Tina from the Hillsdale school actually *did* bring up the Cartoon Crisis and debated about the "freedom of speech" as a part of the third game session without destroying the tone of the debate or creating personal disputes in the class [GS 3: #4]. The main point here is that *each game session reflected a particular "debate climate", which implied different norms and values for negotiating and interpreting the shared ground rules among the game participants.*

Similar to the other three voices, the students' parodic voices can also be summarised in relation to positioning theory (Ongstad, 1997). The referentiality (the "content") of the parodic voices reflected an *ideological tension* between the students' own political opinions and their assigned political positions. The expressivity, that is the "formal" aspects of the parodic voice, was characterised by *stylisation*, i.e. humorous attempts to imitate political phrases. Finally, the addressivity of the parodic voices implied a *distorted dialogue* where the main aim was to address the classroom audience by creating "an arena of battle between two voices" (Bakhtin, 1984: 193).

8.3.6. The interplay of student voices

The above sections identify four different *student voices*, which emerged during the "multivoiced" game sessions (Dysthe, 1996). The students' reproductive voices, professionalised voices, personalised voices and parodic voices all represent different ways of interpreting and enacting the repertoire of available discourses within the dialogical space of *The Power Game.* Drawing upon positioning theory, the four voices can be categorised in relation to different communicative aspects of referentiality ("content"), expressivity ("form") and addressivity ("speaker-hearer relationships") (Ongstad, 1997; Gee & Green, 1998). Below, Table 8.1 summarises the student voices.

Communicative aspect	Reproductive voice	Professionalised voice	Personalised voice	Parodic voice
Referentiality	Pre-given	Strategic	Personal beliefs	Double-voiced
Expressivity	Non-performative	Political discourse	Individualised	Stylised
Addressivity	Passive dialogue	Public dialogue	Engaged dialogue	Distorted dialogue

Table 8.1: Comparison of student voices within the dialogical space of the game sessions.

Following Bakhtin's dialogical perspective, I do not claim that "objective" or clear-cut boundaries exist between these four categories of student voices (Bakhtin, 1981). When enacted in practice, the four voices were simultaneously overlapping, juxtaposed and/or mutually co-existing as the students tried to imitate, speak, listen and respond through the political discourse of the election scenario. Thus, all the politicians continually positioned themselves and often shifted between different voices during their presentations, i.e. by reproducing the opinions of the real-life political parties, addressing the audience as simultaneously classmates and voters, presenting their personal political opinions, mocking their political opponents or their own assigned ideological positions etc. In this way, the discursive complexity of the identified voices cannot be reduced to sociological ideal types or fixed linguistic categories. Instead, the main point of identifying the different student voices is to provide an *analytical map* for understanding how the dialogical game space enabled a complex interplay of different ideological voices.

As the analysis suggests, there was a close relationship between the students' voices and their *communicative competence* when performing as politicians. Thus, the teachers and the classroom audience generally agreed about whether a particular politician delivered a competent performance. When the teachers and students evaluated the politicians' performances, they did not focus on isolated abilities – i.e. political content, use of expressive language, modes of addressivity

– but on how these communicative aspects were combined in the politicians' actual *utterances* within the dialogical game space (Bakhtin, 1986). This also points to an interesting *dilemma* when trying to perform as a competent politician within the game context. On the one hand, the students were expected to draw upon the *authority* of the real-world political parties in order to present plausible political issues and opinions. On the other hand, the students also needed to *improvise* when answering critical questions, which required them to interpret their assigned ideological positions in relation to their own political views and the ideologies of the "official" political parties.

8.4. Analytical theme: Game experience

After analysing the performative and discursive aspects of the game sessions, I will now describe the students' *game experience* from a pragmatist perspective by focusing on how they interpreted the relationship between the *ends* and *means* of the election scenario. More specifically, the analysis tries to identify different knowledge aspects of the students' game experience; how this knowledge was interpreted in relation to the interpretive frame of the gaming encounter; and why this knowledge may or may not be valuable within an educational context. The empirical data for this section is based on the post-game interviews, which mainly explored student reflections about their game experience (cf. section 5.6.11).

8.4.1. Knowledge forms

As mentioned in chapter 6, *The Power Game* can be understood in relation to three different knowledge aspects (Barth, 2002). Thus, the election scenario is based on a series of *assertions* that require the participants to win a parliamentary election by finding, preparing, presenting, debating and evaluating the performance of each political party. Similarly, the election scenario allows students to use a series of different *modes of representation*, i.e. the websites of real-life political parties and their ability to speak and listen through the discourse of professional politics. Finally, the actual playing of the game *organises* the students into different groups with accompanying roles, rules, goals and phases for realising the election scenario.

In order to understand how the students reflected upon the emerging knowledge aspects of *The Power Game* sessions, I will start by narrowing my focus on the overall "content" of the election scenario, which mainly consisted of political ideologies. When playing the election scenario, the students were able to draw upon their curricular knowledge of the political ideologies, their everyday experience and knowledge of ideological values, and the authoritative key political

issues as represented on the websites of the real-life political parties. In this way, the students enacted and experienced the election scenario by *combining* knowledge and debate practices from different semiotic domains (Gee, 2003). Thus, Martin claimed that he could draw "extremely much" upon his political experiences and activities outside school when performing as a politician [GS 4, group interview]. Christian also mentioned how "he liked to discuss a lot" and how he could use this ability both within the game and when he was out drinking with his friends and "got to chatting outside the bathroom and discussed the Muhammad drawings for half an hour with three other boys" [GS 4, group interview]. Sara gave a similar example of the connections between discussing politics within *The Power Game* and outside a school context:

> I guess you discuss politics every day without knowing it. For example, the thing about the Muhammad drawings, it has become a big thing and now that things have started to be bigger and bigger, it's something you discuss every day. But you can certainly use what we tried [in the game] for after school and things like that beyond school when discussing at home or with friends and see how it really goes on [GS 4, group interview].

The students also compared their experience of the election scenario with their views of real-life politicians. Benjamin, for instance, related his game experience to his father, who was running for the municipal election at the time of the second game session:

> He tells me things now and then and he has also been, he also been out and spoken to people and there you can also, I mean it's easy to see when he is actually evading the topic, I mean… or when he is actually saying… when he is *actually saying something*. If you don't discover it yourself, then that's fine! [GS 2, group interview].

Moreover, the students also argued that game experience made them more *critical* of how professional politicians tended to "wrap in" their political messages and keep their face when appearing on television. In Anita's words:

> I already knew that politicians often put on facades and whatever when they participate in election programmes, but that it could be so *bad* that even someone like Martin could be so damn annoying and not even represent that opinion. Well, it could be twice as bad when they are into their profession… so *yes*, I look more critically at it when I see some things, so in that way it… it's made a big impression on me [GS 4, group interview].

Lisa viewed the game experience from a somewhat different perspective when she tried to define the "most important thing" about *The Power Game*. For her the election scenario was mainly an "exercise", which could teach her and her classmates to become "better at speaking" in front of different audiences:

> First of all, I think that the most important thing about this exercise was that people become better at speaking because there are many people who are really bad at it, too, even if they are… Even if they are pretty bright, it won't help with all that blackboard instruction when people won't speak up… uh… enough. At least they don't in our class. Seventy per cent. And that's what goes wrong. Both at the exam, but also when you come out in the real work life, uh, when you have to go to a job interview and people can't lead a normal conversation because they just sit like this and look around (*shows with her head*). That was definitely what this exercise could contribute to [GS 3, group interview].

As the quote shows, Lisa distinctly viewed the ability "to speak" and present oneself as important skills, which could be relevant in many different contexts, i.e. when speaking up in class, at oral exams or at job interviews. Moreover, Lisa also mentioned how the game experience could "embellish" her CV as she might start studying social science at university [GS 3, group interview]. In this way, Lisa viewed the game session as an "exercise" that was relevant within and beyond a school context. Interestingly, Fine makes a similar observation when he notes that many American high school students participate in "debate clubs" in order to improve their CVs and their career opportunities (Fine, 2001; cf. section 3.1).

As the examples above imply, the students were able to relate their knowledge from the context of *The Power Game* to other semiotic domains, i.e. when discussing politics with family and friends, watching politicians on TV, when performing at oral exams and job interviews or by speaking up in class. In this way, the students clearly *valued* how their game experience made them reflect upon different aspects of political knowledge and self-presentations in front of various audiences. At the same time, the upper secondary students were quite *ambiguous* when interviewed about the subject matter content and the subject-related outcome of *The Power Game* in relation to the social studies curriculum. Some students made cost-benefit analyses of the time spent for the game session when asked to evaluate the outcomes of the game scenario. Martin, for example, emphasised how the game session lasted for "six hours", which meant that "you need to evaluate how much you could learn on those six hours if you weren't role-playing" [GS 4, group interview]. The students directly compared the "subject matter content" of the game scenario with everyday

forms of classroom instruction, where their teachers would go over fixed forms of knowledge (i.e. from a textbook) that the students were expected to reproduce at an oral or written exam. In summary, the students were both positive and sceptical toward the relevance of the knowledge aspects of the game. This *ambivalence* toward the educational outcomes of the game sessions is expressed well in Michael's evaluation of the election scenario where he discerns between "soft" and "hard" outcomes:

> I mean, you didn't get so much, you know… hard, hard outcome, you didn't get so much *pure subject matter content*. What we did, you could've read in a textbook in half an hour maybe, but the thing about the *soft outcome*, what you gained from discussing and arguing… I mean the different things and talking with each other about the political opinions and such, I think that, I think that we *benefited enormously* from that, uh… so, I mean, it *can't stand alone*, because then you'd get a very, very stupid class of social studies students who don't know much about social studies but are enormously good at arguing. But I think that it's a *good supplement to social studies* because social studies is also… I think, is more than just being able to mention the Danish parties precisely, also the thing about being able to argue for what you believe in and such things, which you get… yes, a really good grip of in this game [GS 1, group interview].

This quote illustrates well how the students valued the game in relation to *existing* forms of teaching and learning within the context of upper secondary education. Thus, Michael criticised the election scenario for its lack of "hard" or text-book based knowledge. Still, his evaluation is quite positive in relation to how he and his fellow students benefited from "discussing and arguing". Several students mentioned similar points on the educational value of the election scenario, for example, when Lisa emphasised how the "exercise" could teach students how "to speak better". In this way, the students primarily *validated* the playful knowledge aspects of the game sessions in relation to discursive norms and expectations of their actual debate practices (Barth, 2002; cf. chapter 2).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the teachers' epistemological views about the students' game-based knowledge expressed a similar ambivalence toward the pros and cons of the game sessions (cf. chapter 7). Karen, for instance, generally guided and "tested" the students in relation to fixed and pre-given forms of knowledge; Joan and Thomas focused less on particular knowledge aspects and more on the overall entertainment value of the election scenario, while Marianne and Poul clearly valued the students' opportunity to build hypotheses by exploring different curricular aspects of the political ideologies. As these examples suggest, both teachers and students valued the knowledge aspects of the game sessions quite dissimilarly and from

considerably different perspectives. According to dialogical pedagogy, this variation points to a playful *tension* between the centrifugal-centripetal logics of everyday teaching and educational gaming (Bakhtin, 1981; cf. chapter 3). Thus, the election scenario challenged the relationship between fixed and experience-based knowledge forms within the school context by questioning what *counted* as "knowledge" and "outcomes". In this way, *the game sessions facilitated a contingent and relatively unpredictable interplay between different forms of knowledge that related to the semiotic domain of schooling as well as semiotic domains outside school.*

8.4.2. *Multiple goals, roles and perspectives*

When interviewed after the game sessions, the teachers and students emphasised how the election scenario made the students "work" in a different way compared to everyday forms of group and project work. The most striking contrast was that the educational game made the students become *engaged* in their learning activities, e.g. when Anita mentioned that she was "*into it* all the time" (cf. section 8.4.1). The students would come up with numerous explanations about why and how they became "engrossed" in *The Power Game* (Goffman, 1961a). Several students mentioned that one of the main differences between their game experience and everyday forms of teaching and learning was the prospect of *competing* with other students to win the election. Ramon, who played a journalist for the National Party, explained that the election scenario was "exciting" because it was a:

> …political game with a lot of things that you had to pay attention to. I mean, it all came down to winning, uh, in the end, so it was very funny to speak about, okay, what possibilities there were, what we had to do. For example, we found out that, uh, we only had young people here, which meant that we could disregard all those questions about the elderly. We could very quickly skip those because we would not win any votes on those anyway. I mean, on the whole, just finding the strategies and then seeing how much they change all the time [GS 1, group interview].

Like Ramon, several other students experienced how the competitive aspect of the election scenario provided an important tactical "framing" of their game experience (Goffman, 1974). Dennis and Michael also became quite engaged with the prospect of winning the election by forming an "unholy alliance" between the Socialist Party and the National Party in first game session.

Reducing the students' overall incentive for participation simply to a matter of "winning the election", however, would be quite misleading as the interpretive framing of the game

sessions involved the pursuit of *several different goals* that created a complex and dynamic interplay between different interpretive sub-frames (cf. overview of interpretive frames in section 8.2). As indicated by the following excerpt, Sarah thought that the game "was really exciting" because she "learned about the process a bit" of what happens in a parliamentary election:

> There were so many *tasks involved*. I mean, it was not the same role, or, yes, it was, but we went *from point to point all the time*, right, and this made the day pass quickly. I mean, you had something *you had to do all the time*. It wasn't like sitting in front of a blackboard for eight hours, that's a long time, whereas here, it was, here, we were *sent into something* all the time [GS 2, group interview].

Even though the students pursued the overall goal of winning the election, they also *experienced* how they continually had to orient and re-orient themselves toward a number of different "ends in view" that emerged within the game context (Dewey, 1916; cf. section 4.2.2). Subsequently, *the students' main incentive for participating in the game was not simply "winning", but the experience of enacting the overall processes and phases of the election scenario – both in relation to the game goals, curricular goals, individual motives and the students' motives as group members in relation to other groups.* All the politicians from the five game sessions accepted the challenge of giving convincing performances by preparing, performing and speaking through different ideological voices. Similarly, the journalists, spin doctors and stakeholders also attempted to carry out their roles and tasks within the election scenario. In this way, *The Power Game* was not "played" as a homogenous game with only one fixed goal, but *realised* as a rather complex mutual configuration of the participants' intentions, actions and perspectives within the situated context of the educational gaming encounter (Goffman, 1961a).

In this way, the students experienced the interpretive framing of *The Power Game* by *playing roles* and *representing different ideological perspectives.* In the following excerpt, Michael, who played a politician for the National Party, summed up the game experience in this way:

> You might say that the good thing about this game is (…), the thing about being *crammed into a role* so that you come to see it or… if you wouldn't normally vote for the National Party, then you get to *see it from the outside*. At least that's what I did. I mean, when you could look inside the Social Democratic Party and the Liberalist Party and see how they really look at things and such things, uh, and I think that was, uh, fun. Also, the thing about having to adopt the role as… the stupid racist, no it wasn't me, it wasn't me, but the thing about… being crammed into a box and then having to try and get as much space as possible in there at all, you know. Yes, I think it was fun and it was completely different… uh,

that you could, were, part of a game with a different role and then [had to] look at it from the outside, because that's what I thought you did [GS 1, group interview].

By using spatial metaphors, Michael describes his game experience in relation to his role and his assigned ideological position. Being *inside* his role as politician also allowed him to step back and view his assigned political party from the *outside*. Similarly, his ideological position within the game allowed him to "look inside" other political parties at the centre of the ideological spectrum. These spatial metaphors indicate how Michael's role enabled him both to take on the perspective of the generalised other of the National Party *and* to understand on the ideological implications of his imagined perspective from an outsider's perspective (Mead, 1934; Bakhtin, 1986). At the same time, the quote also indicates how Michael felt quite challenged with the constraints of his role as he was "being crammed into a box". Thus, he had to use his *creative imagination* in order "to get as much space as possible in there at all" (cf. section 4.2.). Susanne, who played a journalist from the Socialist Party, made similar points. She thought it was "really cool" to represent an ideology "completely opposite" her own political views since she was "very right-wing on a personal level" [GS 5, group interview]. Susanne further argued that "you learn the most" from "being forced to adopt the view points opposite of your own". Being an experienced role-player in her leisure time, she firmly believed that role-playing was a relevant form of teaching as "it is simply a good way to learn and to develop ways of reacting to other people" [GS 5, group interview].

As these quotes show, most of the upper secondary students valued the process of playing roles and taking on other perspectives to *challenge* their own ideological views. At the same time, the students also responded quite differently to the *moral* aspects of their game experience. An illustrative example is Lisa and Tina's contrasting interpretations of how they were expected to "spin" and "wrap in" their political messages when they played politicians:

Tina: I think that I've become a bit put off. I wouldn't like to be a part of that world. I think that it's spin and lies, and I don't want to build my life on that. And I'm able to see why it's exciting to achieve something, where you can see that "yes, our country" or other countries will get better because I've been part of doing this and this and this. But I simply think that, you know, being false, I don't want to be that at all… I know that…

Lisa: Hey, but that's also pretty exciting!

Tina: Yes, it's exciting, yes, but I wouldn't want any of that [GS 3, group interview].

As the excerpt shows, Tina and Lisa positioned themselves quite differently concerning how politicians tried to "spin" their political messages. Based on Tina's comments, it can be argued that *The Power Game* promoted political apathy by presenting the students with a simplified, cynical and "elitist" model of a parliamentary election (Børhaug, 2008). On the other hand, it can also be argued that the election scenario merely provided a "realistic" imitation of how election campaigns *do* require politicians to position themselves and perform rather tactically to outperform their political opponents and win the support of the voters. For Lisa, these tactical and performative aspects were precisely what made professional politics so "exciting". The main point here is not a moral evaluation of the two students' differing interpretations, which both may be "right". Instead, the point is to illustrate how the election scenario also allowed the students to *reflect critically* upon the different ideological and moral aspects of professional politics (Dewey, 1933).

8.4.3. Adapting knowledge

In addition to the different goals, roles and perspectives of *The Power Game*, several students emphasised how the educational role-play was particularly well suited for translating *theory into practice*. Thus, when interviewed about the subject-related outcomes of the game session, Michelle, gave this elaborate answer:

> I think that it was subject-related in the sense that suddenly you had to *use the knowledge* you believed was valuable. You had a whole lot of theory in the background that we had all been told about, and then suddenly, you're asked about something, and then you had to *adapt the knowledge*, you had to do something concrete. I also think that's one of the things that is important, in an academic sense, to learn to do. It's all very well and good if you know a whole lot of the underlying theory, but if you're *unable to use it* in real-life then it's *not worth much*, and I think that this was one of the things that was good about it, because we were able to *use some theory* we wouldn't otherwise know what to apply to (…). I think that it can be used as a *way to round off* a topic, if you have had a *long module*, for example, about ideology. Then you can use it to put all the knowledge you have acquired into practice, because that's what *blackboard instruction normally misses*, where you get a lot of knowledge but you can't use it for anything, and then I think that role playing is a good way to learn it, and now you have to use it and I think that was sort of inspiring [GS 2, group interview].

Michelle values the game experience for providing an "inspiring" opportunity to "use" and "adopt" her theoretical knowledge to the demands of the game scenario, which she is unable to do within the context of everyday classroom instruction. Put differently, Michelle clearly experienced *The Power*

Game as a *competence*-based form of teaching and learning, since the election scenario required a *context*-specific interplay between *action* and *knowledge* in relation to particular *demands* (cf. section 3.4). Several other students mentioned how their game knowledge was related to practice-oriented aspects of the election scenario. Thus, Jacob remarked that "you learn a lot when you try on your own, then you remember it better" [GS 5, group interview]. Christian made a similar point about how he would "learn better" through game-based teaching:

> Personally, I'm better at grasping things by carrying it out in practice and not by sitting down for six hours and reading a book or listening in front of the blackboard, because then I can't concentrate on the same things all the time. So, in this way, I concentrated the whole time. I was into it the whole time, and in this way, I learned it better [GS 4, group interview].

As the comments above indicate, the students had to be *scenario competent* in order to participate in and enact the knowledge forms, conflicts, roles, rules, goals and possible outcomes of *The Power Game* (cf. chapter 4). More specifically, they had to *inquire* into the assertions of the election scenario and relate their continual building and re-building of hypotheses to relevant knowledge aspects (Dewey, 1916; Barth, 2002). As Michelle mentioned, one of the primary prerequisites for playing *The Power Game* was the students' ability to "adapt knowledge" from one context to another. This meant that the students were expected to understand and adapt the different forms of knowledge of the election scenario in relation to the different demands, e.g. by finding key political issues through ideological and strategic positioning, performing and debating as politicians, asking critical questions, tactical negotiation with other political groups etc. Instead of being able to reproduce factual knowledge, the students had to understand how to use their *existing* knowledge and acquire *new* knowledge by "dramatically rehearsing" the possible outcomes of the election scenario (Dewey, 1922: 132-3).

In summary, the students generally praised *The Power Game* as a relevant and valuable way of learning about political ideologies, political communication and the tactical aspects of a parliamentary election. At the same time, several students agreed with Michael that educational games should only be used as a *supplement* to other forms of teaching – no more, no less. Thus, Michael thought that role-playing represented a "nice break" and not "something which you have every other week. It's something you could do once or twice a year" [GS 4, group interview]. Still, some students – like Sarah and Ramon – wished that the election scenario had lasted for "several days" or "a whole week". One of the main reasons why the students were fond of educational

games was that they provided *variation* to everyday forms of instruction. As Michelle argued, "You get fed up with doing the same thing if you do it for a longer period. So role playing, yes it's really fun and such, but it's just because you're fed up with sitting down and staring at the blackboard [*sic*]" [GS 2, group interview]. Similarly, Julia and Jakob argued that role-playing should not be used *too often* as it would stop being "exciting and new" [GS 5, group interview]. In this way, the students generally feared that role playing – and educational games as such – could lose some of their qualities if the phenomenon became an integrated part of *everyday* teaching and learning. Put differently, several of the students wished that the knowledge of educational gaming should retain its playful status.

8.5. Game competencies

This chapter has analysed and mapped how the students in this study *participated* in *The Power Game* through different patterns of social interaction, communication and inquiry. More specifically, it concentrated on three analytical themes, which all relate to the students' *debate practices*, i.e. how the students performed as politicians, how they communicated through different ideological voices, and how they experienced and valued different knowledge aspects of the election scenario. Like their five teachers, there was significant variation in the students' interpretation of the game sessions. Seen from a dramaturgical perspective, some students managed to give convincing performances as politicians, whereas other students found it difficult to keep "face", when presenting and debating in front of their classmates. Similarly, drawing upon positioning theory, the students' political performances have been categorised as a complex interplay between four different voices: reproductive, professionalised, personalised and/or parodic (cf. Table 8.1). Finally, a pragmatist perspective clarified how the students experienced different forms of knowledge, how they interpreted the different goals, roles and perspectives of the election scenario, and how their game-based knowledge production was valued in relation to the wider educational context of upper secondary school.

As the analysis has shown, the teachers and students evaluated the politicians' performances as being more or less *competent* in relation to the goals of *The Power Game* scenario. More concretely, the students who played politicians were expected to fulfil the multiple goals of the game through different *game competencies*, which referred to particular expectations and demands that emerged when playing the game. These competencies have been described from three different theoretical and analytical perspectives in terms of social competence, communicative

competence and scenario competence (cf. chapter 4). During the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews, the students' game competencies were also validated in relation to the knowledge criteria of the wider educational context. In this way, the students' game competencies were related to both the situated context of the game sessions and the broader educational context (cf. Table 3.2). In Table 8.2 below, I have summarised the *dual contexts* of the students' game competencies in relation to the analytical findings:

Competence	Game context	Educational context
Social competence	The ability to *adopt* and *perform* the role of a professional politician – i.e. by taking the role seriously and avoid losing "face".	The ability to understand the social knowledge game of parliamentary debate from *multiple perspectives*.
Communicative competence	The ability to *address an audience* using political discourse – i.e. by self-positioning through various ideological voices.	The ability to present and debate political arguments within *the dialogical space* of a public forum.
Scenario competence	The ability to *imagine, select* and *adapt* key political issues in order to influence possible outcomes of the election.	The ability to generate and critically explore *hypotheses* on the implications of political ideologies.

Table 8.2: The dual contexts of the students' game competencies in relation to *The Power Game*.

Following Barth's anthropology of knowledge, the boundaries between the students' game competencies – and their different aspects of knowledge – are not clearly deliminated as they are highly interdependent and mutually constitutive (Barth, 2002). Moreover, the context of the gaming encounters and the educational context were also – or at least were *designed* and *intended* to be – quite overlapping. Still, as the analytical findings of this chapter indicate, it makes sense to make an analytical division between the dual contexts of educational gaming. Thus, the row entitled "game context" represents a *situated* perspective on the actual game sessions, where the teachers and students validated particular game competencies in relation to the immediate activities and goals of the game scenario. Correspondingly, the "educational context" refers to the teachers and students' *generalised* views upon the politicians' competent performances, which were mainly elaborated through critical reflection during the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews.

As mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, this study has not tried to assess or measure the validity of the students' competencies in any narrow sense. Instead, the aim has been to *describe* how the students' participation generated a playful form of knowledge, which both referred to the situated demands of the game scenario and the demands of a wider educational context – i.e. the institutionalised knowledge criteria of the social studies curriculum or the overall aims of educating

competent citizens in upper secondary school (cf. chapter 3). In order to explore how *The Power Game* scenario was used to enact and validate a wide range of different game practices and game competencies, I have taken a discourse analytic approach to identify particular analytical themes and situations, which illustrate patterns of variation and invariation in the five game sessions by focusing on the emic (insider's) perspective of the social actors of the field (Gee & Green, 1998 cf. chapter 5). By following this open-ended approach, the analysis has tried to create a bottom-up perspective on the five game sessions instead of evaluating whether or how the students' fulfilled particular learning goals. Seen in retrospect, the aims of the election scenario – and other forms of educational games – are congruent with the overall aims of *citizenship education* (Jerome & Algarra, 2005; cf. chapter 3). However, since this cross-curricular theme was not an explicit part of the game design or the actual design interventions, I have not included this aspect directly in the analysis presented above. In this way, it is quite open to interpretation, whether or in what way *The Power Game* enabled the students to become more articulate, critical and/or reflective citizens – i.e. as when Lisa claimed that she and her classmates became better at speaking in front of an audience. In order to fully answer this difficult question of learning *transfer*, it would have been necessary to study whether or how Lisa and the other students were able to use their game competencies in other contexts (Rychen & Salganik, 2003).

Even though this chapter has focused on student participation in a single debate game, the consistency of the findings suggest that this description also could be extended to a more *general perspective* for understanding participation in other forms of educational games that are based on a dynamic interplay between social interaction, communication and critical inquiry. Obviously, this assumption presupposes that students are actually *able* and *willing* to enact and validate social competence, communicative competence and scenario competence in relation to other forms of educational gaming.[65] Thus, students' game competencies should always be *contextually* explored in relation to the assertions, modes of representation and social organisation of particular games within particular educational contexts.

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[65] Arguably, this competence perspective may have less relevance when analysing the use of simple game scenarios – i.e. "edutainment" computer games, where students are supposed to learn basic skills through behavioristic drill-and-practice in relation to fixed and pre-determined forms of knowledge (cf. research overview in Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006).

9. Playful knowledge – discussions and conclusions

The overall aim of this study has been to explore how educational games can be enacted and validated within educational settings. In order to pursue this aim, I conducted a series of design interventions with a particular game scenario – *The Power Game* – within five social studies classrooms. These design experiments were based on a series of assumptions about the educational value of teaching with and playing the game, which I later re-conceptualised in relation to a range of theoretical and analytical perspectives. Taken as a whole, these perspectives have been used to describe and understand the *playful knowledge* that emerges when teachers and students unfold an educational game scenario. As this term suggests, educational gaming creates a *tension* between the contingent and creative knowledge aspects of the emerging game scenario and the institutionalised knowledge aspects of an upper secondary school context.

The aim of this last chapter is to discuss and conclude on the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into eight sections. First, I summarise what I mean by taking an explorative approach to educational gaming. The next section presents my theoretical conclusions. In the third section, I reflect on how this study has combined the methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis. The next three sections present conclusions in relation to my three analytical perspectives on game design, game pedagogies and game competencies. Then, a discussion follows on the limitations of the research design and its conclusions, which discuss the validity of my findings. Based on this discussion, I make suggestions for possible future studies on educational gaming. Finally, I summarise the main findings of this study and argue why it is important to study the educational use of games.

9.1. Exploring games and education
When embarking upon this research project, I had no clear idea of how or why educational games could be used as a form of teaching and learning. In this sense, this study started out as an attempt to *explore the unknown*, which involved the process of designing *The Power Game*, establishing contact with DR Education as well as the participating schools, teachers and students. Since I had no prior experience with designing games or teaching in Danish upper secondary education, it was quite challenging to imagine whether or how games and education could be combined. This also explains why my design interventions were initially based on a set of rather loosely formulated assumptions on the educational value of games. In spite of my lack of a clear focus, both DR

Education, and the participating teachers and students still agreed to collaborate with me as they hoped to use the project for supporting their different agendas. Thus, DR Education aimed to distribute *The Power Game* along with other online learning resources for Danish upper secondary education, the teachers wished to develop different aspects of their teacher competencies, and the students viewed the election scenario as a welcome variation to their everyday classroom activities. In spite of these mutually supporting aims, I encountered several constraints during my fieldwork – especially in relation to the teachers' lack of time, DR Education's long-term production planning and the inflexibility of the schools' time schedules when it came to allocating one-day blocks of time for the game sessions.

Eventually, each of the five teachers found the necessary time to teach with the election scenario and participate in post-game interviews. Similarly, all the students in this study accepted *The Power Game* as a legitimate learning resource and way of teaching, even though the game scenario in many ways represented a break from more familiar school practices. Thus, based on the many positive responses from the participating teachers and students, it seems fair to say that the game "worked". Seen from this pragmatic perspective, my design interventions can be described as a "success" as the game *was* adopted and adapted by the social actors of the field. But the main focus of this study has not been an attempt to design and distribute a new educational game. Rather, my aim has been to describe and analyse the social phenomenon of educational gaming in order *to understand patterns of variation of how teachers and students enacted and validated a game scenario in relation to particular practices and knowledge aspects*.

In order to achieve this aim, I had to reconceptualise my initial (lack of) theoretical assumptions and then apply an outsider's perspective on the empirical data, which mainly consisted of video recordings from the five game sessions and post-game interviews. Hopefully, this analytical attempt to distance myself from my initial preconceptions of the game design has resulted in a nuanced perspective on educational gaming that focuses on how *meanings* emerged between social actors within the "messy" context of a classroom setting. In summary, then, the explorative approach taken here refers to the abductive process of *analytical discovery* used when studying the complex interplay between particular game elements, the teachers' pedagogical approaches and the students' game competencies. Thus, by combining different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, this study has tried to *generate new knowledge* on the meaning-making processes, practices and competencies of educational gaming.

9.2. Theoretical conclusions

As mentioned, the project started out with a set of relatively loosely formulated assumptions on the educational value of a particular game scenario on parliamentary elections. Thus, I assumed that the game design should be "realistic" in order to support the development of student competencies within the context of Danish upper secondary education. During my design interventions with *The Power Game*, I realised that my initial assumptions were inadequate when trying to understand the complex interplay between the *intentions* of the game design and how the design was *adapted* by the participating teachers and students. In order to analyse and contextualise my empirical data, I developed a more detailed theoretical and analytical framework for understanding the meaning-making processes of educational gaming, which I have summarised below.

First of all, the educational use of games should be understood in relation to how particular games are *enacted* in actual contexts. Thus, instead of playing "the definition game", and trying to define the essence or ontology of games, this thesis presents a more pragmatic approach to the study of actually playing educational games. More specifically, I have identified a series of *game elements* – scenarios, goals, outcomes, rules, roles, resources and dialogue – which are all relevant for understanding the interplay between a particular game design and the educational context in which it is enacted. These game elements also reflect how games and education represent different *traditions of knowledge*, which involve a range of partially overlapping assertions, modes of representation and social forms of organisation (Barth, 2002). Finally, both games and education create specific criteria for *validating* particular forms of knowledge. In this way, educational gaming represents a tension between two different traditions of knowledge which I have captured in the term *playful knowledge*.

In order to further describe and understand the different knowledge aspects of educational gaming, this thesis takes a sociocultural approach to playing, learning, thinking and meaning-making within *The Power Game* by combining the theoretical perspectives of pragmatism, dialogism and interactionism (cf. chapter 4). Thus, the assertions of the debate game are understood as a *scenario-based inquiry* where teachers and students try to unfold the election scenarios in relation to real and imagined outcomes. Similarly, the social organisation of the election scenario is understood as different forms of *social interaction* between the game participants – i.e. in terms of roles and generalised perspectives. Moreover, the representational modes of the game scenario are conceptualised as different aspects of *discourse*, which implies mutually responsive speaker-hearer relationships within the dialogical space of a parliamentary debate.

The main point here is that the educational use of *The Power Game* – and other games – only becomes meaningful in relation to particular forms of *agency*, i.e. how the election scenario is actually played out by the social actors of a gaming encounter. Thus, the inquiry, interaction and discourse of educational gaming should be understood in relation to concrete forms of *social action*. By studying and analysing how the game scenario was enacted, I have tried to avoid reducing games to essentialist worlds or deterministic designs for learning, which presuppose a rationalist model of social action. Obviously, the process of facilitating and playing *The Power Game* involved several constraints such as a limited time frame, narrowly defined goals (winning/losing) and more or less fixed rules of relevance and irrelevance. In this way, the interpretive framing of the game sessions was clearly dominated by *strategic* forms of interaction (Goffman, 1969). But the game sessions were also characterised by playful, creative and contingent forms of *inquiry*, since it was impossible – and ultimately undesirable – to fully predict the actual outcomes of the election scenario (Dewey, 1916). Similarly, by viewing the election scenario from a dialogical perspective, I analysed how the discursive positionings between the game participants involved centrifugal/centripetal tensions between open-ended (dialogical) and fixed (monological) forms of meaning (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Thus, any form of educational gaming involves negotiation of interpretations of what should and what should not count as *valid knowledge* within a particular game session. Combined, pragmatism, interactionism and dialogism represent three *complimentary perspectives*, which I have used to analytically foreground (and background) various aspects of educational gaming – both in relation to the knowledge aspects of the situated gaming encounter and the wider educational context.

9.3. Methodological approaches

In order to explore the meaning-making processes of educational gaming, this research project has combined the methodological approaches of design-based research and discourse analysis. Thus, the study started out as a design-based research project in order to generate data and refine my theoretical assumptions in relation to the design and re-design of *The Power Game*. More specifically, I documented five successive game sessions with video and sound recordings as well as post-game interviews with the teachers and selected groups of students. After observing how the game was enacted by teachers and students through complex patterns of social interaction, inquiry and discourse, I eventually abandoned the idea of being able to "test" a particular theory of educational gaming in any narrow sense. Instead, the design experiments in this study mostly served

to generate empirical data on the actual process of educational gaming as well as to gradually refine the design of *The Power Game* by removing or modifying game elements, which did not "work" according to the participating teachers and students. These design changes were related to pragmatic assumptions on how to validate the realism of the parliamentary election and the opportunities for combining the game website and the game activities.

In spite of the dictum "context matters", design-based researchers provide rather few detailed accounts of how actual designs are adapted and interpreted *in situ* within classroom contexts (Barab & Squire, 2004: 1). In that sense, design-based research may be blamed for a rather narrow or deterministic conception of "theory", which is claimed to be closely associated with the pragmatic *consequences* of actual design-in-use. At the same time, it is impossible to contextualise the design and use of learning resources without taking a broader range of theoretical and analytical perspectives into account that cannot necessarily be *directly* linked with concrete design features. Consequently, my pragmatist approach to design-based research has not served as a theoretical limit for making interpretive claims, but more as an empirical starting point for further analysis of the five game sessions.

In order to provide a more detailed understanding of the empirical data, I developed and explored my theoretical perspectives through a discourse analytic approach. More specifically, I primarily focused on the video recordings of the game sessions through an ethnographic perspective on discourse analysis (Gee & Green, 1998; Green et al., 2007). Thus, by articulating my research project as a *logic-of-inquiry*, I have been able to identify and describe a series of analytical themes that address different aspects of how the teachers and students enacted and validated domain-specific forms of knowledge, practices and competencies. Arguably, this discourse analytic approach represents an attempt to "test" the validity of my theoretical framework, which assumes that the meaning-making processes of *The Power Game* sessions can be understood as a dynamic interplay between inquiry, interaction and discourse. At the same time, my discourse analytic approach has wider and more holistic implications which extend beyond the study of the actual *design-in-use*. Thus, the analytical themes of this study not only focus on design features, but also involve broader perspectives on the dialogue, roles and experience of the game participants which are related to different knowledge aspects of their everyday school practices.

Design-based research and discourse analysis can be seen as *engineering* and *enlightenment* models of research, respectively, which involve different research aims and different assumptions of context and validity (Hammersley, 2004). However, as I have argued, the two

models can be *combined*, as they both assume a pragmatic relationship between knowledge and action which can be explored through abductive reasoning. Thus, design-based research and discourse analysis are able to provide valuable descriptions of how a particular game design "works" by analysing *in what way* the context of the design matters. In other words, the two methodologies can be seen as two complimentary approaches for simultaneously *constructing* and *de-constructing* different interpretations of how game scenarios create new contexts for learning, which must be understood in relation to both the design intentions and local practices. In this way, I have studied educational game sessions as the interplay of two overlapping traditions of knowledge, which involve the assertions, modes of representation and social organisation of gaming and schooling.

9.4. Exploring game design principles

As mentioned, the empirical data in this study was generated through design interventions, which primarily focused on how a "realistic" game design could be enacted and validated within the context of Danish upper secondary education. This involved five successive game sessions with a restricted amount of time for design changes and the development of theoretical assumptions between each of the game sessions. In spite of these limitations, the process of designing, using, and re-designing *The Power Game* addressed a series of design problems, which I have explored through two analytical themes termed *relevant realism* and *frame clashes*.

In summary, the response from teachers and students caused me to remove or modify questionable aspects of the game design to "improve" the relevance of the game scenario. During this iterative design cycle, I gradually reformulated my initial hypothesis on the educational value of creating a "realistic" game design. Thus, I developed the hypothesis that the design of educational games should only be based on *realistic means* insofar as the game elements address *relevant ends*, i.e. curricular goals, teacher goals and/or student goals. Based on a pragmatist line of reasoning, the educational *value* of particular design elements should always be determined in relation to their actual *use*. Even though this study concentrates on debate games as a particular game format, the discrepancy between design intentions, design-in-use and educational goals seems to address a more general problem of educational game design, including educational computer games (Linderoth, 2004; Harr et al., 2008).

In addition to studying different aspects of "realism" in *The Power Game*, this study also explored how incoherence between different game elements can create "frame clashes". Thus,

my design interventions were based on the hypothesis that the students' role-playing activities could be supported by viewing online video clips. However, as it turned out, the interpretive framing provided by the video clips was unable to support the framing of the students' activities *within* the context of the actual game sessions. As Martin argued, the video clips were mostly seen as "a waste of time" in relation to the situated goals, tasks and actions of the election scenario, e.g. when preparing key political issues. At the same time, the students from the fifth game session interpreted the video clips on the "Politics and Media" website as a valuable and meaningful learning resource since they were used as preparation *before* the game session. The frame clashes between the students' in-game activities and their reception of the video clips illustrate how *educational gaming is able to offer both opportunities and barriers for learning.* On the one hand, game scenarios are able to stage focused forms of interaction through spontaneous engrossment in relation to particular topics, for example, by playing roles within an election scenario (Goffman, 1961a). On the other hand, the focused framing of games also implies that many phenomena become backgrounded if they have little or no immediate relevance to the actual game activities.

In conclusion, then, this study has tried to show *how particular design choices involve decisions about which forms of knowledge should be foregrounded at the expense of others*. Thus, the design of educational games is ultimately a question of designing intended contexts for learning that should be able to support particular aspects of knowledge production according to certain relevance criteria. In this way, the design and re-design of *The Power Game* aimed to create a form of relevant realism which avoided frame clashes – or incoherence – between the game participants' experience of the different game elements. The design process was also based on a number of other design principles, which involved attempts to create meaningful roles and positions, facilitate emergent knowledge production, support critical thinking and ensure adaptability to different educational contexts and teaching practices. However, further work needs to be done in order to explore and possibly validate these design principles in relation to other educational game formats.

9.5. Exploring game pedagogy

As discussed in chapter 2, educational game research suffers from a strong tendency to neglect the crucial roles of teachers as game facilitators and gatekeepers for deciding how and why to teach with games. However, educational gaming *is* a form of teaching. Thus, it is highly problematic to overlook how teachers – as professional practioners – decide to include (or not include) educational games in their existing repertoire of teaching practices. In order to generate more knowledge on

educational gaming from a teacher perspective, the thesis explored how five social studies teachers chose to adopt and adapt *The Power Game* by staging, authorising, and evaluating five different game sessions. As my findings indicate, the teachers represented quite different *pedagogical approaches* to the same election scenario in terms of presenting the game, balancing discursive authority and taking different epistemological views on the students' knowledge production.

When faced with the task of *staging* the game scenario, the teachers had to transform their roles into that of game facilitators, which to some degree diverged from their everyday forms of (overt) instruction. More specifically, the teachers had to provide relevant information in relation to the students' roles and tasks and use their scenario competence to describe the different phases, rules, goals and possible outcomes of *The Power Game*. In summary, the five teachers interpreted this scenario-based learning resource quite differently. Thus, the teacher named Karen perceived the election scenario as a form of *scripted* or programmed instruction and felt quite challenged by the fixed phases, goals and tasks, which differed from the progression of her everyday classroom instruction. For Joan and Thomas, the game scenario was seen more as a playful form of *performance* which represented a welcome or entertaining variation to their everyday teaching practices. Finally, Marianne and Poul viewed the game as a scenario-based form of *exploration*, and focused upon the students' opportunities for building and exploring hypotheses within the context of the parliamentary election.

Moreover, the teachers also chose different approaches for *authorising* the game sessions, especially when articulating and interpreting the students' game experience during the end-of-game discussions. As my findings indicate, Karen, who focused upon *The Power Game* as a fixed script, tended to *play against* the reflective goals of the game by neglecting the students' game experience and imposing her own version of the "truth" during the end-of-game discussion. Conversely, the two teachers who viewed the game as an performance simply *played along* with the game goals of the election scenario and refrained from challenging the validity of the game result or the students' interpretation of the election scenario. In one game session, Thomas simply authorised the game as a harmless form of play. Similarly, Joan authorised the entertaining aspects of the game. In the post-game interview, Joan further described the game as a relevant form of democratic *Bildung*. However, she did not articulate this subject-related perspective when discussing the game results with the students. The third group of teachers, who mainly viewed the election scenario as a scenario-based inquiry, tried to *re-negotiate* (or re-delegate) their discursive authority within the dialogical game space. Thus, instead of playing against or playing along with the election scenario,

Marianne and Poul tried to compare and critically discuss the students' different interpretations of the same game session. In this way, they used the end-of-game sessions to support collaborative knowledge building through a shared form of inquiry.

Furthermore, the five teachers in this study also represented three different criteria for validating the students' game knowledge which can be described as three different epistemologies: *realism, constructivism* and *pragmatism*. From a realist perspective, the game represented a pre-determined script that could reproduce knowledge to be evaluated in relation to well-established truths or facts about parliamentary elections. In this way, the students' game experience was evaluated in relation to a realist tension between "right" and "wrong" knowledge. In contrast, when seen from a constructivist perspective, the game represented an open-ended performance or an end in itself. Here, the knowledge of the game was mostly seen as a "fun" means of self-expression and only marginally linked to the "serious" knowledge forms of the curriculum. Finally, from a pragmatist perspective, *The Power Game* represented a scenario-based form of inquiry, which allowed students to continually construct and re-construct hypotheses on political ideologies and the rhetorical forms of appeal by translating theory into practice. In this way, the students' game knowledge was not reduced to dichotomies between right/wrong or fun/serious, but was seen as outcomes of hypothesis building that was open to differing interpretations and continual revisions – both in relation to real-life phenomena and various curricular goals.

As mentioned, the three different pedagogical approaches presented above should not be seen as an attempt to categorise the five teachers according to particular teaching styles or representative ideal types. Thus, it can be argued that the teachers in this study *all* used different aspects of the three approaches when teaching *The Power Game*. Instead, my aim has been to identify some of the *pedagogical tensions* that arise when teaching with game scenarios which enable playful knowledge that involve both opportunities and barriers for learning. In this way, the empirical findings should be seen an attempt to explore the outline of a *dialogical game pedagogy* (cf. chapter 3). Thus, in the most general sense, the educational use of games inevitably creates centrifugal/centripetal tensions between the logics of a given game scenario and different teachers' pedagogical approaches. Moreover, these tensions are related to both the discursive *authority* and the ideological *voices* of the dialogical game space, which involves a dynamic transformation between open-ended and more fixed forms of meaning. Obviously, this dialogical perspective on game pedagogy is particularly relevant when trying to understand the educational use of *debate games*, which are based on explicit dialogue between game participants. However, I would argue

that this dialogical perspective might have relevance when trying to understand *any* form of educational gaming, especially if the meaning-making processes of teaching and playing games are viewed in relation to a wider educational context, e.g. when discussing the game results and comparing the forms of knowledge of the game with curricular goals and real-world phenomena.

9.6. Exploring game competencies

In addition to a design perspective and a teacher perspective, this thesis has also explored how *The Power Game* was enacted and validated as seen from a student perspective. More specifically, I focused on the *debate practices* of the students who played politicians in the election scenario, i.e. how they performed their roles, how they positioned themselves through ideological voices, and how they reflected upon the different knowledge aspects of the election scenario. The fixed roles, rules, goals, resources and interpretive framing of the game sessions clearly differed from everyday learning activities. Thus, in order to purposely adapt the available knowledge of the election scenario within the limited time frame, the students had to think both strategically and creatively. At the same time, several of the game activities could be related to familiar classroom practices, e.g. when carrying out group work and giving presentations. As a result of this overlap between the game practices and existing pedagogical practices, the students' game activities can also be described as a staged and focused form of problem-based project work, which involved creative and strategic decision-making in relation to their verbal presentations .

Furthermore, this study describes how the students' debate practices were enacted and validated when analysed from a competence perspective. As the analysis indicates, the students' game competencies must be understood in relation to both the situated demands of the game encounter and the different demands of the wider educational context. Thus, the students' *social competence* was related to both their ability to perform their individual roles within the game and their ability to reflect upon the strategic knowledge game of parliamentary debate from multiple generalised perspectives. Similarly, the students' *communicative competence* was related to both the task of addressing a particular classroom audience and to the wider aspects of debating politics within the dialogical space of a public forum. Finally, the students' *scenario competence* represented both their situated ability to imagine possible outcomes of the election scenario and their overall ability to critically explore hypotheses on the implications of political ideologies.

When interviewed after the game sessions, both teachers and students often responded that the game sessions represented an engaging, relevant and valuable way of "doing" social studies

education. At the same time, there was a wide variety of different interpretations of *what knowledge* the students produced when playing the election scenario and *what status* this knowledge should be granted. Initially, this project aimed to explore how the election scenario could be used in combination with Danish and social studies in upper secondary education. Due to the logistical constraints of my fieldwork, I eventually decided to limit my focus to social studies. However, when comparing the five teachers' interpretation of the game sessions, it was quite clear that the knowledge forms of the election scenario extended far beyond the scope of the social studies curriculum. Thus, even though *The Power Game* was enacted and validated as a form of social studies education, the knowledge forms of the game were also highly relevant for other school subjects such as mother tongue education, history and/or media studies. As Marianne remarked, the election scenario might be even more relevant in relation to *cross disciplinary* forms of teaching as the problem-based scenario was able to transcend artificial divisions between the school subjects. In this way, the open-ended game scenario of *The Power Game* represented an *epistemological model* of a real-world phenomenon (political practices in a Danish parliamentary elections), which could be adapted and interpreted in relation to a variety of subjects and curricular aims.

Consequently, the students' game competencies can also be understood as a form of *citizenship education*, which is a cross-curricular theme in the Danish educational system (cf. chapter 3). According to Jerome and Algarra, the pedagogical aims of debating are closely linked to the aims of citizenship education. In summary, debate games may be used to develop students' argumentation skills, their ability to select and use relevant information, their self-confidence in relation to verbal presentations, and their critical understanding of selected topics (Jerome & Algarra, 2005: 495-497). These claims correspond well with my findings on how the students participated in *The Power Game*. Thus, the students' had to find and formulate key political issues, be able to perform and persuade their classmates through political arguments and view their own and the others' ideological positions from multiple strategic and critical perspectives. Moreover, it can be argued that the students' experience of the election scenario is closely linked with their personal beliefs and their knowledge of what it means to be a *citizen* in a democratic society. As Sara remarked in the post-game interview, "I guess you discuss politics every day without knowing it" (cf. section 8.4.2). In this way, the game sessions provided a formalised dialogical space in which the students were allowed to build a *public voice* by experimenting with different ideological positions and by viewing their assigned roles through an outsider's perspective. It is questionable whether *The Power Game* allowed the students to become more democratic citizens in any simple

or direct sense. Rather, based upon my observations and post-game interviews, I would argue that the game sessions allowed the students to become more *experienced* and more *reflective* citizens – i.e. in relation to the strategic knowledge game of election campaigns, the exploration of political ideologies, and the dialogical space of parliamentary debate.

Even though the election scenario was related to a wide variety of different curricular topics and aims, the teachers and students were still somewhat ambivalent toward the *status* of the knowledge produced when playing *The Power Game*. As Michael noted, the game mostly resulted in "soft" and not so much in "hard" learning outcomes (cf. section 8.4.2). Several other students and teachers also had difficulties with matching the game knowledge with the demands of the upper secondary school context. In this way, the students' game competencies and the unpredictable outcomes of the game sessions represented a creative or *playful* form of knowledge, which was both seen as valuable but also difficult to validate through existing knowledge criteria.

9.7. Limitations of the research design and the findings

Based on these broad conclusions, I will now discuss the *trustworthiness* of the empirical findings presented in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; cf. chapter 5). In the empirical chapters, I aimed for validity by triangulating different sources of data and different analytical perspectives. In this way, I tried to provide a sense of diversity within the study which implies that the social phenomenon of educational gaming is viewed as a construct of different perceptions.

An important aspect of trustworthiness or validity concerns the *internal generalisability* of the study (Schrøder et al., 2003). As mentioned, the five game sessions described in this study were comparable as the five teachers had similar backgrounds and they all adapted the same game instructions within similar educational settings. From the outset, I assumed selecting Redville School and Hillsdale School might generate significant patterns of variation in relation to the schools' different ICT profiles and these students' different sociocultural backgrounds. However, these two parameters did not have significant influence when exploring how the game was enacted and validated within the five classroom settings. Thus, the patterns of variation between each of the five game sessions were more significant than the variation between the two schools. At the same time, there was a clear consistency when comparing the five game sessions, as they all followed the same game phases – including teacher introductions, the students' debate practices and the end-of-game discussions. Based on these similar pre-conditions and processes for conducting the five game sessions, I organised the empirical data in relation to both a *vertical*

structure (the progression of the game sessions) and a *horizontal structure* (comparisons between the five game sessions). In this way, the analysis has explored recurring patterns of *social action* within and across the game sessions – as seen from a design perspective, a teacher perspective and a student perspective. As the analysis documented, the game sessions generated significant patterns of both variation and invariation, which have been studied through particular *analytical themes* – i.e. in relation to the students' political performances and the teachers' pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, this study has also argued how the analytical findings have *external generalisability*. Thus, even though this study has focused upon the use of a particular debate game on parliamentary elections within the context of Danish upper secondary education, I will argue that the findings presented here might have general relevance when designing, teaching, playing and/or researching educational games. Myriads of different educational games exist that may be used for an even more staggering array of different educational aims. However, in this thesis, I have tried to avoid locating the "essence" of debate games or attempting to measure how well they function as rationalist "techniques" for learning. Instead, I have viewed educational gaming as a dynamic interplay between two traditions of knowledge, namely games and education, which can be studied in relation to different forms of inquiry (assertions), interaction (social organisation) and discourse (modes of representation). By taking this *contextualised* approach, it becomes possible to relate the findings presented here on design principles, game pedagogy and game competencies to how other game formats may be adapted in other educational settings. Similarly, the theoretical framework presented in this study may also be re-adapted to other studies of educational gaming. However, the validity of these claims needs to be explored through further empirical studies.

When generalising the findings of this study to other game formats and other educational practices, I run the risk of contradicting myself. Thus, this thesis should – and hopefully can – be read as an argument for studying how particular educational games are enacted and validated within particular educational *contexts*. To give an example, consider how the social studies teachers responded to *The Power Game*. The election scenario was not just presented to them as an educational game but as a *role play*. This game label was clearly not insignificant as it triggered particular pre-conceptions and genre expectations. As an example, Thomas viewed role-playing as a harmless and entertaining form of play. Poul, on the other hand, was initially a bit too shy to adapt this staged form of teaching until he learned more about how the game was actually played from his colleagues. Having observed and analysed how the game was enacted, I re-labelled the election scenario as a debate game in order to emphasise the importance of the students' debate

practices. In contrast to the English speaking world, debate games represent a relatively unfamiliar phenomenon within a Danish educational context. Thus, it is quite likely that the teachers would have reacted differently to the election scenario, if I had presented it by using this rather unknown label instead. A similar point could be made about the subject-related content of *The Power Game*, which I initially related to social studies education. However, as mentioned above, the game scenario can also be related to the overall aims of citizenship education, which is a cross-curricular theme in the Danish educational system. In this way, citizenship education is – in principle – omnipresent, which also makes it difficult to *identify* as a subject-related topic within the curriculum. Thus, if I had presented the game as a form of citizenship education it is quite likely that some teachers – such as Joan, who perceived the game as a form of democratic *Bildung* – would have been attracted by this dimension of the election scenario. Similarly, some of the other teachers might have regarded this cross-curricular aspect as being only marginally relevant.

As these examples indicate, *The Power Game* – or any other type of educational game for that matter – is not simply a transparent learning resource, which automatically "fits in" with the existing genre expectations and local practices of a given educational context. The introduction of new types of learning resources always involves translations, which imply both *change* and *continuity* in relation to existing pedagogical practices. Thus, one of the limitations of this study is that I only studied how the five teachers used the game as a standalone experiment. As the post-game interviews suggest, it seems quite likely that the teachers would have chosen somewhat different approaches to the election scenario if they had had prior experience with *The Power Game* or similar forms of debate games. In this way, Karen would probably have felt less "programmed" by *The Power Game*, while Joan would have been less fascinated by the students' "entertaining" performances and explicitly articulated the subject-related aspects of the game session. Even though the actual outcome of the activities in the game scenario would remain contingent when played over and over again with different classes, the teachers would be able to develop a far more specific frame of reference, which could prepare them for what should happen *before* the game and how to orchestrate the discussion *after* the game. In this way, the game scenario would also become adapted as a more legitimate or "naturalised" part of the teachers' everyday teaching practices. The point here is that the meaning-making processes of educational gaming should not be reduced to purely *situated* phenomena. Rather, the actual process of playing educational games should be understood in relation to the playful tension between different knowledge traditions, which imply

different validation criteria – some of which are embedded in the game design, some of which only makes sense when related to the existing values, norms and ideologies of an educational setting.

A further problem of this study is related the methodological approach of design-based research, which represents a highly and – in my opinion – *too* ambitious research agenda, as it aims for the development of educational designs, close collaboration with educators and theory-building on the basis of interventions in classroom contexts. Theoretically, these goals can be achieved, but it is quite telling that design-based research often aims for large-scale projects that run for several years and requires "intensive and long-term collaboration" (Herrington et al., 2007: 4089). Seen in retrospect, it was quite demanding to try to meet the goals of design-based research as a single researcher-designer working within the scope of a PhD programme.[66] As mentioned, it was particularly difficult to ensure a close integration between iterative processes of design and re-design, detailed data analysis, and the refinement of theoretical hypotheses to be explored in subsequent interventions. Thus, the design interventions in this study only involved partial integration between the pragmatic interplay of design, use and re-design of *The Power Game* scenario, and the more detailed discourse analysis of the participants' meaning-making processes conducted after the completion of the five game sessions. One explanation for this lack of integration between the different aims of my design interventions is that educational games pose particular problems for conducting design-based research. Thus, it is difficult to "engineer" successive design experiments with the same game within a classroom context as games often represent *stand-alone phenomena*, which are rarely used several times with the same class. In this way, it is difficult to conduct iterative design experiments with a particular game design within the same school environment.

As argued, my combined methodological approach of design-based research and discourse analysis does not necessarily invalidate the analytical approaches of my study. Rather, the combined approach simply generates different *analytical contexts* for the empirical findings in terms of design aspects and discourse analytic aspects, which are both related to my research question and theoretical assumptions. Two conclusions can be made from this. On the one hand, this study might have benefited from a pilot study of *The Power Game*, which would have enabled me to refine my initial theoretical and empirical focus before conducting further design experiments. On the other hand, the aims and scope of design-based research could – and probably should – be formulated in less ambitious, more pragmatic terms, which also address small-scale

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[66] This issue was also discussed by Andrea diSessa and the participants of the PhD course "Introducing Design-Based Research", Learning Lab Denmark, Copenhagen, 21-22 March 2005.

projects that do not necessarily involve entire teams of researchers, designers and teachers working together over the span of several years.

9.8. Suggestions for future studies

There are several aspects of educational gaming which I have only briefly mentioned in this study that deserve further exploration. In the following, I focus on five areas of research, which I hope to explore in my future work on educational games. These include: 1) assessment and educational gaming, 2) comparative studies of how teachers adapt educational games, 3) the relationship between educational gaming and critical reflection, 4) games and citizenship education, and 5) comparative studies of the use of different educational game designs.

One of the recurrent topics of educational game research is the question of *assessment* – what, how and/or why do students learn from playing games (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006; Shaffer, 2008). As mentioned in chapter 2, this study does not attempt to provide any formal assessment of learning outcomes from playing *The Power Game*. Instead, I identified, described and analysed how particular student competencies emerged when playing the election scenario and how these competencies were validated by teachers and students – both within the actual game encounter and in relation to a wider educational context. Thus, I have not tried to assess the educational value of the game in relation to fixed curricular goals, but rather to explore the *playful knowledge* of educational gaming which can involve dynamic tensions between the different traditions of knowledge that emerge when teaching and playing games.

As noted in chapter 2, assessment drives instruction. Since this study involved a series of open-ended design experiments with a lack of clear focus, all the teachers decided that the students' participation in the game sessions would not "count" in relation to their grades (cf. example in section 7.2.2). In this way, the game scenario clearly represented a *break* from the everyday focus on grades, which is a defining aspect when "playing the game" as a student in Danish upper secondary education (Kvale, 1980; cf. Shaffer, 2006). This decision had both advantages and disadvantages in relation to the aims of this study. On the one hand, the lack of focus on grades made it easier for the teachers and students to accept the election scenario, which represented a relatively unfamiliar form of teaching and learning. Obviously, this acceptance also made it easier for me as designer and researcher to conduct the design interventions. Thus, it is questionable whether all the teachers would have agreed to teach with the game, if I had insisted that the students' participation *had* to be graded.

On the other hand, the lack of formal assessment of the game sessions also implied a lesser degree of "seriousness" than everyday teaching. Thus, it was quite telling that some teachers and students were close to skipping the end-of-game discussions and wanted to simply finish off the game sessions after a new government had been constituted. Moreover, it seems likely that both teachers and students would have interpreted the game sessions quite differently if it had involved a more formal form of assessment than the end-of-game discussions. As other game researchers have noted, one way to evaluate and assess students' game knowledge is through written assignments that relate to the subject-related topics of the game scenario – i.e. political ideologies, parliamentary elections, political communication, rhetoric etc. (cf. Bernstein & Meizlish, 2003). This written way of responding to and reflecting on the game experience would make it possible to further explore how the students' game experience was validated in a wider educational context. Written forms of knowledge tend to have a higher or more legitimate status within educational systems than verbal forms of knowledge, which are often regarded as elusive and difficult to assess (Haugsted, 2004; Alexander, 2008). Thus, if the students were asked to write an assignment in extension of the game sessions, it is quite likely that both teachers and students would have interpreted the knowledge aspects of the game sessions more "seriously". Written assignments would also make it possible to compare and analyse the validity of the students' game knowledge in relation to other assignments as they represent a rather familiar task or discursive *genre* within an upper secondary school context (Ongstad, 2002; Smidt, 2002).

More importantly, there is a need for further work on why and how *teachers* choose to teach with games – i.e. through *comparative studies* of how teachers adapt educational games. So far, there is a great lack of knowledge on whether or how teachers decide to teach with games. This is a bit of a paradox since it seems rather unlikely that educational games will ever be taken "seriously" to the degree that many educational game researchers and designers hope for, *unless* the crucial role of the teacher in actually adapting the games is addressed more seriously.[67] As Goffman writes, the "problem of too-serious or not-serious-enough arises in gaming encounters not because a game is involved but because an encounter is involved" (Goffman, 1961a: 63; cf. chapter 4). Similarly, the actual *encounter* between teachers and students is highly important when enacting and validating educational games. One way to explore how teachers adapt educational games is to analyse and compare teacher practices across different schools as well as different countries with

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[67] The attempt to legitimise games as a "serious" form of education is expressed most clearly in the Serious Games community, which both includes game designers and game researchers, cf. www.seriousgames.org.

varying curricular structures.[68] For a number of historical and political reasons, different school systems are based on different criteria for validating knowledge (Barth, 2002). Thus, in comparison with other countries, it may be argued that Danish teachers have a relatively high degree of freedom as they are allowed to independently choose particular teaching methods and learning resources in order to fulfil curricular goals (Nordenbo, 1997). The time schedules at Hillsdale School and Redville School were quite inflexible in the attempt to allocate a whole day for playing *The Power Game*. In spite of such "logistic" difficulties at the local level, it can still be argued that Danish formal education is more geared toward the open-endedness and contingent outcomes of educational games than e.g. the American school system, which is more based on fixed curricula and standardised testing (Gee & Shaffer, 2005; cf. chapter 2). Thus, the educational use of games should also be understood in relation to different teaching traditions and national school systems.

A third direction for future studies concerns *the relationship between educational gaming and critical reflection*. In this study, I have mostly focused upon the teachers and students' reflection upon their game experience in relation to the end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews. Based on my empirical findings, I argue that the teachers play a crucial role when finishing off a game session as they are able to articulate and support the students' reflection upon the domain-specific outcomes of educational games. In this way, the teacher may be able to use his or her *outsider's perspective* upon the game session to build a bridge between the students' game knowledge and other forms of knowledge, for example, real-world events, curricular themes, personal experiences etc. This point has been made several times by other educational game researchers, especially by contributors to the *Journal of Simulation & Gaming* (cf. Klabbers, 2006). Still, end-of-game discussions and post-game interviews only represent two points of entry, among others, when trying to understand how the students' reflected upon their inquiry into the game scenario.

When observing the initial phases of the five game sessions, the students' activities and engagement increased to a significantly high level while they were working together in groups and preparing their key political issues. As a response to the difficulties of selecting a focus for my group observations, I eventually decided to limit my focus to the students' debate practices, which addressed the classroom at a collective level. Still, it would be interesting to conduct a more detailed study of how the students in this study – or in a similar study – worked together when researching websites to construct their arguments as part of a debate game setting. Based on

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[68] This is the aim of my current research project, which is part of a larger research project called "Serious Games on a Global Market Place". For more information, cf. www.dpu.dk/site.aspx?p=11102.

existing work on computer-supported group cognition and dialogical inquiry, it is reasonable to assume that the *quality* of the students' collaborative talk had a significant influence on how they were able to represent, present and debate their political arguments in the debates that followed (Stahl, 2006; Wegerif, 2007). Moreover, the students' *roles* and *positions* also influenced how they framed their shared inquiry – both in relation to their everyday roles/positions and their assigned roles/positions as e.g. a politician for the National Party. However, it would be necessary to conduct a more detailed analysis of such group conversations and lines of inquiry in order to further explore the dialogical phenomenon of "building" arguments within a game context.

The relationship between games and critical reflection is closely linked to a fourth area of research, which I hope to explore in the future, namely the relationship between *games and citizenship education*. As mentioned, it was only after reconceptualising the initial assumptions and analytical approach of my design interventions that I "discovered" how the educational aims of *The Power Game* – and other debate games – were closely related to the overall aims of citizenship education (Jerome & Algarra, 2005). Since this cross-curricular theme was not explicitly articulated in the empirical data by me, the teachers or the students, I decided not to integrate this perspective directly in my empirical analyses. In this way, this study has tried to ensure a "bottom-up" approach to my analytical findings by viewing the game sessions from an emic (insider's) perspective (Gee & Green, 1998). Still, as the discussion of my analytical findings suggest, there are obvious reasons for exploring the relationship between games and citizenship education in relation to the educational use of debate games and other "opinion-based games". In a current research project that I am simultaneously working on, I am studying the educational use of *Global Conflicts: Latin America*, which is a 3D adventure/role-playing educational computer game, where students-as-players are able to explore various aspects of "global conflicts" in Latin America – i.e. in relation to human rights, corruption, pollution etc. – through the perspective of a journalist avatar.[69] There are obvious differences between performing as a politician in front of a classroom audience in *The Power Game* and "interviewing" non-player characters in a 3D-based computer game environment, as the games involve different knowledge aspects – in terms of assertions, modes of representation and social organisation. Still, there are also interesting similarities between these game formats as they both demand players/students to explore hypotheses by finding information that can be used to build arguments in order to pursue particular strategic and ideological goals. In this way, both game formats can be related to the cross-curricular aims of citizenship education.

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[69] For more information on *Global Conflicts: Latin America*, www.globalconflicts.eu/gcla.

As this example suggests, I also believe that future work needs to be done on the *comparison of different educational game designs*. So far, educational game research has suffered from a certain tendency to create "research ghettoes" based on particular game designs – i.e. debate games, educational computer games, mobile learning games, business simulations etc. (Harr et al., 2008). Thus, it is rather common that educational game researchers are directly or indirectly involved in the actual design of the game that they study, which makes them relatively biased toward other game designs than their own. Obviously, this is also the case in this study of a particular debate game, which I have almost exclusively designed on my own. The advantage of being a designer-researcher is that it becomes easier to continually adjust the game design when conducting design experiments as this approach provides important insight into the relationship between the *intentions* of the game design, the design *choices* and the actual *use* of the design.

At the same time, this design-based approach to educational research also has several disadvantages. Most importantly, the designer-researcher easily becomes focused on particular design features instead of describing the *relationship* between the game design (means) and the educational goals (ends) in the actual context in which it is intended to be used. Thus, my design process was quite focused on designing a realistic game, an assumption which I later had to modify to meet the teachers and students' relevance criteria. Moreover, the process of designing and re-designing a game is often quite demanding, which also explains why my design actual interventions mostly focused upon making the design "work" instead of generating theoretical perspectives. In this way, it was only after finishing my design interventions that I was able to achieve an *outsider's perspective* on the actual design of *The Power Game* and compare it with other forms of debate games. This process involved the transcription and analysis of the empirical data and the gradual development of a theoretical framework for conceptualising the analytical themes. In this way, my initial focus upon the intentions and design of the election scenario became a barrier when trying to *understand* how the game was actually played by the participating teachers and students.

In summary, comparative studies of educational games offer a valuable way to overcome the strong design bias of educational game research. Thus, by comparing patterns of variation and invariation between the ways different games – and different game formats – are enacted, it may be possible to formulate more general perspectives on game design, game pedagogy and game competencies. Moreover, comparative studies of educational games may also generate knowledge about how particular games are perceived within different educational contexts – i.e. in relation to the varying epistemologies of different school subjects.

9.9. Why games and education?

This thesis has explored the *whats* and *hows* of educational gaming by analysing a series of design interventions. Thus, I have described the main features ("the what") of *The Power Game* as a debate game that has several educational aims – or assertions – in common with the overall objectives of citizenship education. Moreover, I have also described how the game was enacted and validated ("the how") as seen from a design perspective, a teacher perspective, and a student perspective. By focusing both on opportunities and barriers in relation to these perspectives, this thesis has tried to provide a nuanced understanding of educational gaming. Thus, the aim has been to contribute with detailed descriptions and to *generate new knowledge* on the actual processes involved in designing, teaching and learning through educational games.

This still leaves an important question unanswered, namely *why* we should teach and learn through games. So far, educational game research has been dominated by attempts to celebrate the assumed learning potential of games, which are rarely backed by empirically grounded research (Sefton-Green, 2006). Thus, much educational game research offers a wish list of how games *might* be able to revolutionise teaching, schooling and learning (Gee, 2003; Shaffer, 2006). In my opinion, many pragmatic reasons exist to be wary of claims that are too optimistic about educational games as such claims often seem quite speculative in comparison with the existing practices and constraints of educational systems. On the other hand, a focus that is too sceptical may also end up reducing educational games to mere hype without actually exploring their possibilities and barriers for learning within a school context. In order to overcome this futile dichotomy between being either "pro" or "con", educational game researchers need to conduct more detailed studies of how actual games are enacted and validated in relation to particular knowledge aspects and local practices. Moreover, we also need to address more general questions about *why we should educate* and how this question can be related to the educational use of games. As mentioned in chapter 2, I agree with Dewey's philosophical claim that education has no overall aim but more education (Dewey, 1916). This means that education represents an on-going process, which implies preparedness for change. At the same time, game designers, teachers, parents, policy makers, researchers, journalists and students are constantly using games as a means for pursuing various educational agendas. Thus, any discussion of education – including the educational use of games – can ultimately be seen as discussion of *ends* and *means*. In this way, the aim of educational game research is to *qualify* why particular ends and means are more desirable than others.

In summary, this thesis has identified a number of theoretical reasons why it is desirable to combine games and education which extends commonsensical notions of how game may create "fun", "realistic" and/or "authentic" learning. Thus, interactionism, pragmatism and dialogism represent three theoretical perspectives, described as follows, on why it is possible to combine the *knowledge production of games* with the *knowledge production of education*:

- Seen from an *interactionist* perspective, game scenarios may provide players/students with a more complex understanding of social phenomena through role-taking and by applying multiple perspectives.
- From a *pragmatist* perspective, game scenarios can be used to enact inquiry-based learning environments where players/students are able to construct and re-construct hypotheses in relation to relevant and meaningful situations.
- Finally, from a *dialogical* perspective, games are able to create dialogical spaces that allow players/students to position themselves and create mutually responsive understanding through particular ideological voices.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, I have argued how *The Power Game* – and other examples of educational games – can be adopted and adapted as a valuable form of teaching and learning. Thus, my analytical findings indicate that the game scenario represented:

- An *engaging* way to teach and learn through *active participation*;
- A *focused* and *staged* way of doing problem-based project work that involves *creative* and *strategic* decision making in relation to *verbal presentations*;
- An opportunity for translating *theory into practice* in relation to domain-specific knowledge;
- A *competence-oriented form of education* that not only focused upon the pre-defined knowledge of the curriculum, but also on how the students' knowledge could and should be *used* in relation to particular demands – i.e. as defined by individual school subjects, cross disciplinary themes and other demands which might be exterior to the school context; and
- A relevant *supplement* to existing learning resources and ways of teaching.

These findings challenge the prevalent dichotomies between "fun" versus "serious" and "right" versus "wrong" forms of knowledge, which are often found in stereotypic conceptions of

educational games. Thus, instead of viewing educational games as the "progressive" alternative to "traditional" forms of teaching, I argue that educational gaming can both *challenge* and create a sense of *continuity* with teachers and students' existing pedagogical practices.

Not surprisingly, my findings also show wide variation between the individual teachers and students' experience of the game sessions. Based on this rich variation, I argue that is impossible to fully predict or determine the interplay between the *intentions* of a game design and the actual *use* of the participating teachers and students which is based on prior knowledge and genre expectations. Simply put, if the outcome of a game was fully predictable, it would no longer be a game! The same claim could be made for education. In this way, the educational use of games reflects *contingency* as a fundamental condition of modern society which implies that any form of knowledge – whether it can be described as assertions, modes of representation or social organisation – is potentially open to further inquiry and validation. From this perspective, the *playful knowledge* of educational gaming represents a tension-filled encounter between game design, teacher and students, which may be used to pose questions and provide answers in a continual attempt to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the world as we know it.

Dansk resumé

Viden i spil: et eksplorativt studie af spil i undervisningen

Baggrund og formål

Gennem de seneste fem-ti år er der blevet talt og skrevet meget om brugen af spil i undervisningen – hvad enten det gælder læringscomputerspil, simulationer, rollespil, debatspil osv. På trods af den stigende forskningsmæssige interesse for emnet, så findes der fortsat kun relativt få detaljerede empiriske studier af, hvordan spilscenarier kan anvendes inden for en undervisningsmæssig kontekst (jf. Magnussen, 2008). I stedet har spilforskningen haft en tendens til enten at udkrystallisere de universelle "essenser" af spilfænomener eller måle "effekten" af spilbaserede læreprocesser. Der mangler således mere praksisnær viden om, hvordan spil kan *udfoldes* som læringsressource og som undervisningsform. På den baggrund forsøger denne afhandling at gentænke anvendelsen af spil i undervisningen gennem en *kontekstualiseret* tilgang, der trækker på sociokulturelle forståelser af betydningsprocesserne i spilbaseret undervisning. Mere specifikt kan spil i undervisningen ses som et socialt fænomen, hvor det dynamiske samspil mellem forskellige aktører – dvs. spildesign, lærer og elever – indebærer løbende forhandlinger og fortolkninger af gensidigt konstituerede scenarier, diskurser og interaktionsformer.

Med udgangspunkt i Frederik Barths vidensantropologi kan spilfænomener og undervisningspraksisser anskues som to forskellige *videnstraditioner*, der hver især bygger på lokalt forankrede aspekter af viden i form af påstande, repræsentationsformer og social organisering (Barth, 2002). Spilbaseret undervisning forudsætter at vidensaspekterne i spil og undervisning kan kombineres. Men ud fra en handlingsorienteret forståelse af viden er koblingen mellem spil- og undervisningsforløb ikke en selvfølge, eftersom der er tale om et overlap mellem to domæner, hvis betydningsprocesser ikke kan "styres" i enkel forstand. Spilbaseret undervisning kræver derfor at intentionerne i et spilscenarie kan omformes meningsfuldt af lærere og elever for at få gyldighed i forhold til specifikke *valideringskriterier*, der både er en integreret del af spildesignet og spildeltagernes lokale praksisser. Afhandlingen bygger således på den tese, at brugen af spil i undervisningen skaber en legende og uforudsigelig spænding mellem forskellige måder at frembringe og validere viden. Det betyder på den ene side, at spilscenarier giver deltagere mulighed for at udforske hypoteser gennem engagerende, kreative og strategiske beslutningsprocesser i

forhold til relativt fastlagte mål, roller, rammer og spilressourcer. På den anden side, så skaber spilbaserede vidensformer per definition uforudsigelige udfald, som kun delvist stemmer overens med undervisningssystemers institutionaliserede kriterier for, hvad der "tæller" som gyldig eller relevant viden. På den baggrund rejser afhandlingen følgende forskningsspørgsmål: *Hvordan kan spilscenarier udfoldes og valideres af lærere og elever i relation til specifikke praksisser og vidensformer*?

Empiri og metode

For at kunne besvare det spørgsmål undersøges anvendelsen af et bestemt spilscenarie gennem en række *designinterventioner* – en metodologisk fremgangsmåde, der bygger på designbaseret uddannelsesforskning (Barab & Squire, 2004). Dvs. at jeg, som en del af forskningsprojektet, har designet (og re-designet) et spilscenarie for at kunne undersøge bestemte teoretiske antagelser og designhypoteser om spilbaseret undervisning. Mere specifikt er det empiriske aspekt af afhandlingen baseret på design og anvendelsen af det it-støttede debatspil *Spillet om magten*, der giver gymnasieelever mulighed for at agere politikere, journalister og spindoktorer i forsøget på at vinde et folketingsvalg gennem udvælgelse af mærkesager, fremlæggelser, debat, forhandling, afstemning og ny regeringsdannelse.[70] Eleverne grupperes i fire eller seks forskellige politiske partier, der hver især repræsenterer et ideologisk aspekt af det danske politiske landskab – f.eks. Det Socialistiske Party og Det Nationale Parti. Med afsæt i de rigtige politiske partiers hjemmesider skal hver gruppe finde og omformulere tre politiske mærkesager at føre valgkamp ud fra. Spilscenariet er således udviklet omkring *valgkamp* som et bestemt "semiotisk domæne" (Gee, 2003), der fordrer at spildeltagerne skal imitere den måde, hvorpå professionelle politiske aktører forsøger at vinde en valgkamp. Med udgangspunkt i elevernes debatpraksisser kan valgkampscenariet beskrives som et *debatspil*, der er et relativt velkendt spilformat i den engelsksprogede verden. Derudover svarer formålet med *Spillet om magten* også med overordnede mål for demoratisk dannelse i gymnasiet – dvs. at eleverne skal tilegne sig og anvende viden gennem bestemte kompetencer, der er væsentlige for at kunne begå sig som medborgere i et demokratisk samfund (Jerome & Algarra, 2005).

Gennem samarbejde med fem samfundsfagslærere fra to almene gymnasier har forskningsprojektet dokumenteret fem forskellige spilforløb med *Spillet om magten*, der hver strækker sig over fem-seks timer. Det empiriske materiale består således primært af feltnoter, video- og lydoptagelser samt efterfølgende lærerinterviews og gruppeinterviews med udvalgte elever

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[70] Spilinstruktioner samt hand-outs kan downloades på følgende link, hvor der også er adgang til supplerende tekster og videoklip: www.dr.dk/gymnasium/emner/spillet_om_magten/forside.asp.

foretaget efter hvert af de fem spilforløb. Den metodologiske fremgangsmåde til at beskrive, analysere og fortolke, hvordan lærere og elever udfolder valgkampscenariet følger Judith L. Green og James Paul Gee's diskursanalytiske tilgang til videoanalyse, der anlægger et etnografisk perspektiv på sociale aktørers diskursive handlinger og praksisser (Gee & Green, 1998; Green et al., 2007). Derudover er afhandlingens empiriske afsnit struktureret efter tre forskellige analytiske perspektiver, der beskriver de fem spilforløb ud fra et *designperspektiv*, et *lærerperspektiv* og et *elevperspektiv*. Dermed besvares følgende tre empirisk-analytiske spørgsmål:

1. Hvad er relationen mellem spillets intentioner og dets anvendelse?
2. Hvordan faciliterer lærerne spilscenariet gennem forskellige pædagogiske tilgange?
3. Hvordan udfolder eleverne bestemte kompetencer indenfor spillets rammer?

Teoretiske perspektiver

For at kunne udforske de analytiske spørgsmål præsenterer afhandlingen en teoretisk model til at forstå vidensproduktion i undervisningsspil. Modellen bygger videre på Barths vidensantropologi ud fra tre komplementære teoretiske perspektiver, og udfolder hvordan spilbaseret undervisning er knyttet til bestemte påstande, repræsentationsformer og social organisering (Barth, 2002). Med udgangspunkt i John Deweys pragmatiske teori om spil, leg og læring kan spilbaseret undervisning beskrives som *scenariebaserede undersøgelser* af bestemte påstande om verden, der indbefatter erfaringsdannelse i forhold til konkrete mål og delmål, kausalitet (regler) og kontingente udfald (Dewey, 1916). Tilsvarende anvendes Erving Goffman og George Herbert Mead's interaktionistiske teorier om *spil, rolleleg, performance* og *fortolkningsrammer* til at beskrive den viden, der er knyttet til den sociale organisering af spil i undervisningen (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974). Endelig trækker afhandlingens teoretiske model på Mikhail Bakhtins teori om *dialogisk kommunikation* til at beskrive den viden, der er knyttet til repræsentationsformer i spilbaseret undervisning – hvilket i *Spillet om magten* primært udgør mundtlig dialog (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a, 1986). Ved at sammenholde disse tre komplementære teoretiske perspektiver udvikles en analytisk forståelsesramme, der gør det muligt at fremhæve bestemte aspekter af viden i spil frem for andre. Betydningsprocesserne i spilbaseret undervisning fremkommer således gennem et dynamisk samspil mellem erfaringsdannelse, social interaktion og dialogisk kommunikation.

Analyseresultater

Ved at beskrive empirien ud fra et designperspektiv, et lærerperspektiv og et elevperspektiv, når afhandlingen frem til en række forskellige analyseresultater. Det første analytiske perspektiv kortlægger designprocessen, anvendelsen og re-designet af *Spillet om magten* ved at udforske diskrepansen mellem intentionen om at skabe et "realistisk" valgkampscenarie, den faktiske udfoldelse af spillet og den efterfølgende respons fra de deltagende lærere og elever. Som det fremgår af analysen, så trådte den oprindelige intention om at skabe et realistisk undervisningsspil gradvist i baggrunden for i stedet at fokusere på relevansen af de enkelte spilelementer. Forsøget på at balancere realistiske spilelementer med undervisningskontekstens relevanskriterier kan således beskrives som et spørgsmål om at tilstræbe *relevant realisme*. Derudover udforskes en designhypotese om at kunne kombinere elevernes deltagelse i spillet med udvalgte online videoklip. På trods af at lærere og elever vurderede begge typer læringsressourcer positivt, så skabte kombinationen af spilaktivitet og computerbrug et *sammenstød* mellem forskellige fortolkningsrammer. Design af undervisningsspil fordrer således beslutninger om, hvilke vidensaspekter, der skal fremhæves og valideres på bekostning af andre.

Det andet analytiske perspektiv beskriver spilforløbene set fra et lærerperspektiv. For at kunne udfolde valgkampscenariet, måtte de fem lærere redefinere deres velkendte lærerroller fra at undervise til at *facilitere*. Set ud fra en dialogpædagogisk forståelse forsøgte lærerne samtidig at *autorisere* elevernes deltagelse i spilforløbene. Derudover *evaluerede* lærerne også det faglige indhold og generelle fordele og ulemper ved undervisningsspillet. Ved at sammenligne lærernes måde at undervise med og reflektere over det samme spilscenarie fremanalyseres tre forskellige spilpædagogiske tilgange. Lærerne fortolkede således spilscenariet som henholdsvis en *skematisk*, en *performativ* og en *undersøgende* undervisningsform. Forskellen på de tre pædagogiske tilgange viste sig især i den måde lærerne autoriserede spilresultatet i den afsluttende diskussion med eleverne efter valgkampen. Således valgte én lærer at præsentere bestemte tolkninger af spillet, der kun delvist relaterede sig til elevernes spiloplevelse. To lærere valgte at lade spillets logik og resultater styre tolkningsmulighederne, mens to andre lærere undersøgte og validerede flere mulige tolkninger af spilforløbet. Dermed peger de tre pædagogiske tilgange også på tre forskellige epistemologiske opfattelser af spilscenariets faglige indhold. Dvs. at den skematiske tilgang primært fokuserede på spillets "facts", og vurderede spilbaseret viden som værende enten sand eller falsk; den performative tilgang forstod spillets vidensformer som en underholdende kontrast til

gymnasiets mere "seriøse" vidensformer; mens den tredje undersøgende tilgang var baseret på den opfattelse at spilbaseret viden opstår gennem konstruktion og rekonstruktion af hypoteser.

Det tredje og sidste analytiske perspektiv beskriver de fem spilforløb ud fra et elevperspektiv. Her fokuseres især på de elever, der spillede politikere, hvilket var den mest betydningsfulde og krævende rolle i valgkampscenariet. For at kunne overbevise deres klassekammerater var spildeltagerne nødt til at imitere professionelle politikeres debatpraksisser. Eksempelvis forsøgte eleverne at undgå at tabe ansigt eller, med deres egne ord, at "blive slagtet" af deres politiske modstandere. Eleverne blev derfor nødt til at være *socialt kompetente* for at begå sig i valgkampscenariets strategiske spil om viden. Tilsvarende positionerede politikerne også sig selv i valgkampens dialogiske rum ved at udtrykke sig gennem ideologiske stemmer, der kunne være parodiske, personificerede, professionaliserede og/eller reproducerende. Valgkampsceneriet krævede således at eleverne havde tilstrækkelig *kommunikativ kompetence* til at virke overbevisende og troværdige på deres klassekammerater. Endelig måtte politikerne også generere og udforske hypoteser om mulige konsekvenser af at præsentere og forsvare deres forskellige politiske mærkesager. Eleverne skulle dermed have *scenariekompetence* for at kunne forudsige udfaldet af deres handlinger og træffe kreative beslutninger indenfor valgkampens ideologiske spillerum. De tre kompetenceformer peger alle på væsentlige aspekter af at blive uddannet til demokratiske medborgere. Samtidig satte mange elever spørgsmål ved validiteten af deres spilkompetencer ("blød" viden) i forhold til de gængse vidensformer i gymnasiet ("hård" viden).

Konklusion

Gennem en teoretisk og empirisk analyse af spilbaseret undervisning bidrager afhandlingen med praksisrettet viden om spildesign, spilpædagogik og spilkompetencer. Generelt set kan spil i undervisningen forstås som et spændingsfyldt møde mellem to forskellige videnstraditioner. På den ene side vurderede både lærere og elever anvendelsen af *Spillet om magten* som en værdifuld form for undervisning, der også kan beskrives som en iscenesat og fokuseret form for problem-baseret projektarbejde med mundtlige fremlæggelser. På den anden side blev elevernes spilbaserede viden også tildelt en ambivalent status, eftersom deres spilkompetencer var vanskelige at sammenkæde med eksisterende valideringskriterier indenfor gymnasiets faglige og pædagogiske kontekst. Afhandlingen afspejler derfor, hvordan spilbaseret undervisning faciliterer en kontingent form for viden, der kan være vanskelig at legitimere, men som samtidig kan tilføje nye perspektiver og udfolde scenariebaserede hypoteser i undervisningens dialogiske spillerum.

English summary

Playful Knowledge: An explorative study of educational gaming

Background and purpose

Over the last five to ten years, much has been said and written about the educational use of games – whether it concerns educational computer games, simulations, role-playing, or debate games etc. In spite of the growing research interest in this topic, still only relatively few detailed empirical studies exist of how game scenarios can be used within educational contexts (e.g. Magnussen, 2008). Instead, game researchers have had a tendency to either try and crystallise the universal "essence" of game phenomena or measure the "effect" of game-based learning processes. Thus, there is a lack of practice-oriented knowledge on how games can be *enacted* as a learning resource and as a form of teaching. Against this backdrop, this dissertation reconceptualises the educational use of games through a *contextualised* approach, which draws on a sociocultural understanding of the meaning-making processes of educational gaming. The educational use of games is thus seen as a social phenomenon in which the dynamic interplay between different actors – game design, teachers and students – implies on-going negotiations and interpretations of mutually constituted scenarios, discourse and interaction patterns.

Using Fredrik Barth's anthropology of knowledge as a starting point, game phenomena and educational practices can be seen as two different *traditions of knowledge* that each build upon locally embedded aspects of knowledge in terms of assertions, modes of representation and social organisation (Barth, 2002). Based on an action-oriented understanding of knowledge, the integration of game activities and educational activities is not a matter of course, as it entails an overlap between two domains whose meaning-making processes cannot be "controlled" in any simple sense. Rather, educational gaming requires that the intentions of a game scenario are meaningfully adapted by teachers and students in order to be legitimised in relation to particular *validity criteria*, which are both an integrated part of the game design and the local practices of the game participants. Consequently, this dissertation is based on the hypothesis that the educational use of games generates a playful and unpredictable tension between different ways of enacting and validating knowledge. On the one hand, game scenarios may enable participants to explore specific hypotheses through engaging, creative and strategic decision-making processes in relation to

relatively established goals, roles, frames and game resources. On the other hand, game-based knowledge forms, by definition, generate unpredictable outcomes that only partially coincide with the institutionalised knowledge criteria of educational systems concerning what "counts" as valid or relevant knowledge. This raises the following research question: *How are game scenarios enacted and validated by teachers and students in relation to particular practices and knowledge forms?*

Methods and empirical studies

In order to answer this question, this study has explored the adaptation of a particular game scenario through a series of *design interventions* – a methodological approach inspired by educational design-based research (Barab & Squire, 2004). This means that as a part of the research project, I designed and re-designed a game scenario in order to explore particular theoretical assumptions and design hypotheses on educational gaming. More specifically, the empirical aspect of the dissertation is based on the design and use of the ICT-supported debate game called *The Power Game*, which allows upper secondary students to perform as politicians, journalists and spin doctors in the attempt to win a Danish national parliamentary election. The students are grouped in four or six political parties, which each represent ideological positions in the Danish political landscape by using generic party names, e.g. the Socialist Party and the National Party. Using the real political parties' websites, each group is then expected to find, re-phrase, present and debate three political key issues in order to run for election. In this way, the game has been developed on the basis of an *election scenario* as a particular "semiotic domain" that requires the game participants to imitate how professional political actors try to win a parliamentary election (Gee, 2003). Based on the students' debate practices, the game is labelled as a *debate game*. Moreover, the overall objectives of *The Power Game* share similarities with the overall goals for *citizenship education* within the context of Danish upper secondary education. Thus, the participating students are expected to find and adapt knowledge through particular competencies, which are important to becoming a well-functioning citizen in a democratic society (Jerome & Algarra, 2005).

Based on collaboration with five social studies teachers from two upper secondary schools, this research project documents five different game sessions with *The Power Game* lasting five to six hours each. The empirical material primarily consists of field notes and video and sound recordings in addition to post-game interviews with teachers and selected students conducted after each game session. The methodological framework for describing, analysing and interpreting how teachers and students enacted the election scenario follows Judith L. Green and James Paul Gee's

discourse analytic approach to video analysis which takes an ethnographic perspective on social actors' discursive actions and practices (Gee & Green, 1998; Green et al., 2007). The empirical studies are structured in relation to three different analytical perspectives that describe the five game sessions from a *design perspective*, a *teacher perspective* and a *student perspective*. Consequently, the dissertation explores three empirical questions:

1. What is the relation between the intentions and the actual enactment of the game design?
2. How do the teachers facilitate the game scenario through different pedagogical approaches?
3. How do the students enact different competencies within the frame of the game sessions?

Theoretical perspectives

In order to explore these analytical questions, the dissertation introduces a theoretical model that addresses the knowledge production of educational gaming. The model extends Barth's anthropology of knowledge by applying three complimentary theoretical perspectives and reveals how educational gaming is related to specific assertions, modes of representation and social organisation (Barth, 2002). Based on John Dewey's pragmatic theory of games, play and learning, educational gaming can be described as a *scenario-based inquiry* of certain assertions about the world, which involve experience in relation to concrete aims and ends-in-view, causality (rules) and contingent outcomes (Dewey, 1916). Similarly, Erving Goffman and George Herbert Mead's interactionist theories of *games*, *role-play*, *performance* and *frames* are used to describe the knowledge that emerges through the social organisation of educational gaming (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1959, 1961a, 1974). Finally, the theoretical model of the dissertation draws upon Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of *dialogic communication* in order to describe the representational knowledge of educational gaming which in *The Power Game* primarily refers to spoken dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a, 1986). The aim of integrating these three complimentary theoretical perspectives is to develop an analytical framework, which makes it possible to foreground (and background) particular aspects of game-based knowledge. This is based on the assumption that the meaning-making processes of educational gaming emerge through a dynamic interplay between scenario-based inquiry, social interaction and dialogical communication.

Analytical findings

By describing the empirical data from a *design* perspective, a *teacher* perspective and a *student* perspective, the dissertation presents a number of different analytical findings. The first analytical perspective maps the design, adaptation, and re-design of *The Power Game* by exploring the discrepancy between the intention of creating a "realistic" election scenario, the actual enactment of the game and the successive responses from the participating teachers and students. As the findings indicate, the initial intention of creating a realistic educational game was gradually transformed into an attempt to ensure the relevance of particular game elements. The attempt to balance realistic game elements with the relevance criteria of the educational context is thus described as a question of achieving *relevant realism*. Another design hypothesis is explored on the value of combining the students' game participation with selected online video clips. Even though teachers and students gave positive responses to both types of learning resources, the combination of game activities and computer activities created a *clash* between different interpretive frames. These examples show how the design of educational games requires decisions on what knowledge aspects should be foregrounded and validated at the expense of others.

The second analytical perspective describes the game sessions as seen from a teacher perspective. In order to execute the election scenario, the five teachers had to re-define their familiar teacher roles as instructors to *facilitators*. When understood as a dialogical form of pedagogy, the teachers also tried to *authorise* the students' participation in the game sessions. Finally, the teachers *evaluated* the subject-related content and the general pros and cons of the educational game. By comparing how the teachers taught with and reflected on the same game, three pedagogical approaches concerning the game emerged. More specifically, the teachers interpreted the game scenario as a *scripted*, a *performative* and an *explorative* form of teaching. The difference between the three approaches was particularly clear in the way that the teachers authorised the game results in the end-of-game discussion. Thus, one teacher promoted particular interpretations of the game which were only partially related to the students' game experience. Two teachers chose to let the assertions and results of the game determine possibilities for interpretation, while two other teachers explored and validated multiple different interpretations of the game session. These three pedagogical approaches also indicated three different epistemological views on the subject-related knowledge of the game scenario. The scripted approach mostly focused on the "facts" of the game and validated game-based knowledge as being either "true" or "false". The performative approach viewed game knowledge as an entertaining contrast to the more "serious"

knowledge of upper secondary education. Finally, the inquiry-based approach validated the students' game-based knowledge as a construction and re-construction of hypotheses.

The third analytical perspective describes the five game sessions from a student perspective by focusing on the students that played politicians, which was by far the most significant and demanding role. In order to appear convincing in the eyes and ears of their classmates, these students imitated the debate practices of professional politicians. For example, the students tried to avoid losing "face" or, in their own words, "being butchered" by their political opponents. In order to meet this demand, the students had to have *social competence* when navigating in the strategic knowledge game of the election scenario. Similarly, the politicians positioned themselves within the dialogical game space through ideological voices that were parodic, personalised, professionalised and/or reproductive. In this way, the students had to demonstrate *communicative competence* in order to appear persuasive and trustworthy to their classmates. Finally, the politicians generated hypotheses on the possible consequences of presenting and defending their different key political issues. This meant that the students had to enact *scenario competence* in order to predict outcomes of their actions and make creative decisions. These three competencies all address significant aspects of being educated as democratic citizens. At the same time, several students also questioned the validity of their "soft" game knowledge" in relation to the prevalent "hard" knowledge forms of the upper secondary educational context.

Conclusion

Through a theoretical and empirical analysis of educational gaming, this dissertation has contributed with practice-oriented knowledge on game design, game pedagogy and game competencies. Generally speaking, the educational use of games can be understood as a tension-filled meeting between two knowledge traditions. On the one hand, teachers and students both regarded the adaptation of *The Power Game* as a valuable form of teaching, which could be described as a staged and focused form of problem-based project work with verbal presentations. On the other hand, the students' game-based knowledge was given an ambivalent status as their game competencies were difficult to integrate with the existing validation criteria within the curricular and pedagogical context of upper secondary education. This reflects how educational gaming facilitates contingent knowledge, which can be difficult to legitimise even though it is able to add new perspectives and unfold scenario-based hypotheses within the dialogical space of teaching and learning.

Games

Confrontation (*Konfrontation*), Learning Lab Denmark and The Danish Agricultural Council (*Landbrugsraadet*), www.konfrontation.nu..

Election (*Valgkamp*), Awiwa International, www.awiwa.dk/da/games_valgkamp.html.

Environmental Detectives, MIT Teacher Education Program and The Education Arcade, education.mit.edu/drupal/ar/projects#ed.

Escher's World, Epistemic Games Research Group, www.epistemicgames.org/eg/?cat=61.

Global Conflicts: Latin America, Serious Games Interactive, www.seriousgames.dk.

Global Island, Mellemfolkelig Samvirke, www.globalisland.nu.

Homicide (*Drabssag/Melved*), Learning Lab Denmark and Malling Beck, www.drabssag.dk.

In the Service of the State (*I Statens Tjeneste*), Zentropa Interaction, www.demokratispil.dk.

Power Play (*Magtspil*), DR Education, www.dr.dk/magtensbilleder/undervisning/magtspil.htm.

Power Politics, Randy Chase & Kellogg Creek Software, Inc., www.powerpolitics.us.

Savannah, NESTA FutureLab, Mobile Bristol and BBC Natural History Unit, www.futurelab.org.uk/projects/savannah.

Science.net, Epistemic Games Research Group, www.epistemicgames.org/eg/?cat=10.

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