Analyzing Teachers' Discretion
- The Influence of Role Identity

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Abstract

School is one of the most important institutions in Western society; hence, the role of teachers is also highly important. By investigating their discretion, i.e. constraining and enabling factors, a broader knowledge regarding the working conditions of teachers can be gained. Understanding these issues is important to continuously improve the working conditions of teachers. In this paper the point of departure is to study and understand teachers' discretion through the teachers' own perception of their working conditions.

During the last 10-15 years, upper secondary school in Sweden has gone through major structural changes concerning governance and organization. The teaching commission is often described as having become extended. It is reasonable to assume that these changes have affected the teachers' working conditions, including the issue of discretion. The aim of this paper is to *investigate the impact teachers' role identity has when it comes to the level of discretion.* The research questions posed are: *Are there different ways of perceiving the level of discretion depending on role identity? How do these different views manifest themselves? How can they be enabling or constraining on the level of discretion?*

This study is based on a number of interviews with experienced upper secondary school teachers. The interviews focus on the concept of discretion in various aspects of the teachers' work. The theoretical framework is based on concepts such as discretion, control, demand, support as well as identity and role.

The Teaching Profession and Discretion

In many social service jobs where professionals provide the service, decision-making is extremely discretionary (Adler and Asquith, 1981). This is crucial in order to carry out one's tasks (Lipsky, 1980). Even if problematic, discretion is a must for employees like teachers (Davis, 1969). Whether today's teachers enjoy a high level of discretion or not is a disputed issue, and is certainly of interest in this paper. For example, Ingrid Carlgren and Ference Marton (2001:89) claim that teachers have a relatively high level of discretion regarding how the operation should be designed. Further, "*in some respects it is rather clear that the Swedish teachers have gained a larger control over the operation's design and planning*" (ibid., 2001:107). They continue by saying that at the individual school it is possible to decide on "*both content and form, how the pupils in the various kinds of classes and groups are organized, time use, defining the teaching, etc.*" In other respects, "*the control over the teachers' work has increased – different kinds of evaluations, national exams as well as the demands that the pupils should pass have contributed considerably to this*". Lennart G. Svensson (1998:46) claims that teachers have been independent in the actual task of teaching in the classroom. However, as a group, teachers have been somewhat firmly governed through the central school administration by goals, rules and

instructions. In this sense, Svensson claims that teachers have had a lack of professional autonomy over some arenas of their job, meaning that teachers have great freedom to make their own decisions, yet are constrained.

It is interesting to find out what influences the level of discretion among teachers; a high level of discretionary power can be considered positive in a job such as the teaching profession where much of the actual job involves decision-making and judgement of various kinds. In this paper it will be argued that teachers' role identity influences how they perceive their level of discretion.

The Concept of Discretion

As with any commonly used concept, various definitions exist. The etymological meaning of the word refers to judgment, particularly good judgment (Galligan, 1990). The opposite of discretionary power is said to be strict rules with no space for discretion. Generally speaking, it can be said to deal with choice. An important feature of discretion is that it contains a relational aspect (Hellberg, 1991). Hellberg claims that the concept of discretion is asymmetric because one part is subordinated to the other, though the subordination is legitimate. In this study the teachers are legitimately subordinate to the local management (their headmasters, the local politicians) as well as to the politicians on a national level. Gunnel Gustafsson (1989) discusses different levels at which discretion can be studied. These

definitions focus on either the individual professional or the collective aspect of the profession, i.e. the profession as such. Without detailing the nuances in defining the concept of discretion, discretion can be defined as either inclusive or wide, or else exclusive or narrow. K. C. Davis (1969:4) defines the concept of discretion thus: *"a public officer has discretion whenever the effective limits on his power leave him free to make a choice among possible courses of action or inaction"*. This is an example of a rather inclusive or wide definition. The use of an inclusive or wide definition may stem from the number of conditions to be considered regarding the level of discretion. In other words, being a relational concept, the different contexts may determine what is included in the definition.

"…To exercise discretion, however, requires the professional to make decisions and recommendations that take all factors and requirements into account. These factors and requirements will include organizational, economic, social, political and bureaucratic conditions and constraints".
Evetts, J. (2002), 345, 10 (2)

In this study, discretion is defined as *having the power and control to exercise one's own professional judgment in carrying out and making decisions in the daily work*.[1] This can be supported by referring to Lipsky (1980), who uses the term 'discretionary power'. Discretionary power is connected to the possibility of individual professionals, i.e. teachers, to make judgments and decisions.

The concept of control is obviously closely related to the concept of discretion, though two types of control can be defined. The first aspect is control *in* the job and the second refers to control *over* the job (Aronsson, 1990). Control *in* the job can be defined as control over *how* to do things, whereas control *over* the job is *what* should be done. In this study, control in the job can be exemplified by how the teachers plan the teaching and how they teach, and control over the job is what they are to plan, teach and otherwise do. Control in the job can be related to discretion; control over the job can be related to autonomy. Robert Karasek and Töres Theorell's (1990) now classic 'demand and control' model borders on Aronsson's idea of control, since Aronsson claims that Karasek and Theorell identify two aspects of control, i.e. control in the job and control over the work. Control in the work refers to how the tasks are done; it is restricted/limited to the actual performance of the work, and can be exemplified by the individual's possibility to determine the pace, prioritizing between tasks and how to conduct the

[1] It is crucial to distinguish between this and what is meant by being able to do what one wants. Here, the teachers' discretionary power does not concern *whatever they want*, but rather what they find to be the best way of doing things in their role as professionals. This involves not basing their decisions and judgments upon personal preferences as such, but rather exercising their role as professionals employed by the government/the local municipality, and wanting to do what is most beneficial for the pupils and the organization as a whole, and also considering the policy documents.

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tasks. This does not necessarily mean that the individual has control over her work, referring to the frames or rules of the game that form the job process. Work demand, i.e. control in the job, is the second of two main components, and deals with the psychological and physical demands put on the individual to be able to carry out her work. It is about the intensity required to carry out the job. Furthermore, Karasek claims that social interaction is a crucial component for a good psychosocial work environment. The concept of social support is connected to the concept of social interaction. According to James House (1981:15f.), different definitions exist, though they usually have many components in common. Social support can be defined as the support to an individual through social bonds to other individuals, groups and societies, and divided into belonging to one or more of the following three categories: information that leads the individual to believe she is liked, appreciated, or part of a network with communication and mutual responsibilities (House, 1981:15f.). There are three types of social support: informative, emotional and instrumental support. Research on stress and demand/control, here exemplified by Karasek, can be linked to this study, since the concept of discretion is closely connected to the concepts of demand and control and social support.

Trust can be described in terms of confidence, and deals with the teachers' feeling of being trusted – that their professional competence is given credit through trust. Trust can be referred to as an implicit or unspoken concept. A high degree of trust means that much of, for example, decision-making is left to the teachers, using their professional competence. However, whether the level of discretion in general is high also depends on the portions of the other ingredients.

Governance is a possible source of constraint in the level of discretion. Control and governance are closely related; governance can be seen as the other side of the coin. If control is about the

individual's control in her job, governance is about how the superiors' level uses their power to control their employees.

To summarize, discretion can be described and defined via the concepts of power, control, demand, social support, trust and governance.

The Creation of Discretion

Discretion can be viewed as a relational concept, and is thus created in relation to something. The creation of what is the reality is both a conscious and unconscious negotiation between the actors in the social process (Charon, 2001 and Säljö, 2000). Ference Marton (1994:28) claims that as individuals we "*develop a common-sense knowledge of the world around us and of ourselves by progressively differentiating various kinds of entities and aspects and relating them to each other*". In other words, ideas about the reality are collectively created from social processes. In many cases these ideas are so well-defined and well-established that they can easily be perceived as if they were natural. In such cases, these ideas are taken for granted in the particular context, indicating that the meaning of the reality in one context is not necessarily valid in other contexts. Opinions of what the reality is differ between different groups. In work organizations, management and employees can have different views of what the reality is. Norms and roles established within an organization form the individual's discretion (Johansson, 1992). This reflects upon John Stewart (1983:163), who claims: "*At any time there are accepted values, assumptions and beliefs reflecting established organizational interests. They will set the limits of perceived choice as well as determining choice in practice.*"

Certain research illuminates the extent and consequences of discretion for individuals and organizations. Hans Berglind (1995) claims that there is always a certain amount of discretion for personal judgments and decisions among street level bureaucrats[2]. However, it is important to consider that there is an inbuilt conflict in the role as a street level bureaucrat, one that Johansson (1992) claims comes from being a representative for an organization and being a human being. This conflict can arise when the street level bureaucrat (in this case the teacher) identifies specific needs that have not been decided

[2] Street level bureaucrat is a term used by Michael Lipsky (1980), referring to professions such as social workers, police and teachers.

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upon at the management level. Since the street level bureaucrat always has a certain amount of discretion she becomes an abureaucratic feature in the bureaucratic structure (ibid.). Michael Lipsky's (1980) classic, *Street-Level Bureaucracy – Dilemmas of the Individual in the Public Services,* deals with the borderline between policy and practice. Lipsky claims that street level bureaucrats not only execute decisions made at a management level, they also develop a kind of policy in their professional role. In Lipsky's view, there are three circumstances that create discretion, viz. the juridical aspect, the organizational aspect and the moral aspect. Rules and regulations are often indistinct and inconsequent; hence, street level bureaucrats have to interpret the rules and regulations themselves, and thus create a policy. The social context in which street level bureaucrats work is characterized by being unpredictable and complex, and it is therefore impossible to govern their work by detailed rules. Finally, the discretion that these circumstances create allows street level bureaucrats to significantly conduct their work according to personal preferences. To sum up, when the level of discretion is high, the teacher has access to a considerable repertoire and a number of decision-making alternatives (Gustafsson, 1989:10).

The concept of profession and the concept of discretion are both relational in their character; they and their meanings come about in interactional processes. In addition, the concept of role identity, central to the understanding of discretion, is also relational.

The concept of role identity[3] is central. A crucial element which sheds light on why discretion is perceived the way it is perceived, and as a clue to how creation is created, is the teachers' role identity. As will become clear, the concept of role identity also says something about the level of the discretionary power. As a teacher one will view one's professional role in a certain way – what it means to be a teacher and what the task(s) actually is(are). The term 'role identity', in this context, deals with the view which the teachers convey regarding how they view what it means to be a teacher, but also what it should be about being a teacher. Role identity is expressed through themes such as the view of the teaching task(s), the view of what competence development should be about and what colleagues are of most importance. The teachers' role identity can possibly influence how the concepts presented above are perceived as enabling or constraining factors regarding the level of discretion. To

clarify, depending on one's view on what it is or should be to be a teacher, one will perceive the very same conditions differently; differing points of departures open up for differing results.

It has been claimed that the teaching commission has changed; it is referred to in terms of an extended commission, where not only the actual teaching should be in focus, but also a social responsibility over the pupils. This implies that the teacher role, formally seen, is also changed. In Pedagogisk Uppslagsbok (1996:371f.) Lundgren defines the teacher role in the following way: *"By the teacher's role is normally meant the special professional role which teachers exercise in the school… The teacher's role can be said to consist of at least three different functions: conveying knowledge, leading work, and responsibility for care of pupils."* However, as Landahl (2006) claims, the teaching profession and what it implies about being a teacher change over time, as a response to the changing society we live in. Landahl (ibid.) uses the concept of dirt to encompass the aspects of the teaching profession that teachers themselves categorize as not really belonging to the profession. These aspects are often described in terms of metaphors with other professions/occupations – psychologist, social worker and police, for example. These metaphors give an indication of a notion of what the teaching profession should be about, Landahl claims. However, it should be noted that the dirty aspects of the profession are not something teachers are clearly and only against; Landahl uses the term 'ambivalence' to describe these aspects, which the teachers do not always feel that they have the proper competence to handle.

As the term 'role identity' itself signals, it is about the teachers' own view of their role as teachers. There are formal policy documents stating what the teaching commission is, and should be. Along

[3] The concept of identity can be defined in a number of ways. Jenkins (2004) claims that identity per se is social in its character; forming it involves interaction with others. He goes on to say that identity should be treated in terms of work, implying that it not simply is (statically) but is formed and reformed continuously.

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with changes, or estimated changes, in society, these documents change over time. Teachers belong to a professional group, and as such they develop a picture of what their role is and should be; this picture may change. Nevertheless, it cannot be taken for granted that every teacher's view at all times coincides with the current view presented in the formal policy documents. If there is a mismatch, the level of discretion may be influenced either positively or negatively. The formal commission has changed; today a stronger emphasis lies on the social responsibility over the pupils. This concept is empirical in that it seeks to identify actual views of what it means and should mean to be a teacher today – what the task(s) is(are).

Ulf Linnell (1994:115) claims that upper secondary school teachers have a stronger identity with their specific subject(s) than as teachers in the generic sense. In today's school much emphasis is laid through the policy documents on cross-disciplinarity.

Here two theoretical ideal-type-inspired definitions of role identities will be presented.[4] These two ideal types should not be regarded as something the teachers themselves explicitly claim to be, but rather are applied to indicate two empirically identified identities. The first can be called **profession representatives**, and the second can be called **organization representatives**. It must be noted that no value should be put on either of the ideal types. They are merely ways of describing and understanding the teachers' discretion; these are theoretical terms and not empirical terms which the teachers themselves use to describe their role identity. To clarify, the term 'profession representative' does not imply that this is what the teaching profession should be about, how it should be viewed or valued; nor is the term 'organization representative' concerned with value. Valuing what the profession should be about is left to others. The profession representatives identify a shift in the teaching profession and teacher role, a change they do not view as beneficial to the pupils or to themselves. This indicates that the profession representatives would perceive a lower level of discretion than their counterparts, the organization representatives. The organization representatives also see changes in the profession and in the teacher role. They perceive these changes as positive; hence their level of discretion is possibly high.

The two types of role identity lie close to a distinction between two ideal types of professionalism that Julia Evetts (2006) identifies; she sees these as discourses. Evetts presents two types of professionalism, occupational and organizational, where the two are in conflict, and the organizational gains ground in the NPM era. Organizational professionalism, Evetts (2006:2) states, involves an increase in standardization of work procedures, managerial control, *"externalized forms*

of regulation and accountability measures such as target-setting and performance review".
Occupational professionalism, on the other hand, *"is a discourse constructed within professional occupational groups and incorporates collegial authority. It involves relations of practitioner trust from both employer and clients. It is based on autonomy and discretionary judgment and assessment by practitioners in complex cases"* (ibid., 2006:2). Compared to the two ideal types of role identity in this study, it could be claimed that the organization representatives currently identify having room for both organizational and occupational professionalism. Among the profession representatives, on the other hand, a lack of room for occupational professionalism can be found.

To sum up, discretion is created in social interaction; it is a relational concept (Parding, 2006). So is the concept of role identity. It has become clear that within an organization various role identities may occur simultaneously. These role identities may impact on how the level of discretion is perceived.

Methodological Considerations

This paper is based on qualitative interviews with seventeen upper secondary school teachers – newly graduated as well as more experienced teachers. The interviews focus on the teachers' professional role and the possibility to carry out tasks with their own experiences, through their individual professional judgement, and on what enabling and constraining factors can be identified.

4 It should be noted that the term 'ideal type' is inspired by that of Weber, but is not used here in as strict or orthodox a manner as by Weber.

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Two ideal typical role identities emerged from the interviews: profession representatives and organization representatives. Already here it should be observed that every individual teacher, in all probability, cannot recognize herself entirely in these simplified role identities. This is precisely because the two role identities to be presented are ideal types and, as such, stress what is typical for each specific ideal type. To make use of ideal types is a kind of schematization of the material in terms of patterns that systematize it and render it meaningful. Hence every individual teacher need not correspond 100% to one of the ideal types. Also noteworthy is that it is not the teachers who have labelled themselves as either one or the other – this has emerged from reading and analysis of the interview material and has proved to influence the experience of their leeway for action. The labels or names used are "theoretical" references created by this author in order to emphasize just which role identity the participating teachers have. In other words, these are my labels applied to clarify a source of how leeway for action is experienced and of opportunity or obstruction as regards the creation of leeway for action. To elucidate further what each of the two role identities involves, they will next be presented briefly; a more detailed presentation is given throughout this chapter and will follow throughout the dissertation's section on results.

Results – Profession Representatives and Organization Representatives

Common to the two ideal types is that all the interviewed teachers find it a great joy to work with people and, in particular, the young. Being able to work with people and especially the young is given as a reason for choosing a teaching career. Both ideal types have the goal that the pupils should reach the level of knowledge which is required for passing the courses; with what mark depends also on the pupils' own goals.

The first ideal type is that of the **profession representatives**. This role identity is comparable to what is usually called a more traditional view of the teaching profession, where one sees the subject as central in regard to issues of work organization. The case school is not traditionally designed in terms of organization (with work units according to subject); the profession representatives express some dissatisfaction over today's basis of work organization in this respect. Those teachers who have been categorized as belonging to this ideal type place strong emphasis on what they think the profession today constitutes, but perhaps primarily on what it ought to be. They do not feel that they receive full support here through the school organization. One might say that the profession representatives experience that they work within a structure, or work-organizational order, which would not have been introduced if the choice were theirs. It must be noticed clearly that the profession representatives, even though comparisons can be made with a traditional view of the profession where the subject is in focus, are not reactionaries who work passively in an organization that they actually do not consider optimal. As will be shown, the teachers who can be categorized in this ideal type see to it that they ensure, for example, their own competence development in free time so as to keep abreast. We shall return to this during the rest of the chapter. In sum, the profession representatives can be said to experience

demands for being something other than what they wish to be – organization representatives. It can be noted that the large majority of the teachers are profession representatives. Yet it should be added that, despite this, no claims are made for advancing any statistical generalizations, as was also explained earlier in the methodological framework.

The **organization representatives** would in all likelihood, if asked, say that they too were profession representatives. But this actualizes the content of what the teaching profession is, or should be; these teachers have a perception of the profession which is distinct from that of profession representatives. The teachers categorized in this type have a perception of the profession more in line with the formal school organization, chiefly as regards how the work should be organized. They speak in terms of a changed upper secondary school and a changed commission, on which they take a positive view. This has the result, for instance, that a changed work-organizational basis is not seen as problematic or negative, since this very way of organizing the work is considered to be a contemporary one and to benefit the pupils. In other words, the teachers classified as organization representatives can see that they, too, are representatives of their profession; but they have internalized the idea of the new changed way of organizing the school, which becomes clear chiefly through the interdisciplinary

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work-teams, a new organizational design that they see as part of the profession. In concrete terms, Olle and Camilla can be classified as organization representatives while other participating teachers have been classified as profession representatives.

□*The primary activity, well, it*□□□□□

A dimension of content can be applied to the role identity. This has to do with what the teaching profession involves today and should involve – what competence development is regarded as valuable, which colleagues one sees as valuable, and why these in particular are valuable. In the teachers' reasoning about what their work today involves and what it involved previously, there is also a clear evaluation of how they would like it to be, which demonstrates their role identity. To illustrate the reasoning: the profession representatives describe what the teaching profession involves today in terms such as core activity or primary activity, and contrast this with terms such as side-lines. Anna thinks that *"As the **primary activity** that I work with, it doesn't give a higher salary and that's completely crazy."* She means that the part of the job which involves instruction, and is normally defined as the traditional picture of the teaching profession, has a low priority today among superiors. Anna is sceptical about this as she thinks the part in question is the very essence of the teaching profession. Also interesting to note here is that Anna refers to what she calls the primary activity. One may ask what really comprises the primary activity, or the core activity as some of Anna's colleagues call it. By looking at what is not thought to belong to the primary or core activity, one can get an indication of what that activity in fact is.

*"...in the activity itself we have acquired many more of these **side-lines** that are connected, we're supposed to join school-development groups, take part in competence-development groups, be part of enjoyment groups at school, and all this is also salaried work, so that if it were only..."* Anna Work-tasks that belong today to the teaching profession such as school-development groups, competence-development groups and enjoyment groups are not seen as falling exactly within the range of what is characterized as the core activity; they are seen rather as side-lines. In contrast, according to Anna, is *"...**my core activity**, what I do **together with the pupils...**"* Here it becomes clear that what constitutes the core activity is seen as time with the pupils, instruction and the preliminary and subsequent work with it. Tina, 9, describes this explicitly: *"Yes, then there was really just one thing and that was the lessons and work before and after the lessons. Everything had to do with the lessons then."* She thinks that now *"There is so much **else** than **the actual teaching job**. It has grown exponentially, one might say."* This could be seen as a strong expression and a firm emphasis that there is a great difference in what it means in practice to be a teacher today compared with previously. Tina also thinks that *"...now there are any amount of **other** things. There are **meetings and everything** that you fix nowadays."* The term **other** is used here as a contrast to what is defined as the core activity, namely what concerns the pupils in the form of instruction and work before and after it. The term refers for example to meetings, and here too it becomes clear what is most important. Nina agrees and says: *"I think that the instruction, in any case, is most important. But there is a lot **else**."* Nina plainly states where the emphasis in the work should lie – on the instruction.

Already now it is evident that the profession representatives see that the actual content of the teaching profession has shifted to dealing more with matters which they do not directly connect with what they call the core activity. One can also note that the profession representatives are not uniformly positive in their attitude toward this. The additional work-tasks that have arisen are experienced as burdensome, which can be linked directly to their being seen as not belonging to the core task. Moreover, it can be observed that the instruction in the teacher's own subject is what is central. *"...my task is to give the pupils a stable foundation to stand on when it comes to **my subject**"*, says Alicia. One's own subject is what every profession representative focuses upon.

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The organization representatives, too, speak of the content of the profession as changed. They are partly negative toward tasks that they also characterize as *"more than being a teacher"* (Christina), but they regard the actual organization of the pedagogical work as positive. Eric, 13, who has worked as a teacher for a long time, thinks that *"One needs to meet new people, new young colleagues, and reconsider. Can you imagine if you sit with five or ten persons for 40 years, you're the world's best at everything. Nobody can persuade me to begin to change my way of instructing then."* In Eric's statement it is clear that he takes a generally positive view of changes. He is not really talking about today's working situation in a problematizing way, unlike his colleagues who are profession representatives. Eric observes rather that *"The upper secondary school has changed now, Karolina..."* However, Eric believes that he is probably a little different from many of his contemporary colleagues and those who have long worked in the teaching profession. *"But I reason with other teachers too and I don't know, not everybody agrees with me, they would probably be more negative to several of these questions you have asked. I don't know why it is... So I'm probably a bit unique in being so old and still thinking school is fun."* This reflection proves to agree with the interview material which the present study builds upon.

Christina, a recently graduated teacher, clearly demonstrates her identification as a teacher in a programme team, rather than with a subject. This emerges when she speaks in terms of "we" when referring to her colleagues in the team. *"**We** have an opportunity to make the best X-programme, **we** have thought of doing this, it is **our** vision – Sweden's best X-programme. And that's what **we** are trying for. So **we** are now planning for the autumn, **we** will have total integration in the courses, not only in the courses but the whole year-course. For example, I will have year-course three, then in year-course three they study religion, psychology, pedagogical leadership and so on, and **we** are reviewing what we can do together. **We** can have religion, psychology and pedagogical leadership in the same block and then **we** study block-wise, so that the pupils get a guideline, and then they get a little more... The programme team is planning this..."* Furthermore, one learns that total integration of courses is something Christina's programme team is working with, which she sees as positive.

□**Competence development is**□□□

What view the teachers take of competence development, what it consists of today, and what it should consist of, are aspects that also show which role identity the teachers participating in the study have. Why competence development is treated in this chapter, which deals with the teachers' role identity, has to do with the fact that the view one takes of what competence development should comprise also demonstrates the teachers' general outlook on the teaching profession, what it involves and what it should involve. Competence development can be defined in diverse ways. One way is to distinguish between the teacher developing herself in her own specific subject and developing herself in regard to more general didactic and pedagogical issues. What competence development concerns today, but perhaps primarily what one wishes that it would involve and deal with, will turn out to differ between the two ideal types. On the whole it can be said that the profession representatives prefer to see that their own subject is dealt with in competence development, whereas the organization representatives take quite another view. Here the teachers' voices with respect to competence development will be presented, as part of positioning the teachers' role identity.

The profession representatives speak on the one hand of what the concept of competence development implies for them, and on the other hand of whether they think they get this and why. Competence development concerns learning new things. *"Competence development means that I get to **learn something new**,"* says Tommy. But as noted above, this learning may focus on different things. For the profession representatives, it is clear what one chiefly wants to learn more about – the focus is on the subject.

Preferably it should be possible to relate this material directly to one's own subject. *"I do learn something new then [on general competence-development days], but I think more of **developing my subjects**..."*, continues Tommy. The focus on one's own subject emerges plainly. It can be asked why one is focused on one's own subject. The answer must lie partly in the descriptions given by the profession representatives regarding competence development in subjects. Being allowed to learn

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something related to one's own subject is described in terms of ***"nourishment"***. The purely subjectbased competence development is described thus: *"Things one **can make use of**"*.

Competence development is viewed differently by the organization representatives than by their colleagues who are profession representatives. Granted, even the teachers who are categorized as organization representatives see that there is a point in learning more within one's own subject. Yet they think it more important that competence-development days should treat issues which all teachers can make use of. This is related to the changed manner of organizing the upper secondary school. *"But at the same time we are so close to each other that we must learn to work together. The upper secondary school has changed now, Karolina, since 1995"*, says Eric.

In sum, it can be said that the profession representatives consider the instruction in one's own subject as the primary core activity, and other work-tasks as secondary. Thus the profession representatives see the work-task more as a term in the singular, when it concerns how they would like things to be an how they themselves view the teaching profession. This distinction is shared by the organization representatives in one sense, but not in another sense. The content of the work is not shared by the two ideal types; the organization representatives regard today's work-organizational basis, with crossdisciplinary work-teams, as a natural development of the school. To a certain extent, they see the work-task in the singular, when it comes to what is to be done – instructing the pupils. But the way in which this is to be done can be described rather in the plural for the organization representatives, at any rate if one then refers to work which crosses the traditional subject boundaries. This is not something the profession representatives speak warmly about. The organization representatives do mention new added work-tasks, but not by contrasting how things functioned previously: they do not set such a negative value on the new work-tasks as such. For the additional work-tasks are tasks that have not been added by the teachers themselves, but originate in a wider perspective from political decisions at a national level, as well as local decisions about the school. Thus, the profession representatives see the changes more in terms of deterioration than improvement and natural development.

It☐s lucky we have each other☐☐

The last question concerning the dimension of content in role identity deals with one's colleagues. More specifically, the teachers' reflections are presented as regards which particular colleagues have the greatest importance and why, in order to deepen the picture of diverse role identities. Here, too, a difference between the two ideal types has appeared in the material.

The profession representatives, as was discernible above, are at home principally within their subjects. There are concrete examples of why one sees the closeness to subject colleagues as so important; this closeness is rewarding in several respects. Partly, the profession representatives view their subject colleagues as supportive and helpful, since they share the same subject and are often faced with similar situations and problems. By having experiences in the same area, yet still different experiences, one can give and take, not only emotionally but also practically. Elisabeth says:

*"Formerly one sat with one's subject colleagues, during the first 20 years, as long as I've worked, and that's since 1978, and it was a **magnificent support** because then there were perhaps ten to eleven who had the same subject orientations, so that besides being work-comrades and working in the same corridors one had **the same subject area** and got **enormous help from each other all the time**. There was a **reciprocal exchange** both in mental support and in making material that others used, and one got it back too."*

Maria also expresses the added value of subject colleagues in terms of practical support: *"As soon as somebody had found a good stencil or good material, one mentioned it immediately since one sat at the same place, so one was constantly supplemented and helped..."* Subject colleagues are thus seen as a sounding-board in the work with the pupils, an arena for discussing pedagogical questions in the

subject. Tina holds the same view: *"I have a colleague who teaches math, and we work very much and well together, and it is **really cool** that this happens. So **we prepare and think out things together** and **we do things together and compare** and if we come up with something **we share it** and so on, **within the math subject**, that is."* The collaboration with a subject colleague is described as really cool; this collaboration gives a synergy effect in the form of their planning and thinking things out together, doing things together and sharing what they find with each other. It is clearly expressed that this concerns a specific subject.

The organization representatives do not refer to their subject colleagues to the same extent as do the profession representatives. Rather, what is described as *"really cool"* by the profession representatives and as gotten from their subject colleagues is something which the organization representatives get from their colleagues in the programme team.

That Christina sees the programme as central, and thus also her programme team colleagues, follows clearly from her way of expressing herself. *"I think it looks good because **we** have network meetings, **we** are BF-teachers, **we** meet once per year with other BF-teachers from all over Norrland, and there **we** exchange thoughts and ideas."* Christina speaks in terms of "we" when mentioning her programme colleagues. Further, she speaks in terms of "we" when referring to the work with pupils. Here again, the programme colleagues area central; it is with them that she works on a daily basis.

Concluding Remarks

Role identity concerns how one views the teaching profession, and thereby also quite practically one's role as a teacher. Two ideal types have emerged in the material. To summarize, it can be seen that the profession representatives more strongly experience that the structures they work within do not agree with their actual role identity. A discrepancy between the organization and the profession is noticeable. The profession representatives think, for instance, that they meet their subject colleagues *"far too seldom"* today (Nina). It should be pointed out that the school today is organized through crossdisciplinary work-teams in which the organization representatives feel more at home than do the profession representatives. The organization representatives, for their part, are closer to the way in which the school is organized today. With them, there is no explicit discrepancy between profession and organization. Thus, the profession representatives are in a position where they must defend or take care of their leeway for action more than the organization representatives need to do. A field of tension between organization and profession is recognizable, especially for the profession representatives – due to a sense of belonging in a certain role identity that does not agree for all teachers with the organization's formal and official goals. From the teachers' perspective, this can be seen as extremely problematic. Yet it must be kept in mind that, when one belongs to a profession, membership of an organization is almost always necessary in order to exercise the profession, and means giving up certain rights to self-determination (Svensson, 2006).

Two ideal types have been presented as central for the teachers' experienced leeway for action: profession representatives and organization representatives. Which role identity one has can thus influence how one experiences one's leeway for action. A role identity that lies closer to today's school organization entails experiencing a greater leeway for action than otherwise.

It is interesting to observe that two role identities exist and are thereby included. This suggests partly that, despite the control documents speaking of a changed teaching assignment, different role identities prevail. Consequently a need can be seen to discuss the teaching assignment and the conditions provided for it. A reasonable assumption is that those teachers whose identification lies closer to the school organization's and formal control's concept of the teaching assignment experience greater enjoyment and satisfaction in their work.

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