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"Betwixt and Between": Leisure-time Teachers and the Construction of Professional Identities

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"Betwixt and Between": Leisure-time Teachers and the Construction of Professional Identities

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ABSTRACT

In 2014, a newly formed group of teachers graduated from Swedish universities. In addition to their qualification as leisure-time pedagogues, their degree includes teaching practical/aesthetical subjects in compulsory school. This group of teachers thus has to relate to dual professional identities and to maintain a balance between the socially oriented leisure-time centres and a goal- and results-driven school. In this article we describe their first two years after graduation, trying to get hold of their negotiation of professional identities and orientation in the professional landscape. Results shows that the graduates try to balance own ideals and hybrid professional intentions against traditional professional identities and labour market conditions and that position in a liminal phase might be crucial for the outcome.

In 2014, the first round of teachers specialised in working in leisure-time centres[1] graduated from Swedish universities. In addition to their specific education in the traditional work of leisure-time centres, these recently graduated teachers have also been educated and certified to teach a practical or aesthetical subject (usually Physical Education, Art or Music) in the compulsory school. As recently graduated teachers they have formal access to and competence in teaching areas and positions within the school system that their older colleagues in leisure-time centres do not have. In charge of a practical or aesthetical subject, they are expected to teach, make assessments, and also grade pupils. Consequently, the new group of teachers gets a dual professional role, where balance between two professional logics must be maintained; one that consists of the traditional, socially oriented work in leisure-time centres, and the other that is goal- and results-driven teaching in schools. Consequently, the professional careers of the new teachers will be staged across institutional and professional boundaries within the educational system, in the form of a balancing act between two traditions where, among other things, institutional rules (Searle, 1997), collective memories (Giddens, 1994), and cultural tools (Wertsch, 1991) differ.

Studies on teacher graduates and how they initially construct professional identities usually emphasise the first five years of teaching as crucial and as a struggle between, on one hand, trying to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be and, one the other hand, being exposed to the socialising forces of the school culture (Day, 1999). Techer identity is often

[1]It is possible to use different concepts when describing the context for the before and after school activities for school age children. In this article, we use the concept *leisure time centres*. It is also possible to call this arena after school care or school age educare.

seen as co-constructed through engagement with others in the schools cultural practice (Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). The influence of the workplace is often highlighted as playing a key role in the shaping of teacher identity (Flores & Day, 2006). However, results from recent studies have shown that teachers' personal biographies have a strong influence on their professional identities (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016).

Research on the construction of teachers' professional identity has to a large extent paid attention to this two-way struggle between workplace and biography. However, studies that take into account the complex context that surrounds the workplace are rare. In the previous study we considered the dual character of the new professional role that opens up previously unexplored career paths, where novel professional stances are required. The members of this new professional category thus find themselves in what Andersson (2013) calls the field of tension between traditions and the new policy intentions. In this field of tension they are not only supposed to balance across boundaries between two missions, they are also expected to construct identities as a new professional cadre (Croft, Currie, & Lockett, 2015). Another way of describing their position is to initially place them in a phase of liminality, they are "threshold people" (Turner, 1969, p. 95) placed "bewixt and between" (a.a., p. 107) occupational groups, and to relate this position to the notion of professional hybrids (Croft et al., 2015). A liminal phase can thus be seen as a state where identity conflicts and the construction of new identities can be managed. The way the professionals orient themselves in this position can consequently be seen as crucial for the outcome.

In the spring of 2014, a longitudinal research project was initiated with the general aim of following this newly formed group of teachers during their entry into and their first five years in the labour market. The overall aim of the project is to try to understand how individuals entering into a newly constructed and sometimes incongruous profession negotiate professional identities over time. Special attention is paid to how positions in a liminal phase affect the intended potential of these professional hybrids. Half way through the project three rounds of surveys were collected and complemented by an e-Delphi study focusing on the former students expectations of, and understanding of, their current position and their professional identity. What type of positions have they been offered and what positive things and difficulties have they encountered so far? In this article we present results concerning the students anticipatory orientation before graduation and how they oriented themselves professionally the first two years into working life.

Field Outline

The Swedish leisure-time centre is an institution with more registered pupils than upper-secondary school. Approximately 478,000 Swedish children are registered in after-school care today, which is 85% of six- to nine-year-olds (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017). This means that the leisure-time centre constitutes a large labour market in need of competent teachers. The USA and most European countries offer childcare for school children, but forms and organisation vary. Research in the area is rare. Some findings from the USA indicate that participation in so called after-school programmes is associated with improved academic performance (Hirsch, 2011). Out of the Nordic countries, only Sweden and Denmark employ higher educated staff in childcare for school children (Dahl, 2014; Pálsdottir, 2012). In spite of Sweden being the only Nordic country with a specialised university education aimed at working in leisure-time centres, the level of education among employees is low, even though it varies between municipalities (http://www. skolverket.se/om-skolverket/press/pressmeddelanden/2015/utvecklingen-i-fritidshemmen-maste-vandas-1.233371). In some municipalities only half of the employees in public leisure-time centres have a higher education, and only one fourth in non-public centres. The Swedish National Agency for Education also states that about half of the employees in non-public leisure-time centres have no education at all for working with children. The low level of education among teachers paired with a growing number of children in leisure-time centres has been noted by the Swedish government, and this issue is now high on the political agenda: "The development in leisure-time centres is so urgent

that measures and efforts are now necessary," writes the Swedish National Agency for Education (2015, 2017).

At the same time, the traditional role of the leisure-time pedagogue is changing. From the 1990s onwards the leisure-time centre has been faced with extensive reforms and changes (cf. Calander, 1999; Munkhammar, 2001; Rohlin, 2012). The integration of leisure-time centres in schools in the 1990s had the biggest impact on the work of leisure-time pedagogues (Andersson, 2013). Several studies have shown that the integration limited their room for action, which also affected their independence and professional identity (Ackesjö, 2011; Calander, 1999; Fyhr, 2001; Haglund, 2004; Munkhammar, 2001). Leisure-time pedagogues were often assigned (or assumed) assistant positions in relation to other teacher categories, often as "teacher assistants" in lessons and other educational contexts. In spite of the integration possibly being perceived as positive from the children's perspective, improving the number of staff during lessons and breaks, it was carried out at the cost of the professional identity and autonomy of leisure-time pedagogues (Calander, 1999).

Preparations for the new teacher education (State Public Investigations, 2008, p. 109; Swedish Government 2010) comprises a political ambition to address the problem and clarify a new professional identity with a clear focus on working in leisure-time centres in combination with a unique competence in a practical/aesthetical subject. Conditions are now being developed for creating a new professional identity, forming an alignment between what Dahl (2014) describes as the socially oriented leisure-time centre and the knowledge efficient school.

Theoretical Framework

In this article the decisions and arguments of recently graduated teachers have been related to theories on professional identity, boundary theories, and studies of liminality in the construction of professional identities. Identity is here understood as something that is constructed and reconstructed during a longer period of time, through interaction with other individuals, environments, and conditions. One starting point is that boundaries create professional identities in the same way as identities create boundaries. Professional identities are an aspect of existence and are constructed in relation to differences, which may mean that one describes oneself in relation to what one is not (Newman & Paasi, 1998). The construction of boundaries and construction of professional identities can thus be connected theoretically. The construction process includes relating to both the area in which one finds oneself and to other individuals on the other side of the boundary (Ackesjö, 2014).

According to Heggen (2008), qualification for professional activity is about identification with a professional field and a profession, and identifying oneself as a professional practitioner within this field. Consequently, there is a connection between perspectives on construction of identity and professional qualification. This study was initiated when students were still attending teacher education, which means that the concept of anticipatory socialisation (Merton, 1957; Sjöstrand, 1968, 1980) is important to the study. This concept tries to grasp an identification process, which aims at preparing oneself for a future group membership by assuming in advance the attitudes, interests, and values that are perceived as typical for members. During teacher education students already identify with and define themselves as future professionals, but they also identify with the values and knowledge that the future professional role expresses. The professional construction of identity is therefore a process that takes place over time, beginning during teacher education and being nurtured in several different contexts, such as academic theoretical education, practical placement studies, and introductory professional activity (cf. Heggen, 2008).

Constructions of identity include a process of orientation (Molander & Terum, 2008) in which self-reflection is an important part. The central part of this orientation process is the individual's perception and understanding of who he/she is and who he/she wants to be in different situations. In the qualification process it becomes important to create ideas of oneself in one's future and/or present professional role. From a boundary theoretical perspective the construction of professional identity can be related to questions of belonging and establishment of boundaries. The professional identity can

answer the question: "Who are we?" but also "Who are we not?" (cf. Ackesjö, 2010; Newman, 2006; Petersson, 2003). Put differently, these processes deal with experiences of belonging to certain communities, and distancing oneself from others, and identifying with one's own group. To identify with one group means at the same time separating oneself from other groups. It is about creating and preserving notions of how things should be, rather than how they actually are, and about the collective assuming common symbols and approaches (Heggen, 2008). Professions that struggle with jurisdiction, that is, being formally accepted for its members' competence and mission in relation to other professions, may, especially in a constructional phase, count on a strong support for the collective professional identity and for what is perceived as central to professional practice.

Professional hybrids that move between, or are situated in, two different professional contexts have a potential strength that arises from their ability to view issues in the organisation from two different perspectives, they have access a "two-way window" and are able to retain professional influence across multiple organisational realms (Croft et al., 2015; Llewellyn, 2001). But the hybrid role also contains identity conflicts and triggers identity transitions. In this article we try to understand how new teachers manage identity conflicts and, in some cases, move towards new professional identities by employing the concept of liminal spaces (Gennep van, 1960), where individuals are betwixt and between social positions and fall into gaps between social groups. A liminal state is usually marked by discomfort and waiting and characterised by "invisibility, darkness, wilderness, an eclipse of the sun or moon" according to Turner (1969, p. 95), who studied African tribal societies, but it is also a state that can be used to positively manage identity conflicts and facilitate movements between social positions. Existing research on professional hybrids tends to describe liminal spaces as advantageous, a way to increase organisational productivity. Croft et al. (2015) question this assumption and discuss cases where a negative and "perverse" liminal space inhibits identity transition and undermines the potential strength of the professional hybrid.

Materials and Methods

This research project is conducted in collaboration with a larger longitudinal study of teachers' work trajectories sponsored by the Swedish Research Council ("Crossroads – a longitudinal study of teachers work trajectories"). This specific study was initiated in the spring of 2014, when 40 (out of 48) students at a Swedish university, shortly before graduating from primary school teacher education with a specialisation in working in leisure-time centres, accepted a five-year participation in the study. The study should be regarded as a cohort study of an explorative and longitudinal character (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The strength of longitudinal studies is the possibility of following organisations and people for longer periods of time, and that the data can be compared over time. By assuming an initially inductive and longitudinal approach, variations in individuals' experiences and sense making can become visible and, over time, different images are constructed, which can lead to new understanding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Teachers' career paths are, however, not necessarily linear, but can be regarded as a series of interactions that need to be described and understood in several different ways (cf. Ackesjö, 2014). Consequently, this project – as well as the larger project Crossroads – uses several different approaches and theoretical lenses to describe and understand the career paths. In order to allow comparisons between cohorts studied in the larger project (teachers with other specialisations) and this specific cohort, identical survey questions were distributed. At the same time as this approach enables valuable comparisons between groups, it limits the possibilities to capture the truly specific as well as depth and essence of individual experiences. In an initial attempt to address the individual and collective process of identity negotiation we added an e-Delphi study to this cohort and will eventually conduct more in-depth interviews.

Results presented in this article are based on four initial collections of data in the project[2.] The first survey contained questions about students' expectations and understanding of their future

profession. The survey was distributed a few months before graduation (in the spring of 2014). The response rate was 100%. Answers from the following questions in the survey have been used as data in the present article:

> If you could choose a position freely, what would it be? Why?

> What expectations do you have on your future profession?

> What is "the big challenge" of the teaching profession, do you think?

Answers from the second and third survey, which were distributed digitally, were collected in the late-autumn of 2014, six months after graduation (response rate 90%) and in the autumn of 2015, 18 months after graduation (response rate 88%). The surveys, among other things, contained questions about what positions the former students had got and what positive things and difficulties they had encountered. The relevant questions for the present article were:

> Do you work as a teacher right now? If not, what is the reason?

> If you work as a teacher, what type of position have you got?

> In what type of schools are you employed?

> What practical/aesthetical subject did you study? Do you teach the practical/aesthetical subject that you studied?

> To what extent do you work as a teacher in a leisure-time centre?

> To what extent do you work as a subject teacher?

> What difficulties have you experienced during your first months as a teacher?

The surveys were followed up in the autumn of 2016 by an e-Delphi study (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2007), a method for the "systematic collection of judgments on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarised information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses" (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975, p. 10). We used a variant of the method that was developed and used in order to formulate professional knowledge (Reid, 1988). Via e-mail we requested reflections on the informant's occupational positions and orientations. We asked for comments on the results from the surveys presenting actual quotes indicating a struggle between professional roles; for example:

> I have a feeling that me calling myself a teacher in a leisure-time centre is somewhat of a provocation to teachers and leisure-time pedagogues alike. (Third survey)

The comments were compiled and returned together with new follow-up questions, allowing them to further reflect, to consider the compilation, and to return comments indicating whether the compilation agrees or does not agree with their understanding of the matter. This procedure was repeated two times during a period of three weeks. In all, 21 respondents (50% of the entire cohort) chose to participate in the e-Delphi correspondence.

Data from the surveys was analysed both quantitatively (frequencies) and qualitatively (respondents arguments were thematised). Data from the e-Delphi was first read through and then inductively analysed as we thematically categorised the responses. Themes that were generated were, for example, the balancing act between and within professions as well as considerations about leaving the profession. We then applied the theoretical framework to the themes, and began an inductive-deductive reasoning (Cohen et al., 2011), which lead to an abductive analysis of the respondents answers. The overall aim for the analysis was to describe the respondents' paths and orientations in the professional landscape and to theoretically understand their constructions of professional identities when entering the labour market.

Results

The following results section presents data from the three surveys and the e-Delphi study. With the intention of describing how the former students understand their profession and orient themselves in the professional landscape over time, the result has been divided into two themes: *Anticipatory orientation before graduation* and *Orientation work and demarcation after graduation* (Figure 1).

These two themes and subthemes will be discussed in the following.

Anticipatory Orientation Before Graduation

In the first survey (before graduation) students are asked to state what type of position they would like in school, if given a choice. Their answers provide a divided picture (Figure 2).

Towards the role of a traditional leisure-time pedagogue.

In spite of the new education granting certification for working both as a leisure-time pedagogue and as a teacher in a practical/aesthetical subject, 47% of students state shortly before graduation that

Main themes	Sub themes
Anticipatory orientation before graduation	*Towards the role of a traditional leisure time pedagogue*
	Towards a split professional role
Orientation work and demarcation after graduation	*Reality bites – intentions vs conditions*
	Protecting the traditions
	Towards a hybrid professional identity
	Experiences of a liminal space

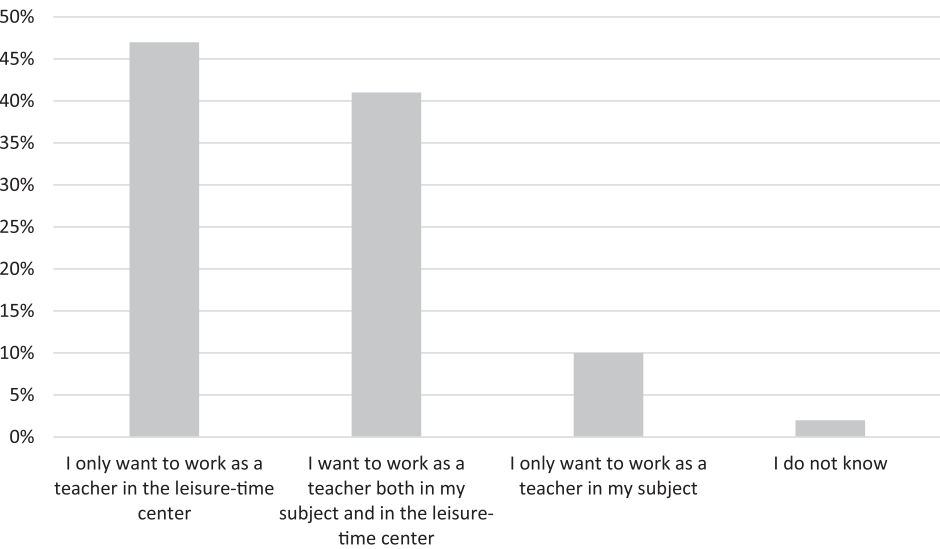**Figure 1.** Student orientations in the professional landscape.

Figure 2. Distribution desired position after graduation (*n* = 41).

they only want to work in a leisure-time centre. When they describe their expectations on their future profession, they put traditional work in a leisure-time centre first:

> The leisure-time centre is the best place for children. It's the most fun part of school.

> I want a job where I can be proud of choosing to become a leisure-time teacher.

> I really don't want to teach Physical Education, despite my competence in the subject.

In anticipation they prepare for entering the labour market by beforehand identifying with and assuming the attitudes and values that can be perceived as typical for leisure-time pedagogues. The students' arguments show how they emphasise the traditional direction of the leisure-time centre towards a socially oriented organisation:

> I have high hopes that I will become a leisure-time pedagogue who is well liked by the children and who creates joy and security in the leisure-time centre.

> To get to work with social relations and fundamental values. To create meaningful activities for children. Job satisfaction and a safe and fun place for teachers and children.

Even though the majority of students look forward to their professional careers, several of them also describe how they expect having to work hard on multiple levels. When they are asked to describe "the big challenge," the students who claim that they *only* want to work in the leisure-time centre mainly provide thoughts about how they want to contribute to the development of the leisure-time centre organisation and the status of leisure-time pedagogues, whom they refer to as "my profession":

> To get a chance to show what I want to achieve and change it for the better. To show what my profession is about and develop it.

> To participate in increasing the status of the profession and organisation.

> To craft my own professional role. To build a position within the profession that clarifies the important work being done, which makes the profession visible.

These statements indicate students' ambitions to legitimise the traditional profession. Students' statements can be interpreted as an aspiration to assert the traditional professional field of leisure-time pedagogues and their defined area of knowledge and responsibility, both towards teachers and school heads, as well as towards society and the general public. Here we can see what Heggen (2008) calls a strong collective professional identity. Students' statements indicate how the leisure-time centre as an arena still struggles for recognition and jurisdiction; they seem to view the profession and its traditional professional practice as something that needs to be defended, preserved, and strengthened. This approach recurs when students describe some of the difficulties they fear running up against:

> I'm sure it will be a struggle to persuade parents and school heads that leisure-time activities are an important part of children's learning.

> That the power perspective will predominate, so I can be overrun by a teacher.

> Resistance and lack of knowledge from teachers and school heads.

To orient oneself towards a relatively refined professional role as leisure-time pedagogue was a central and recurring thread in these students' survey answers before graduation. This orientation also includes students' ambitions to legitimise and assert the traditional professional field of leisure-time pedagogues.

Towards a split professional role.

Even though 47% of students before graduation stated that they put working in a leisure-time centre first, nearly half of the answers, 41%, indicate that there is an almost as large group of individuals who want to work both as subject teachers and leisure-time pedagogues.

> I want to work both with Physical Education and leisure-time activities. It's what I've been trained to do.

In this group we find expressions that indicate that students expect a new role, which is based on being the intended alignment between leisure-time centre and school organisation:

> I'm passionate about leisure-time activities and being able to work pedagogically in a practical manner in school.

> I want to be able to use my knowledge for instance in smaller groups, with a different teaching model. I want to explore new and more methods of teaching …

This group of students describes how they expect to be given responsibility for two organisations, two separate practices placed in two separate arenas. They are also aware that this split mission involves a balancing act between two traditions with different conditions and responsibilities. How they will handle these different missions and create the new alignment between leisure-time education and school organisation is, however, described as a challenge:

> How am I supposed to have time to work both in school and in a leisure-time centre? I'm a bit hesitative …

> I hope I can find the balance between being a leisure-time pedagogue and a Physical Education teacher.

The difficulties and challenges students describe in regard to this divided teacher role are, however, mainly about teaching the subject, making assessments, and marking. In these areas students, among other things, claim to lack competence:

> I feel that my subject, Arts, is difficult.

> I'm afraid of having to mark and assess children if I get a job as a Physical Education teacher.

> I'm also nervous about being responsible for pupils.

Their answers show that they experience both the subject itself and teaching the subject as hard. Their response indicates that they see teaching in these subjects as out-of-field teaching, where there is limited or no professional identity in relation to the subject (Hobbs, 2013). One interpretation, also in line with previously presented survey answers, may be that nearly half of students tend to anticipatorily mark their future professional practice close to a "traditional profession as leisure-time pedagogue," where the social and relational values of leisure-time education is put into focus for the teaching mission. Through numerous contacts with leisure-time centres during placement studies, among other things, students tend to identify themselves as future members of a specific context – the leisure-time centre (cf. Heggen, 2008). In the orientation towards a new professional identity they mainly seem to expect to contribute their socially oriented educational background to the already existing teaching. At the same time, half of the students before graduation already more or less distance themselves from teaching their practical/aesthetical subject. Their reluctance can be interpreted partly as a means of protecting the traditional organisation of the leisure-time centre and partly as a sign that teaching, assessment, and marking might form a controversial aspect for students oriented towards working in a leisure-time centre.

Orientation Work and Demarcation After Graduation

In the second survey the recently graduated teachers were asked to describe their working conditions six months after graduation. Results show that most of the students – 85% – have now been employed. Those not working were on parental leave or studying to complete their exams. Survey answers also show that the recently graduated teachers work in a range of different types of educational settings (see Figure 3).

One can assume that students who work in preschool class (year 0) to year 3, year 4–6 or years 7–9 also teach one or multiple school subjects. Here we can consequently see trans-boundary movements (Newman, 2006). Former students stated that they work 40–80% of their time in a leisure-
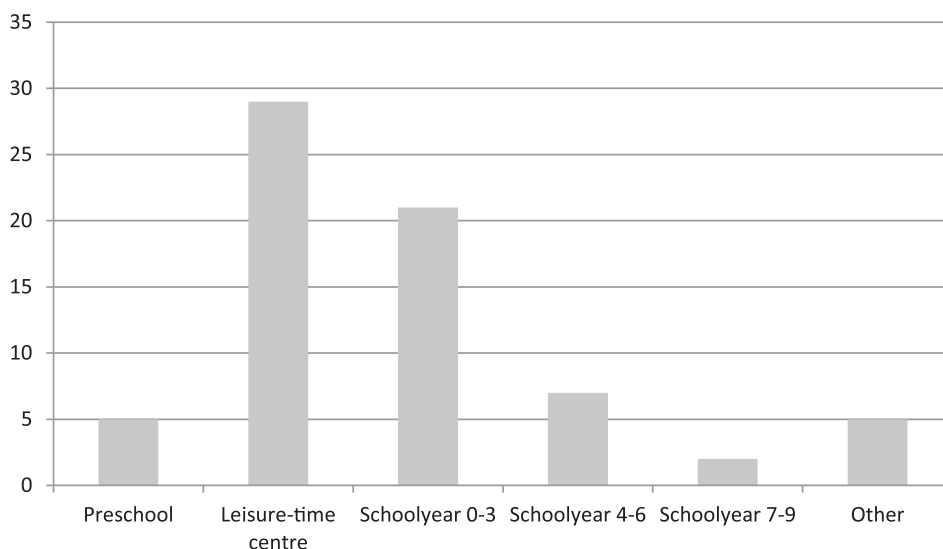
Figure 3. Distribution of positions six months after graduation. Multiple choices were possible.

6 months after graduation   18 months after graduation
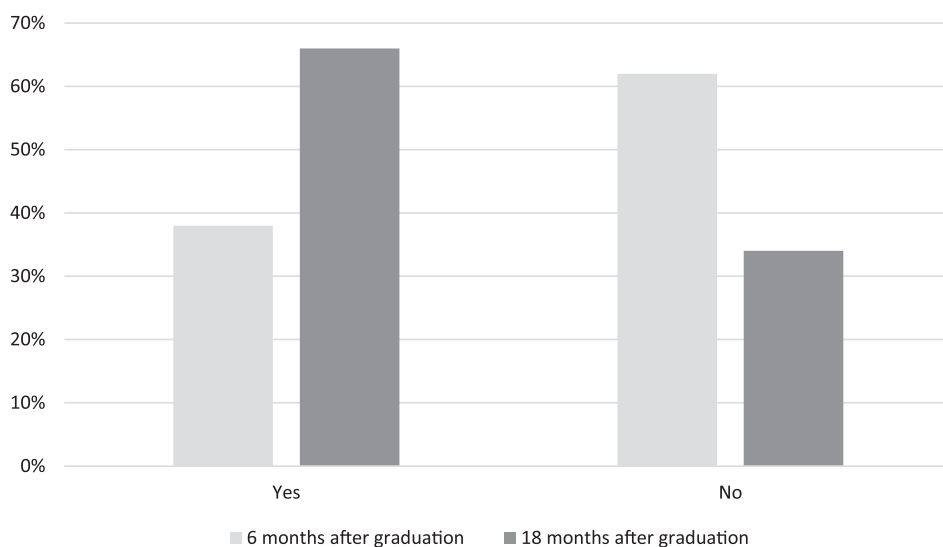
Figure 4. Distribution of answers to the question: "Do you teach the practical/aesthetical subject you studied in teacher education?" 18 months after graduation.

time centre. The rest of the time they either teach practical subjects in different classes or work as assistants in classrooms. Some are employed as assistants to specific children. Former students described how they, on top of teaching practical/aesthetical subjects, teach subjects such as Maths, Natural Science, and Language. Some of them are employed 50% in a leisure-time centre and 50% as "recess monitors." Several of them described how they are employed as "resource teachers" or special needs teachers. Results thereby indicate that the conditions of the labour market have given them opportunities to pursue many types of position, not only as teachers in leisure-time centres specialised in one practical/aesthetical subject. In fact, only 38% state that they teach the subject they are qualified to teach six months into working life (Figure 4):

After 18 months we can see that the former students are still distributed all across the educational field, with positions ranging from pre-school up to secondary school. But at the same time the number of students who teach their practical/aesthetical subjects has increased dramatically (Figure 4). Data gives no clear answer to the question as to why this number has increased, but we can assume that the organisation, after two years, has finally discovered and fully understood the dual competence of this unique group of teachers. Data from the e-Delphi study seem to confirm this:

> I have very consciously tried to point out that I am authorized to teach Physical Education, but the former principal was not entirely aware of this

> … but recently I see that our competence to teach a subject begin to awake some interest among the colleagues

Reality bites – intentions versus conditions.

Data collected after graduation indicates that the first two years on the job have involved orientation work. Many of the former students described that they have revised their perceptions of and expectations on the job and on themselves as professionals:

> As a leisure-time teacher there is less time than expected to create the desired organisation. I get to work with playful learning, but not always in the way I had expected.

> My vision was to work pedagogically, to create exciting learning situations in creative contexts and to develop children's ethical and democratic values. That has not happened.

The statements also indicated how they try to balance between own ideals, professional intentions, and the actual conditions of the profession. After entering the labour market, the recently graduated encountered a reality that differs from the images and visions they had created during their education:

> My expectations that it would be exciting and fun have been realised. However, the reality is not what I had expected. As a teacher in a leisure-time centre, I come third. School comes first, then preschool class and leisure-time centre is last. Therefore, much of my work is about supporting the other "organisations" and then in the remaining time managing the leisure-time centre. I am also alone in managing my leisure-time centre. I have no mentor or colleague to discuss things with. This is a reality that I did not fully expect. But I am learning a lot during my first year. It is definitely stimulating, albeit somewhat cumbersome and lonely.

Protecting the traditions.

The actual working conditions may thus partly overturn the existing professional intentions. However, the complexity of the conditions does not seem to affect the enjoyment of the work. On the contrary it has contributed to ideals being negotiated and renegotiated as conditions change. One such ideal, which seems to be renegotiated after entering the labour market, is how much effort can and may be spent on the activity of the leisure-time centre. That leisure-time centres are neglected while other activities, mainly the teaching activities of the school, are prioritised is a central theme in the accounts. When the individual above writes that "As a teacher in a leisure-time centre, I come third," boundaries are marked. The statement also illustrates how this individual wants to protect the leisure-time centre and does not always appreciate how the school restricts the possibilities to further develop the organisation. This notion is also reflected in other comments:

> It has however been a balancing act and not always easy. The biggest concern has been that school has taken much of my time. I have changed this now, by stressing the importance of planning time in order to deliver a leisure-time centre of high quality.

> I had hoped to have time for much more in the leisure-time centre. But the majority of the time is spent in school.

These statements, like the statements before graduation, indicate that the profession of leisure-time teacher and the activities of leisure-time centres need to be protected. The statements show how most of the

recently graduated unite around this traditional view of the profession and protect its jurisdiction – that is, to be formally accepted for their specific competence in relation to other professions (Heggen, 2008).

Towards a hybrid professional identity

But the data collected after graduation also includes descriptions of a transition into a new unique professional identity. Here the former students describe a position which is "neither … nor" or "both … and" (cf. Ackesjö, 2010), and stories emerge from graduates who seem to stand in the frontline, who assert themselves in teams and who clearly mark their professional identity as "new":

> I was well aware that it would be difficult to enter the school world with a "new" profession. I take on many battles to highlight the activity of the leisure-time centre.

> It has been very difficult to get through to the teachers. To explain my function and the competence I have as a school teacher specialised in working in a leisure-time centre.

These statements mark boundaries towards other teacher categories and school management, based on differences between both professions and missions. From a boundary theoretical perspective (Newman, 2006) these markings can be explained as them identifying as a specific group in contrast with and not joining others. In their orientation process (Molander & Terum, 2008) they try different strategies to make themselves heard and to emphasise their unique professionalism:

> On the next staff meeting in our school management area, I will however present the policy documents of the leisure-time centre, and it will be my pleasure …

> I have chosen to speak the language of the school to gain respect and understanding for the work we do during mornings, days and early evenings …

An interesting strategy is to use the parlance of the school, to choose to "talk the language of the school" to get through and gain respect for their new professional identity. They point out that they too are teachers, and in this work the conquest of the professional title seems to be a crucial point:

> I've gotten a permanent position, but I haven't been given the title *teacher* in a leisure-time centre, as I had hoped. I'm a leisure-time pedagogue, and our school head doesn't want to change that.

> I have a feeling that me calling myself a teacher in a leisure-time centre is somewhat of a provocation to teachers and leisure-time pedagogues alike.

The work to mark a new professional identity seems to be performed in some sort of two-front war. They mark themselves not only towards teachers and the traditions of the school, but also towards colleagues in the leisure-time centre:

> Meeting the old leisure-time pedagogues who have the old training and have worked for a long time. They have no knowledge of the general guidelines and the goals of the Swedish National Board of Education.

> The old colleagues don't like our passion for the profession but to us it is natural to write a pedagogical plan, as well as having a purpose with everything we do.

These recently graduated teachers seem proud to point out that they possess new knowledge that separates them from the rest. They are not leisure-time pedagogues or school teachers, they are leisure-time teachers and they construct themselves as something different, a hybrid profession within the educational system and in school. The ambition of becoming the alignment between two professional logics, with a potential strength in the ability to view organisational issues from two perspectives, is in some cases obvious:

> In my thinking I'm in between the teachers and leisure-time pedagogues quite often. Not that I would be better than someone else, instead I feel that I'm situated in both worlds, if you understand. Among the teachers, my mindset is far more aligned with the leisure-time pedagogues but still more "teacherish." I have no clear examples … more a sense that you are both at the same time.

Experiences of a liminal space

Liminality refers to a temporary state of "bewixt and between," in this case triggered by a move into an uncharted professional role. It is a period associated with uncertainty and identity conflict, usually described as leading to identity transition and culminating in a more stable positive identity (Thomas & Linstead, 2002). Despite the assumption that all professional hybrids undergo such identity transition, how they manage identity conflicts seems to be related to their experiences of the liminal space. As shown in examples above, the liminal space often is experienced as negative, as an initial period of identity conflict and invisibility: " … as liminal beeings they have no status, property, insignia … " (Turner, 1969, p. 95):

> The teachers' lack of interest in "who I am" is actually more about *why* I call myself a teacher when I have not attended a "proper" teacher education. The leisure-time pedagogues mostly snort about our new profession and do not understand why we want to call ourselves "teachers."

> At the same time as the school building is my main working area … I am not welcomed there. I do not drink my coffee in the teacher staffroom. I drink it at the leisure-time centre. My name is not included on the coffee list …

But a couple of years into working life – and for some of the newly graduated – the management of the liminal space seem to result in a beginning transition of identity and eventually in a construction of a new professional cadre in its own right:

> I feel neither as a leisure-time pedagogue, nor as a teacher. I feel like a leisure-time teacher!

> I am thinking that it is important for me, as a leisure-time teacher, to have a distinct job description and that I must take a stance and have a straightforward communication with the headmaster …

> We may therefore become an important link to bridge the gap between leisure-time pedagogues and teachers.

There are also circumstances where a liminal space can be used by individuals to move between professional groups without the necessity of establishing a new identity. A stable liminal space, experienced as positive, is constructed where the individual can embody multiple and/or conflicting identities (Croft et al., 2015). In our data we can see a few examples of this way of dealing with the dual professional logics:

> The key is to keep separate the situations during the day. To know when to step into different roles.

> I feel that I'm situated in both worlds, if you understand. Among the teachers, my mindset is far more aligned with the leisure-time pedagogues but still more "teacherish." I have no clear examples … more a sense that you are both at the same time.

In some cases, experiences of liminality can be characterised as "perverse" (Fischer, 2012). Here the identity conflict becomes stable and intense, leading to an inability to construct a new professional identity or to move between groups. In these cases the informants expressed how they have become caged in a dark gap between two professional logics:

> To leave the profession is not a thought that is foreign to me. I do not feel important or like I belong somewhere. I'm in no-man's land.

> In the eyes of my colleagues [leisure-time pedagogues], I am a *teacher* practicing *teaching* with my *pupils*. Thus, I am one of "the evil" in relation to their own view of themselves as good, with their focus on what's best for the children. Then one can imagine that a solution could be to create better alliances with the school teachers. In that case, however, the way is blocked because in their eyes I'm not a real teacher, I'm one of the new categories and thus automatically one of "the evil" even for them.

Discussion

Our ambition in this article is to try to describe how the recently graduated leisure-time teachers with competence to teach a practical or aesthetical subject orient themselves in the field of tension

between tradition and new intentions during the end of their teacher education and first period on the labour market. The strength of this study is that it allows us to follow these individuals over time. The data are not retrospective, but accounts of the present. At the same time, the longitudinal design can also be considered as a weakness. Distributed survey questions have limited the possibilities to capture the truly specific as well as depth and essence of individual experiences. However, the present study should be considered as explorative. The design of the project is still emerging and initial data has produced an overview and generated some main concerns that need to be further explored. Nevertheless, the results show how this new occupational group navigate in the professional landscape but also how they try to balance their own ideals and professional intentions against traditional professional identities and the terms of the labour market (see Figure 1). They describe a conflict between the professional ideology adopted during teacher education and the expectations and demands they experience on the labour market after graduation. This in turn creates a balancing act in the further development of the professional identity.

Results also show how students, in their construction of professional identities and in their identification with and against different professional identities (Heggen, 2008), mark themselves in the field of tension between tradition and new management intentions. We can see that they orient themselves in different directions. Many of them express a bounded identity disposition, identifying themselves with a traditional profession as leisure-time pedagogue. They put the leisure-time centre first by, before graduation, distancing themselves somewhat from teaching the practical/aesthetical subject they have studied. They seem to view the tasks of teaching in school and in a leisure-time centre as two separate professions with two different missions that are difficult to unite and they put great emphasis on describing work as a struggle where the leisure-time centre as an arena has to fight for recognition and needs to be defended, protected, and strengthened (see also Andersson, 2013).

We can see that during their education they have already adopted and created a professional identity in favour of a sense of belonging to the leisure-time centre and its fundamental values of social relations and meaningful leisure time, in opposition to traditional school values where teaching and assessment can be perceived as a controversial elements. Hence, one possible answer to why the majority of the new group of teachers choose to take traditional positions as leisure-time pedagogues could be that the teacher education, although formally training them for a new dual profession, is essentially (and personally) based on loyalty to the values of leisure-time centres with an ambition to strengthen the status and position of them. Thus, the values and logics of school-teaching risk being downplayed or portrayed as negative. A large part of internships during teacher training is also located at leisure-time centres, whilst only a minor part is located in a school setting.

Another contributing factor to why many of the former students seems to orientate themselves towards the traditional work in leisure-time centres could be that the labour market is not properly matched to the dual or hybrid competence of the new occupational group. Our data suggests that their unique competencies may not be recognised initially and that it takes some time for the occupational field to come to terms with this new profession.

We also see indications that some students assume a type of dual and split professional identity, a self-concept containing both leisure-time pedagogue and schoolteacher, or that they struggle to identify themselves as a new kind of hybrid profession – a leisure-time teacher. For these cross-boundary groups working life also becomes a struggle. Unlike the group that orients itself into a bounded disposition, this group often finds itself in a two-front war, with a sense of not belonging entirely either to school teachers or leisure-time pedagogues, constantly fighting for legitimacy. We can see that these individuals have to build their authority in their day-to-day activities and in the alliances with colleagues, rather than via a fixed position in the organisation or their specialist competence. But at the same time as this position can be characterised as a struggle, it may hold potential. If the liminal space is experienced as negative but temporary and transitional – or as manageable and even positive – professional hybrids are able to retain influence across multiple organisational realms and could become key players in the development of an organisation (Croft et al., 2015; Jarl, Fredriksson, & Persson, 2012). They have the potential to act as "two-way-windows" (Llewellyn, 2001), to mediate and

align the divisions between professional demands, and they are able to develop a "third space" between occupational logics (Whitchurch, 2008).

But what happens when the identity construction is unsuccessful and individuals get stuck in a negative and stable liminal phase that is turbulent and destructive, characterised by intense identity conflict that prevents identity transition? Then the potential of the hybrid professional is lost and the fact that peers no longer accept them as "proper" professionals reduces their influence and undermines their position in the wider organisation. One possible unwanted consequence is the risk for higher attrition rates as a result of the lack of developing an accepted professional identity.

There is every reason to continuously follow this new professional group over time, studying the construction of professional identities and how positions in liminality affect the sought after potential of these professional hybrids.

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