

Social Closures: Reconfiguration of Professional Work in the Danish State School

Marianne Brodersen

University College Absalon, Denmark

Contact: Marianne Brodersen, University College Absalon, Denmark, mar@pha.dk

Abstract

The interconnectedness between the formation of a professional group and its specific tasks and competencies is at the core of sociological theories of professions. In neo-Weberian approaches to social closure, the shaping and maintenance of professional groups have been conceptualised as state-sanctioned efforts to gain control over a specific task area. However, whereas legally sanctioned monopolies have been subject to certain attention, the social dynamics of processes of professional closure in everyday work practices seem relatively unexplored. This article demonstrates how social closure can be analysed as interrelated processes, covering legal as well as practical, symbolic elements. Drawing on the case of the 2014 Danish School Reform and its introduction of a new professional group in Danish schools, “pedagogues”, the article sheds light on the interplay between a state-driven reconfiguration of a task area and the subtle dynamics of symbolic struggles between the two professions teachers and pedagogues.

Keywords

Professional formation, social closure, symbolic struggles, professional collaboration, pedagogues, teachers

For decades, Max Weber's concept of social closure has been central to professional studies, both as a theoretical approach to studies of professionalisation and in debates on how to conceptualise Weber's thinking methodologically (Harrits, 2014; Harrits & Larsen, 2014; Larson, 1977; Saks, 2010, 2012). As such, the academic discussion has revolved around how to operationalise Weber's concept in specific studies, and, as part of this, how and where to localise important dynamics of social closure. In these discussions, it has been argued that neo-Weberian studies of professions have neglected the importance of state sanction in processes of professionalisation and have overlooked the analytic potential of studying the role of legal closure (Saks, 2012; Saks & Adams, 2019). Others point to the untapped potential in examining the intersections of knowledge and power—the symbolic dimensions of professionalisation—and, as such, developing an expanded concept of social closure (Harrits, 2014; Harrits & Larsen, 2014; Hindhede & Larsen, 2020).

This article seeks to contribute to professional studies by drawing on these discussions to analyse processes of legal as well as symbolic forms of closure. Using the case of the changing boundaries between two professions, *teachers*, and *pedagogues*, in the Danish state school, the article presents new insight into the intricate relationship between the state-driven reconfiguration of a task area and the symbolic processes performed in the new working relationship. Against the backdrop of the political altering of professional boundaries, the article sheds light on the nature and dynamics of symbolic struggles between professional groups. It thus seeks to demonstrate the fruitfulness of analysing social closure as interrelated processes in the state-legal field as well as in the field of practice.

Social closure and the continuing development of professional studies

The interconnectedness between the formation of a professional group and its specific knowledge and licensure is at the core of sociological theories of professions. Following from Max Weber and his thinking on “social closure”, the formation and maintenance of professional groups have been conceptualised as efforts to gain status and control over a specific task area and, at the same time, to exclude other groups (Larson, 1977; Parkin, 1979; Weber, 2003a, 2003b). However, scholars continue to discuss the concept of social closure and how Weberian thinking can contribute to the sociology of professions.

According to Saks, neo-Weberians have defined professions in terms of “exclusionary social closure in the marketplace sanctioned by the state”, downplaying the role of knowledge and expertise, which were ascribed significant importance in the taxonomic tradition of professional studies (Saks, 2012, p. 4). More recently, Saks and Adams have stressed the need for studies that can shed light on state decision-making and its role in professional formation, or what they term as the *black box* of policy formation (Saks & Adams, 2019). As

a contribution to the “un-black-boxing” of this issue, these authors and others have conducted studies on state-legal support of professionalisation processes such as the medical profession in UK (Saks & Adams, 2019), Canadian health care (Adams & Saks, 2018), and veterinarian medicine in Britain (Whiting, May & Saks, 2020).

Adding to the discussion on how professions are constituted, Harrits and Larsen examine the role of the social closure concept in the sociology of professions, stating that “legal codification is only one way of establishing professional closure” (Harrits & Larsen, 2014, p. 18). Referring to Tilly and Bourdieu, they suggest considering symbolic mechanisms as sources of social closure in order to understand closure as a result of relational struggles of power between professional groups. Harrits, therefore, suggests a revision of the closure concept, conceptualising professional closure as the intersection of legal, social and symbolic forms (Harrits, 2014, p. 5-8).

The study presented in this article takes its starting point in these discussions. It draws on neo-Weberian thinking as it examines political-legal processes that were guided by the thought that a new profession—in this case, the *pedagogue*—and its associated knowledge and expertise could help to renew the Danish state school. Further, the study examines the effects of state-legal reforms in professional practice. Here the concept of social closure works as an analytical lens to reveal the nature of struggles between professions, specifically the symbolic divisions and distinctions in everyday practices (Bourdieu, 1977). The article thus analyses social closure as both a legal and symbolic process, showing how state decision-making establishes new jurisdictional boundaries between two professional groups in the Danish state school and how those boundaries are performed and challenged in processes of collaboration.

The study is enabled by a research design combining a study of policy papers and ethnographic fieldwork in schools. As they are based mainly on sociological traditions, professional studies do not have a strong tradition of incorporating ethnographic studies of the interaction between professional groups. However, ethnographic fieldwork can be a fruitful methodology to gain insight into the subtle processes of symbolic struggles performed in everyday practice. The article thus explores symbolic aspects of social closure as performed through professional practice and the knowledge invested herein. This part of the study draws on theory of practice and the *New Sociology of Knowledge*, both of which conceptualise knowledge as practices (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Camic, Gross & Lamont, 2011). Further, to be able to capture the nature of professional practice as underpinned by the materiality of institutional settings, methodological inspiration is drawn from new materialism (Coole & Frost, 2010). By taking this approach, the study aims to un-black-box professionalisation processes studied as everyday practices, here conceptualised as symbolic boundary struggles between professions (Lamont & Molnar, 2002).

Social closure is thus studied as processes played out not only in the political field but also in the field of practice. The point is that struggles to determine jurisdictional boundaries between professional groups can be observed in both fields, and that jurisdictions claimed through legal processes do not present a clear-cut space waiting to be filled by the professionals. Rather, state legal reconfigurations can actually fuel the reinforcement of boundaries and the testing of them through everyday practices. As such, the article does not only contribute a study from the Nordic context to the body of research on state-sanctioned professionalisation processes, it also provides insight into power struggles that can follow from a political altering of boundaries between professions, and how these types of processes can be studied as micro-practices.

Legal and symbolic aspects of social closure: Methods and analytical strategy

The analyses presented in this article are based on a study of policy documents and a study of professional practice in classrooms; the latter of which was conducted as part of a PhD project on professional knowledge in welfare work (Brodersen, 2019). In the first section, the analysis takes a political starting point from the Danish state school (folkeskole) reform in 2014, focusing on the actors and rationales that fed into the reform process. This analysis is based on political documents that were selected to examine how diverse actors—politicians, ministerial departments, trade unions—stated their arguments in the process leading to the 2014 Danish School Act. The analytical strategy addresses the question of how different elements of their visions for the Danish folkeskole created a discursive necessity for a new profession in Danish classrooms, the pedagogue, and how the drafting of the new legislation reflects a political will to alter the traditionally dominant position of teachers in Danish classrooms.

In the second section, the analysis takes its departure in the school setting, focusing on how professional knowledge—as practised in the classrooms—is central to the adaptations of and struggles between teachers and pedagogues. In relation to the previous section, this analysis aims to highlight what happens when state-initiated changes to school staffing actually materialise in the classrooms. This section draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Danish schools, illuminating how professional knowledge and tasks are performed in the new context. The concept of social closure is used as a way to comprehend the logics of boundaries in classrooms' day-to-day practices. Analysing knowledge as practice can thus shed light on the nature of symbolic closure, which is observed as hierarchical divisions of roles and tasks between the two professional groups.

The following section illustrates how the pedagogue started to be framed as a necessary profession in Danish schools through political debate and legislation work. It draws inspiration from Bacchi's (2009) approach to policy analysis, aiming to highlight implicit representations of what is perceived to be "the problem". The political and governmental

documents are analysed in order to identify the core rationales that fed these processes and how they led to claims that new professional knowledge was needed in schools. The intention is to explore the multiple rationales that fuelled the shaping of a need for reform, and, as such, influenced processes of legal closure.

Making pedagogues a “necessity” in Danish state schools

Under the latest school reform, *pedagogues* entered the Danish classroom, a work setting that, until then, had primarily been the domain of the teachers. Pedagogues are a professional group specific to Denmark; they are trained for three-and-a-half years at University Colleges and, on top of their broad qualification, they are specialised in three areas: early childhood education and care, social work, and school and leisure time pedagogy. In comparison, teachers employed at the Danish *folkeskole* study for four years at University Colleges in curriculum and subject-specific areas.

The general integration of pedagogues into Danish classrooms was a consequence of the 2014 state school reform and its stated objective to strengthen the academic performances of Danish pupils (Ministry of Children and Education, 2013b). However, the Danish schools' employment of pedagogues was a continuation of a process that had been underway for some time. School authorities in a number of municipalities had in previous years made use of pedagogues in the younger classes. In some cases, this was due to efforts to obtain better results, especially among pupils from a migrant background, including the introduction of extended school hours, which also became an element of the 2014 school reform (Holm, 2009; Jacobsen, 2012).

The political decision to staff classrooms with pedagogues as well as teachers can be regarded as the culmination of a range of political efforts aimed at changing the *folkeskole*. Taking a closer look at Danish school policies and reforms over recent years, it can be argued that three main rationales fuelled the “need” for pedagogues in schools: A rationale of *inclusion*, focusing on children's needs and rights; a rationale of *performance*, emphasising the academic achievement of Danish pupils; and a rationale of *efficiency* as “value-for-money” thinking. Whereas these rationales could be considered as conflicting, they all had an influence on the political arguments that eventually prompted changes to how the schools operate in practice. To support this claim, I unfold how evidence of these rationales can be observed in the recent school reform and how they have constituted struggles in relations between teachers' and pedagogues' unions and politicians.

Inclusion policy: Equality and efficiency

Drawing on international human rights movements, the Salamanca Statement in 1994 was approved by a large number of states, including Denmark (UNESCO, 1994). The statement entails an obligation to ensure that children with special education needs have access to public schools, and that these schools should provide “a child centred pedagogy capable of

meeting these needs” (UNESCO, 1994, §2). However, the Danish approval of the Salamanca Statement and the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2009 did not seem seriously to affect Danish school policy until 2010, when the Ministry of Finance published a report on special education (Ministry of Finance, 2010; Ratner, 2012, p.107). Despite stating that special education has positive effects, the report concludes that “special education, as the political objectives pledge, could be organised more inclusively within the regular *folkeskole* setting to a greater extent than it is today” (Ministry of Finance, 2010, p. 11). Indirectly, this statement was supported by an outline of state funds for special needs education, which amounted to DKK 12.8 million in 2008/2009 (Ministry of Finance, 2010, p. 13). In 2012, the reform known as the “inclusion law” was enacted, which entailed that children who needed less than nine hours of special educational support a week were no longer eligible to attend special needs education (The Danish Parliament, 2012). In practice, this meant that a larger group of children had to be taught together with their peers in “normal” classrooms.

Whereas teachers have generally found it difficult to disagree with the underlying principles and ideals of inclusion policy, the debate following the “inclusion law” was harshly critical towards the actual conditions for realising these ideals (e.g., Schmidt & Langager, 2012). The Danish Teachers’ Union (DLF) acknowledged the overall aim of inclusion, but at the same time, it purported a demand for more resources. Specifically, DLF called for the staffing of classrooms to include two teachers at a time, and in their statement on “inclusion” DLF did not mention pedagogues, although at the time pedagogues had already started entering Danish classrooms (DLF, 2013b).

Inclusion policy in the Danish *folkeskole* can be regarded as being carried by two main arguments: a democracy and equality argument in tune with human and disability rights movements, and an economic efficiency argument underpinned by an alleged demand to reduce expenditure in the Danish public sector. According to economist Henrik H. Lund, the passing of the “inclusion law” was equally caused by a “restoration and zero growth policy” launched by the Venstre-Konservative government (liberal and conservative parties) in 2010, targeting the Danish municipalities under which the *folkeskole* belongs (Lund, 2012, p. 20). Thus, the democracy-equality argument and the economic efficiency argument are closely linked and together they have influenced the political reasoning behind the integration of pedagogues in the Danish *folkeskole*.

The 2014 Danish School Act: Better performance via new means

Political efforts to reform the Danish *folkeskole* continued over the following years. The reform work took its departure in a problematising of Danish pupils’ performances, thus continuing a long political discussion on the capability of schools and teachers to raise

academic standards. As part of the law-forming process, a letter of the agreement stated some of the “major challenges” experienced in the Danish *folkeskole*:

“The academic standards—particularly in Danish and mathematics—are not at a sufficient level. Danish pupils are ranked as “average” in the OECD in Danish, mathematics, and science at the time when they complete school. In addition, we do not improve the potential of the poor academic achievers or the stronger pupils” (Ministry of Children and Education, 2013a, p. 1).

Further, the letter problematises the number of pupils that are referred to special education and stresses the need to improve the performances of all pupils, “so we are able to perform in the increasing international competition” (Ministry of Children and Education, 2013a, p. 1). As such, the key rationale behind making a school reform necessary is primarily focused on performance and is thus in line with international trends. National governments are often found to orchestrate school policy to provide “answers” to the international ranking of pupils and education systems (Steiner-Khamsi, 2017, p. 69). As stated by Swedish educational historian Joakim Landahl, international comparative systems like PISA have provoked an “awareness of crisis” in national school debates, which urges governments to take action (Landahl, 2017).

In the Danish case, this action was taken through the 2014 school reform, which was launched as the *New Nordic School*, as it was claimed to build on Nordic traditions of social orientation and progressive education, as well as taking inspiration from the school system in Ontario, Canada (Antorini, 2012). Under the headline “An extended and diverse school day with better teaching and learning”, the central reform elements were more *exercise* during school days, the idea of an *open school*—implying active involvement in the local community—and *supportive teaching*. The latter element assigned a specific task to pedagogues in the school setting (Ministry of Children and Education, 2013b). Minister of Education Antorini stated that “Pedagogues play a central role in our school reform proposal, because the whole vision of pupils receiving more teaching lessons in a more varied manner requires a close cooperation between teachers and pedagogues” (Antorini, 2013). Further, the minister emphasised that the school reform depended on the development of new teaching and learning methods utilising the pedagogues’ skills, which build on pedagogical traditions from leisure centres.

The reform thus represented a new answer to the persistent Danish *folkeskole* “performance crisis”, framing *inclusion* more as a matter of boosting the academic achievements of all children than of enabling equal opportunities to be part of a school environment. A central part of the reform was its emphasis on new means of achieving schools’ political goals, meaning new ways of teaching, and, as part of this, deploying other types of professional skills in the school setting. In other words, teachers were no longer regarded as the only professionals capable of coordinating the learning processes of Danish

pupils. As discussed by other scholars, a discursive shift in the framing of the task of coordinating learning processes, from the teacher-centred term “teaching” to the pupil-centred “learning”, took place (Kampmann, 2015). In line with this shift, the Pedagogues’ Union (BUPL) welcomed the new role of the pedagogue, describing the reform as “an opening to a broader perspective on learning and Bildung” (BUPL, 2013). Conversely, the teachers’ union DLF emphasised the school as a “learning site”, meaning that activities in school should be goal-oriented and not “loose” (DLF, 2013a). Thus, the school reform was open to interpretation—and contention—about the purpose of the school and, consequently, of what the teachers’ and pedagogues’ actual tasks should be in future classrooms (Thingstrup, Schmidt & Andersen, 2017). These attempts to define the central purposes and methods of the school can be seen as a boundary work, where the two professions strive to either “fence in” or expand their territory (Abbott, 1988; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). During the reform process, DLF fought to maintain control over teaching work in schools and succeeded in this, as in the letter of the agreement it was stated that “the teacher possesses the general competence to teach” (DLF, 2018; Ministry of Children and Education, 2013a, p.18). However, the pedagogues’ union BUPL expressed great expectations regarding their role in the reformed school, as stated by the chairman of BUPL: “I am convinced that our many skilled pedagogues will make a great difference, as they, together with the teachers, will succeed in creating a genuinely new and different school day” (BUPL, 2014).

Summing up, the 2014 school reform offered a new response to ongoing political concerns about academic performance and efficiency in Danish state schools. The integration of pedagogues into the school setting and the introduction of new subjects and activities under the “New Nordic” banner (drawing on ideas from progressive educational traditions) formed a practical and discursive attempt to alter (what was framed as) an ineffective and outdated school structure. Although the teachers’ union succeeded in asserting its stance on the overall competence of teaching in schools, the integration of a new profession in classrooms constituted an attempt to curtail teachers’ jurisdiction over what had previously been their undisputed task area. The framing of pedagogues as a necessity in classrooms can be regarded as state-initiated pressure on the jurisdictional boundaries of the teacher profession. The new situation also put pressure on pedagogues, although this pressure was perceived by the pedagogues’ union as a stepping-stone towards a higher status for their profession. As such, the case of the Danish school reform can be discussed as a state-driven process that has succeeded in forcing a partial “opening” of the legal boundaries between the two professional groups, teachers, and pedagogues.

Whereas the political reform established a new framework for the school, the impact of this framework on classroom practices was yet to be determined. In the next section, the study makes an empirical and analytical shift by focusing on how teachers and pedagogues performed classroom work after the school reform. The focus is not on whether the school

reform is implemented according to its ideals, but on the patterns of practise whereby the two professional groups carry out their tasks in the context of the reformed school.

Performing classroom tasks: Practical and symbolic divisions and boundaries

Turning to the study of classrooms in Danish schools, the aim of the following section is to examine symbolic struggles embedded in the collaborative practices of the two professions. Whereas the previous analysis illustrated the making of legally supported boundaries between teachers and pedagogues, this section examines how professional boundaries are performed and shaped in and through classroom practices during lessons staffed with both a teacher and a pedagogue. The analysis is concerned with how professional tasks and knowledge constitute a social dynamic in the relationship between professional groups over a period of time in which school and classroom work is being reconfigured. “Social closure” is used as inspiration for an analytical strategy that asks how the knowledge of teachers and pedagogues is performed respectively; that is, whether and how tasks are being divided or fought over in classrooms, and what the distribution of tasks reveals about the relationship between the two professions. Knowledge is studied as socio-material practices, as ways of doing things (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Camic, Gross & Lamont, 2011; Coole & Frost, 2010). Analytically, symbolic closure is thus captured as an ongoing process in which knowledge and task areas are struggled over and eventually divided.

The first part of the analysis focuses on how classroom work is being realised through a complex of bodily and material practices, whereby tasks are distributed between teachers and pedagogues. The second part illustrates how pedagogues and teachers are engaged in occupying a specific task area, namely supporting children’s wellbeing and their conditions to thrive at school. By adopting a processual and micro-ethnographic perspective, the analysis focuses on the processes which, through symbolic dimensions, are becoming effective as dynamics of closure. The analysis draws on empirical data from fieldwork taking place in 3rd-grade classrooms in two Danish schools from 2015-2016, here termed the South school and the North school. The schools were selected taking into account socioeconomic diversity in the student base. The analyses below draw on classroom observations during lessons staffed with both a teacher and a pedagogue as well as interviews with these professionals.

Divisions of labour: Zones, things, bodies

The school bell is ringing, and the pupils are entering the classroom from the schoolyard. They sit on their chairs, all facing the whiteboard. Their teacher, Hanne, comes in and settles on the office chair by the whiteboard. She then reaches out to press the top of a bell, which makes a loud “ding!” sound. This makes the pupils stop chatting—almost. The teacher looks intensely at a pupil whose face is turned

towards another pupil, and then everybody is quiet, now looking at the teacher. Martin, the pedagogue, is standing alongside the rows of pupils. From this position, he is looking alternately at the teacher and the pupils. If one of them starts talking or moving, he moves to them and lays a hand on the noisy pupil. (Field note, South school)

A scene like this was typical of how school days and lessons started at the South school, and a similar practice was observed at the North School. Most often, this introduction was followed by a teacher-initiated dialogue (the teacher asking questions and the pupils answering after having put up their hands), a presentation of the day's subject and learning objectives and the children being put to work, either by themselves or in small groups. This classroom practice seems to be carried out within a relatively firm frame in which the pupils, teachers and pedagogues are situated in specific places at specific times during the school day and work in accordance with a common knowledge of what is to be done and by whom. What has frequently been described as a collaboration between professionals can thus be studied in the form of tacit agreements on how to perform practice, which the actual division of labour in classrooms can reveal. In the following, the spotlight is pointed at such divisions and how they work as—and mirror—mental and practical orientations for teachers and pedagogues as well as pupils.

The empirical snapshot above can point to how the material arrangement and use of classrooms draw on implicit expectations of what a teacher, a pedagogue and a pupil should perform in the room. Based on the observations, classrooms can be viewed as being divided into an “upper” and “lower” zone that mark the divisions of tasks between the teacher and the pedagogue. During the lessons, teachers are generally more often situated in the whiteboard area “in front of” the pupils, while the pedagogues are most often situated “down” by and next to pupils. This division of the room into zones is interwoven with differentiated bodily practices. For instance, teachers generally use their voices as a means to manage the class, either by using “teaching language” (i.e., introduction, dialogue) or by telling pupils to be quiet, often with the sound “schh-schh” during lessons. Some teachers generally lower their voice, which is supposed to make pupils prick their ears up and listen. Pedagogues, on the contrary, are often (expected to be) quiet and let the teachers do the talking. From their position “down” by and close to the pupils, they move around, often putting an arm around or a hand on a pupil. Expectations of the role of pedagogues in classrooms were expressed during teacher interviews, for instance by a teacher who praised a pedagogue for “not being too forward (...) but listening”.

The whiteboard is located on the end wall and close to an office chair and a table. This area and these things are generally only used by teachers; at the beginning of the lessons, they always place themselves close to the whiteboard, placing materials like books and papers on the table. Pedagogues do not have a table or equipment that marks their presence or belonging to the room. Along the walls, bookcases are

situated; pupils have their own boxes where they place their books and the work they have done. There is also a locker where teachers keep their materials. (Field note, North school)

The differentiated use of speech and positioning of bodies in the room is interconnected with the use of things. The bell, the whiteboard, papers, and books are things connected to teachers, whereas the material support of the pedagogue in the room is weak but reflects the fact that he or she is expected to move around the classroom, often to handle disruption. In both a practical and symbolic sense, pedagogues appear to be “empty-handed” in the room, although pedagogues do have tasks of their own, in particular to observe the pupils and quickly take action when needed. However, pedagogues express dissatisfaction with this empty-handedness, as the fieldwork revealed. One day at the North School, when a teacher, Jacob, asked a pedagogue, Sanne, to distribute some papers among the pupils, Sanne looked at me and said, “For once, I am allowed to distribute the papers. Jacob uses to split the papers between us, and it is annoying not to be allowed to do it yourself”. This uneasiness with being “empty-handed” can be viewed in relation to the fact that pedagogues working in schools are still based in after school centres, where the use of materials and activities are part of a long-standing pedagogical tradition (Hansen, 1999; Krab & Andersen, 2015). As such, the “belonging” of classroom materials and things to teachers leaves a material and bodily vacuum for pedagogues and seems to evoke a sense of alienation among them.

A space of one's own: Struggles around the division of tasks

Based on the previous analysis, the basic structure of classrooms can be interpreted as being relatively untouched by the integration of pedagogues, as they are generally engaged in supporting well-established teaching practices in school. In this respect, the presence of pedagogues can be seen as supporting the teacher-centred pedagogical tradition, which the rationales of inclusion, performance and efficiency might have intensified. However, the establishment of the pedagogues' tasks and the processes leading to divisions of labour in classrooms can be observed as still *in the making*. Findings from the fieldwork thus point to pedagogues' struggles to capture—or construct—a “space of their own” in the school, that is, a domain where (what they see as) their specific competencies can be unfolded. The domain in which the pedagogues' skills are distinctly being applied is the promotion of children's well-being in school, which the pedagogues often call “relational work”.

During the interviews, the teachers generally acknowledged the pedagogues as having a good grip on relational work, but at the same time, they emphasised that nurturing children's well-being was an important part of a teacher's job. As stated by teacher Hanne, this “makes our job really fascinating, because you need to get to know particular groups of children (...) and how you adjust them”. Teachers express frustration because the weekly scheduled *class time* previously allocated to relational work was abolished as part of the

school reform, which described pupils' well-being as a main focus of supportive teaching and, as such, chiefly a task for pedagogues. Teacher Karin remarks, "I do not understand how they could even think of cutting back a thing like this. I simply don't understand it". In response to the teachers' dissatisfaction, the school management at both of these schools decided to revert some lessons to the previous "class time" format to keep this element as a part of the teachers' portfolios.

Whereas neither the school reform nor the actual practices in the classrooms can be seen as seriously questioning the notion that teaching, as a field of work, belongs to teachers, the task of promoting children's well-being in school has turned out to be a disputed area that both the teachers and the pedagogues claim to have specific competencies in and a commitment to. However, in everyday classroom practice, this dispute seems to have been settled by dividing the task between the teachers and pedagogues. Interestingly, it appears that different ways of dealing with the promotion of well-being are related to the actual spaces, that the school and classroom traditions leave open for these practices. For teachers, their ways of dealing with children's well-being are shaped according to the teaching practice of addressing the whole class as a group. This becomes apparent when teachers emphasise the importance of *class time* and the way it is being performed. The following excerpt is from *class time* at the North school:

The pupils and the teacher, Jacob, are sitting on chairs placed in a circle. Jacob tells the pupils to suggest themes they want to bring up during the meeting. A girl puts her hand up and says "there is someone who smashes [the ball] when we play cheese". Many pupils have their hands up. Jacob says they should suggest solutions to the problems they mention. Nobody suggests any solutions and instead they go on telling about problems they experienced in the game. Jacob tells them to reach an agreement on the rules of the game. (Field note, North School)

The excerpt illustrates how working with well-being in the class is framed within a common type of pedagogical arrangement, teacher-initiated dialogue, which is a predominant method used in the two classrooms. In the context of the module *class time*, this pedagogical form is levelled towards teaching children a sort of participatory democracy (de Coninck-Smith, Rasmussen & Vyff, 2015, p. 27), expressed through the teachers' attempts to get pupils to participate in proposing themes to discuss as well as their solutions. Whilst aiming to downplay the hierarchical relationship between the teacher and pupils, materialised through the arrangement of chairs in a circle, the dialogue follows an instructional logic with the teacher positioned as a leader of the group.

In contrast to this approach, the pedagogues' engagement in promoting well-being can be observed as operating in different ways. During school days, this kind of work takes place in rather quiet and unnoticeable modes, often during breaks or intervals while the teacher is teaching, and rather than addressing the whole class, the pedagogues' work with children's

well-being focuses on small groups or individual pupils. Pedagogue Kasper emphasises his particular focus on the dynamics of small groups of children stating, “Actually, I’m one of the best at handling groups of girls”. He describes the promotion of a good atmosphere in the classroom as being dependent on specific knowledge about groups of girls and boys respectively. Pedagogue Jonas also discusses groups of children who call for his attention, “quiet girls”, for instance. Talking about a specific girl, he says, “I do not like her being so quiet. And there are more of these types of girls, I want to reach them as well. They should be happy to go to school”.

During school days, pedagogues can be observed moving around, keeping an eye on specific pupils and, as such, monitoring and intervening when considered necessary—as is the case with Jonas and a boy who is often involved in fights. Jonas explains that in order to avoid the boy feeling under surveillance and, not least, his classmates observing the presence of the pedagogue, Jonas follows the boy from a distance. During breaks, Jonas is in the schoolyard, and while he talks to the other children, he is keeping an eye on the boy. If any trouble starts, Jonas subtly makes a sign, signalling to the boy that he should withdraw. Jonas explains that this use of signs is something he initiated, and the boy reacts to without them ever talking about it.

The analysis in this section illustrates how promoting children’s well-being in school is regarded as a core task by both teachers and pedagogues, but also how this task is being understood and addressed in different ways by the two groups. Whereas teachers in ‘class time’ deal with ‘well-being’ as an activity involving the whole class as a group, positioning pupils as participants in a democratic setting, the pedagogues’ approaches take place in less formally planned settings and more as day-to-day actions. Rather than being an open conflict about who has the responsibility and competence to manage the task of well-being in school, there appears to be a state of balance. However, this balance draws on the division of space, things and activities in classrooms whereby teachers primarily deal with the class as a whole group and pedagogues, from their alert positions, respond to perceived needs from individual children or smaller groups. The ordering of the classroom can be described as reflecting a symbolic order of things, positioning the teacher—physically and symbolically—close to tasks and items that are regarded as crucial to the school and teaching work, such as the whiteboard, the bell, the papers and books. At the same time, pedagogues can be observed as being attentive to whenever the teachers or their schedules are at risk of being interrupted by the pupils.

Discussion

The article has examined processes of social closure in two fields: a state-legal field and a field of practice in the Danish *folkeskole*. The analysis of the political processes leading to the introduction of pedagogues in Danish classrooms illuminated three rationales behind the political push to alter the Danish state school. Policies actively constitute “problems” by

giving them specific shapes and shedding light on the policy rationales that fuelled the reform process provides insight into the dynamics of state-legal closure. The analysis thus illustrates how a new legal framework seems to be urged by arguments founded in broader rationales with which the professional groups concerned cannot disagree; in this case the claim for inclusion of all children and for better academic achievements among Danish pupils. Accepting these premises, the unions for both professional groups — the teachers and pedagogues — actively sought to optimise their situations. Whereas the teachers' union struggled and broadly succeeded to maintain control over the teaching domain, the pedagogues' union embraced the school reform, welcoming it as an acknowledgement of the pedagogues' skills and knowledge. Processes of legal closure can thus be observed as being captured and utilised by the unions of the professional groups as a means to either maintain or gain control over specific expertise and work areas.

Although, in the political process, the professional group pedagogues was positioned as having the knowledge and skills needed to achieve a “reformed school”, the second part of the analysis demonstrates that legally establishing a new task area does not necessarily create a clear-cut space in which pedagogues can work in the classrooms. Pedagogues' knowledge can be observed as a supporting practice aimed at ensuring that the children pay attention during the lessons planned and led by the teachers. In this setting, the pedagogues' dubious position—both physically and figuratively *in between* the pupils and the teacher—is materialised in the absence of distinct work tools for the pedagogues as well as in their physical placement in the classrooms. As such, the ordering of the classrooms can be interpreted as a symbolic closure, where the teacher is placed (practically and symbolically) in front of the pupils and the pedagogue is placed next to the pupils, watching. From this position, the pedagogues can be observed as practising “relational work”, a task often discussed as an important feature of a pedagogue's skills (Sauzet, 2019). However, both the teachers and pedagogues make jurisdictional claims for the task of promoting children's well-being. The mutual performance of this task can be interpreted as—for the moment—being stabilised through a practical division of labour. Observed through the lens of everyday practices in school, the reform and its “opening” of classrooms as a common work area for the two professions seem to place pedagogues in a supporting position as the teachers' right-hand-men, which in light of the political pressure on schools to fulfil political demands for inclusion, performance and effectiveness are understandable.

The article has thus illuminated the nature of processes of social closure in two fields and their intricate relationship. As demonstrated, legal reconfiguration of professional boundaries performed by state actors does not shape a well-defined space for a “newcomer profession” like the pedagogue in itself. Rather, it opens up a space that is to be filled out through the actors' everyday interactions. The newcomers struggle to define a task area of their own, as illustrated by the pedagogues working during the breaks and pauses throughout the school day, where they perform relational work. Analysing social closure as

processes played out in the state-political field, on the one hand, and in the field of professional practice, on the other, can demonstrate how the legal restructuring of jurisdictional boundaries does not necessarily result in changes that correspond with the political aspirations. Professional practice in schools can be regarded as structured by historical traditions that permeate teachers' work and the socio-material setting of the classroom (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1996; Jackson, 1990).

The hierarchical relationship between the two professional groups, which was observed for this study in the first year after the school reform, could be considered as mirroring a temporary state of things. However, a recent study of collaboration between teachers and pedagogues in Danish schools shows that pedagogues are still often placed in subordinate positions (Cordsen, 2020). The political intentions to mobilise pedagogues as a means to change the Danish *folkeskole* do not seem to have reconfigured the underlying structure of the school and the classroom practice. The study presented in this article has not only shed light on the institutional inertia of the school and the professional domain of practice interwoven with this institution, it has also demonstrated how state-legal changes work as a disturbance of professional practice in the school, feeding continuous negotiations and power struggles in classroom work. Following Weber, such power struggles amongst (semi)professional groups should not be interpreted as an urge to strive for economic power (Weber, 2003a, p. 29). Rather, they reflect attempts to achieve honour; in this case, gaining symbolic status by being regarded as possessing the necessary expertise.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how social closure can be analysed as micro-processes of symbolic closure, observed as divisions of physical space and tasks, leaving the newcomers with the least prestigious elements and spaces. Such processes are not static in nature, as the pedagogues actively question the boundaries between what is considered as their tasks and what the teachers' tasks are respectively. Symbolic closure studied as practices can be regarded as ongoing processes, whereby the division of work is sometimes stabilised in specific forms, and at other times is continuously contested by the presence and practice of pedagogues in the classrooms.

The article has argued for the potential of applying a social closure analysis to cover processes in a state-political field as well as in professional practice, and to consider the relationship between these processes. The analysis of the case of the Danish School reform has thus shown how a state-driven legal "opening" of a new professional task area, at the same time opens up a space for struggles over jurisdictions. Using ethnographic data and analyses, the article has contributed to a deeper understanding of the nature of social closure processes in a field of practice, as they are played out as symbolic struggles and divisions of work.

Article history

Received: 03 Jul 2021

Accepted: 18 Jan 2022

Published: 31 Mar 2022

References

- Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of labor*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Adams, T. L., & Saks, M. (2018). Neo-weberianism and changing state-profession relations: The case of Canadian health care. *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas*, 2018(88), 61-77.
- Antorini, C. (2012, August 7). Vær med i ny nordisk skole [Join the new Nordic school]. *Jyllands-Posten*. Retrieved from <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/kronik/article4800310.ece>
- Antorini, C. (2013, January 14). Antorini: "Pædagogerne spiller en central rolle" [Antorini: "Pedagogues play a central role"]. *Information*. Retrieved from <https://www.information.dk/indland/2013/01/antorini-paedagogerne-spiller-central-rolle>
- Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Australia: Pearson.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1996). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Brodersen, M. (2019). *Forstyrret og forstyrrende: Analyser af velfærdsarbejdets viden om elever, som skolen har vanskeligheder med [Disturbed and disturbing: Analysing knowledge in welfare work addressing the issue of pupils regarded as being troublesome in school]* (Doctoral dissertation). Roskilde University, Roskilde. <https://www.ucviden.dk/da/publications/forstyrret-og-forstyrrende-analyser-af-velf%C3%A6rdsarbejdets-viden-om>
- BUPL (2013). Folkeskolereformen: Kort fortalt [The reform of the Folkeskole: In brief]. *BUPL, Børne- og Ungdomspædagogernes Landsforbund*. Retrieved from <https://bupl.dk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/uncategorized-folkeskolereform-kort-fortalt-web-2163.pdf>
- BUPL (2014, September 30). Pædagoger skal være på alle klassetrin i skolen [There must be pedagogues at all grade levels in the school]. Press Statement. *BUPL Presse*. Retrieved from <https://bupl.dk/nyhed/paedagoger-skal-vaere-paa-alle-klasse-trin-i-skolen/>

- Camic, C., Gross, N. & Lamont, M. (2011). *Social knowledge in the making*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.
- Cordsen, R. F. (2020). *Samarbejde mellem lærere og fritidspædagoger: Intensitet, potentialitet og problemer [Collaboration between teachers and leisure time pedagogues: Intensity, potentiality, and problems]* (Doctoral dissertation). Aarhus University, Aarhus.
- de Coninck-Smith, N., Rasmussen, L. R., & Vyff, I. (2015). *Da skolen blev alles: Tiden efter 1970 [When the school became everyone's: The period after 1970]*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.
- DLF (2013a, June 7). Skolereformen bliver dyr for kommunerne [The school reform will be expensive for the municipalities]. *DLF, Danmarks Lærerforening*.
- DLF (2013b, June 10). DLF mener: Inklusion [DLF Opinion: Inclusion]. *DLF, Danmarks Lærerforening*. Retrieved from <https://www.dlf.org/dlf-mener/inklusion-1/inklusion-1>
- DLF (2018, April 11). DLF mener: Pædagog samarbejde [DLF opinion: Collaboration with pedagogues]. *DLF, Danmarks Lærerforening*. Retrieved from <https://www.dlf.org/dlf-mener/samarbejde-med-paedagoger>
- Ministry of Finance (2010). *Specialundervisning i folkeskolen: Veje til en bedre organisering og styring, 2010. [Special needs education in the folkeskole: Roads to a better organisation and administration]*. Retrieved from <https://fm.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2010/juni/specialundervisning-i-folkeskolen-veje-til-en-bedre-organisering-og-styring/>
- The Danish Parliament (2012). *L 103. Lov om ændring af lov om folkeskolen, lov om friskoler og private grundskoler m.v. og lov om folkehøjskoler, efterskoler, husholdningsskoler og håndarbejdsskoler (frie kostskoler)*. [Act on revision of the Folkeskole Act]. The Danish Parliament. Retrieved from https://www.ft.dk/samling/20111/lovforslag/L103/som_vedtaget.htm
- Hansen, M. (1999). *Yrkeskulturer i möte: Läraren, fritidspedagogen och samverkan [The meeting of work cultures: the teacher, the leisure time pedagogue, and cooperation]* (Doctoral dissertation). Gothenborg University, Gothenburg. <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/7609>
- Harrits, G. S. (2014). Professional closure beyond state authorization. *Professions and Professionalism*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.567>

- Harrits, G. S., & Larsen, L. T. (2014). Social lukning og professioner: Fra juridiske monopoler til symbolske mekanismer for professionel lukning [Social closure and professions: From legal monopolies to symbolic mechanisms of professional closure]. In G.S. Harrits, G. S. & Svith, F. (Eds.). *Professioner under pres: status, viden og styring* (p. 11-29). Copenhagen: Via Systime.
- Hindhede, A. L., & Larsen, K. (2020). Prestige Hierarchies and Relations of Dominance among Healthcare Professionals. *Professions and Professionalism*, 10(2).
<https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.3447>
- Holm, L. (2009). *Heldagsskolen som uddannelsespolitisk initiative: Tredje statusrapport 2008-2009*. [All day schools as educational policy initiative: Status report no. 3, 2008-2009]. Copenhagen: Aarhus University.
- Jackson, P. W. (1990). *Life in Classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jacobsen, G. H. (2012). *Lighed gennem særbehandling? Heldagsskoler og spredning som ekspliciteret særbehandling af etniske minoritetsbørn og udtryk for aktuelle tendenser* [Equality through differential treatment? All day schools and bussing as explicit differential treatment of ethnic minority children and expression of current tendencies] (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen.
- Kampmann, N. E. S. (2015). *Kampen om professionelt arbejde i folkeskolen: En styringsanalyse af læreres og pædagogers professionaliseringsbetingelser* [The struggle on professional work in folkeskolen: A governmental analysis of the conditions for the professionalisation of teachers and preschool teachers] (Doctoral dissertation). Roskilde University, Roskilde.
https://rucforsk.ruc.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/57132045/Kampen_om_professionelt_arbejde_PhD_afhandling_af_No_Emil_Kampmann.pdf
- Krab, J., & Andersen, R. (2015). Ind i kampen [Into the fight]. *VERA*, 2015(73), 48-53.
<https://forskning.ruc.dk/da/publications/ind-i-kampen>
- Lamont, M., & Molnár, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(1), 167–195.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141107>
- Landahl, J. (2017). Kris och internationella jämförelser [Crisis and international comparisons]. In J. Landahl & C. Lundahl (Eds.), *Bortom PISA: Internationell och jämförande pedagogik* (p. 41-63). Stockholm: Natur & Kultur.
- Larson, M. S. (1977). *The rise of professionalism: A sociological analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lund, H. H. (2012). Inklusionens økonomi er en spareøvelse [The economy of inclusion is a cost reduction]. *Dansk pædagogisk tidsskrift*, 2012(4), 17-22.

Social Closures: Reconfiguration of Professional Work in the Danish State School

- Parkin, F. (1979). *Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ratner, H. (2012). *Promises of reflexivity: Managing and researching inclusive schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen.
<https://research.cbs.dk/da/publications/promises-of-reflexivity-managing-and-researching-inclusive-school>
- Saks, M. (2010). Analyzing the professions: The case for the neo-Weberian approach. *Comparative Sociology*, 9(2010), 887-915.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/156913310X522624>
- Saks, M. (2012). Defining a profession: The role of knowledge and expertise. *Professions and Professionalism*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.v2i1.151>
- Saks, M., & Adams, T. L. (2019). Neo-Weberianism, professional formation and the state: Inside the black box. *Professions and Professionalism*, 9(2).
<https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.3190>
- Sauzet, S. (2019). *Pædagogers faglighed i skolen: Udspændtheder i litteratur og praksis*. [Professional competences of pedagogues: Spaces of opposites in literature and practice]. Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur.
- Schmidt, M. C. S. & Langager, S. (2012). Jeg er den, som står på gulvet: Jeg kan ikke sende presset nogen steder hen, så jeg tænker hele tiden at jeg må kunne mere. [I am the one on the floor: I cannot escape the pressure and I keep thinking that I have to manage even more]. *Dansk pædagogisk tidsskrift*, 2012(4), 7-15.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2017). Rankningstabellernas politik [The policy of the ranking charts]. In J. Landahl & C. Lundahl (Eds.), *Bortom PISA: Internationell och jämförande pedagogik* (p. 65-80). Stockholm: Natur & Kultur.
- Thingstrup, S. H., Schmidt, L. S. K., & Andersen, R. N. (2017). The purpose of education: Pedagogues' and teachers' negotiations in Danish primary school. *Educational Action Research*, 26(3), 354-364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2017.1351385>
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Ministry of Education (UNESCO) & Ministry of Education and Science Spain) (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>
- Ministry of Children and Education (2013a). Aftale mellem regeringen (Socialdemokraterne, Radikale Venstre og Socialistisk Folkeparti), Venstre og Dansk Folkeparti om et fagligt løft af folkeskolen [Agreement on the improvement of educational standards in folkeskolen]. Retrieved from [141010-enderlig-aftaletekst-7-6-2013.pdf](https://www.mec.dk/141010-enderlig-aftaletekst-7-6-2013.pdf)
- Ministry of Children and Education (2013b). Lov 1640 26/12: Lov om ændring af folkeskoleloven og forskellige andre love (indførelse af en længere og mere varieret

skoledag). [Act on the revision of the Act on folkeskolen and other laws. Retrieved from <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2013/1640>

Weber, M. (2003a). § 6. *Magtfordeling inden for fælleskabet: Klasser, stænder, partier*. [The Distribution of Power within the Community: Classes, Stände, Parties]. In H. Andersen, H. H. Bruun & L. B. Kaspersen (Eds.), *Max Weber: Udvalgte tekster (volum 2)*[*Max Weber: Selected Works (volume 2)*], (p. 29-43). Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Weber, M. (2003b). § 10. *Åbne og lukkede relationer*. [Open and closed Relations]. In H. Andersen, H. H. Bruun & L. B. Kaspersen (Eds.), *Max Weber: Udvalgte tekster (volum 2)*[*Max Weber: Selected Works (volume 2)*], (p.226-229). Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Whiting, M., May, S. A., & Saks, M. (2020). Social closure and veterinary professionalization in Britain: A self-interested or public interested endeavour? *Professions and Professionalism*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.3321>