

New Situations, New Professionalism in Swedish Adult Education: Work-Life History in Discernable Restructuring Shifts

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Introduction

The basis for the paper is the work-life history studies I am currently conducting, of a handful of teachers who have worked in municipal adult education (komvux) since the early 1970:s. These studies are one of five sub-projects within a research project *Transforming incentives in Swedish Adult Education*, funded by the Educational Sciences Section of the Swedish Research Council. My interest for life history studies focusing relations between ‘private’ (work) troubles and public (work) issues (cp. C Wright Mills 1959) has developed through my journey from being a teacher in municipal adult education to conducting doctoral studies.

As Cole puts it: “...life history places narrative accounts and interpretations in a broader context – personal, historical, social, institutional, and/or political. Thus, life history studies go beyond ‘the personal’... life history draws on individuals’ experiences to make broader contextual meaning (Cole in Hatch & Wisniewski 1995, p. 116). I have completed two work-life histories and am about to complete the third. Altogether there will be five work-life history texts. The way I have worked with the three teachers in the production has been through a collaborative methodology with each (cp. Goodson & Sikes, 2001, pp. 102-103). Each text is about 30 pages, and structured as a narrative analysis (cp. Polkinghorne 1995), and the teachers have been involved in the textual and contextual construction. I have structured the material, sent them early drafts of the life history texts, which then have been discussed and revised, new drafts have been sent, discussed again etc. I have been the main provider of the contextualizing and analysing parts of the texts, which have also been discussed and at some occasions revised. This has been the procedure with each teacher, until an agreement of “their” final work-life history product has been reached.¹

In this paper, themes of professionalism in these work-life history texts are the centre of my attention and focus of analysis. The *time-space* of the two teachers’ work trajectories analysed (cp. Hägerstrand 1978, 1982) is from the early 1960:s until today, and involves three ‘eras’ (two discernable restructuring shifts) in the trajectory of Swedish municipal adult education, (1) from centralization to decentralization in the early 90:s, and (2) the establishment of quasi-marketization of adult education in the late 90:s, with municipal order boards and procurement processes. The two teachers – Gustav and Anna – work in two different municipalities, and have worked in their respective municipalities since the early 1970:s.

¹ Cp. Heron & Reason 1997 and their writings on ‘The inquiry method within a participative worldview’, in which “critical subjectivity is enhanced by critical intersubjectivity”. In this form of research both researchers and subjects engage together in democratic dialogue as co-researchers in designing, managing and drawing conclusions from the research.

Background story: Three eras in the trajectory of Swedish municipal adult education

The restructuring of the education-state relationship in Western society and the concept of *restructuring* has been discussed and scrutinized by many, from various angles and aspects (e.g. Green 1997, Whitty 1997, Dale 1997, Hargreaves 1997, Lindblad & Popkewitz 2004). In the trajectory of Swedish municipal adult education three eras can be distinguished, with diverse ideas on how the education-state relationship is to be structured.

First era: Centralism

Since the late 1960s, Sweden has had an “institutional structure” of formal adult education (cp. Abrahamsson 2001) – *municipal adult education (komvux)*. The 1967 Adult Education Reform was a result of the school reforms initiated by the social democratic government in the early 1960s, in which the parallel school system was abandoned and a nine-year compulsory school was introduced as well as a modernized secondary education. As Lindblad and Popkewitz put it: “...the State functioned through a monopoly paradigm, where the principles of management embodied a centralism, a universalism, a social engineering and a myth structure of national consensus”. The institutional structure of municipal adult education was introduced in 1968, with every municipality obliged to offer the corresponding elementary and secondary education for adults. Adult education was the means to provide a ‘second chance’ for those who had been denied that opportunity earlier – research of Husén and Härnqvist had shown that there was a large “educational reserve” or “reserve of talent” of adults who had not been able to pursue education when young but who had the intellectual capability of doing so. (cp. Rubenson 2001). Four goals for all state-financed adult education were gradually formulated between 1967 and 1975 in a series of government bills: 1) equality, 2) democracy, 3) economic growth and 4) the satisfaction of individual preferences. As Fransson and Larsson point out in a report from 1989, “the goals still apply as general goals today” (Fransson & Larsson 1989). As argued by Wass (Wass 2004), this is still the case today, in 2004. Thus, the field of municipal adult education has had the ‘same’ goals through the three eras that can be distinguished.

Second era: Decentralization, goal-steering and ‘extended professionalism’

The Swedish government proposition dated 1990/91 about responsibilities in schools stated that the traditional way of controlling public activities by means of a detailed state regulation should be brought to an end and that control must instead be ... by parliament stating objectives and frameworks but handing over the responsibility for execution to the people who work in the municipalities and their districts. (Prop 1990/91:18. p. 17). In accordance with this proposition, the municipalities took over the responsibility for the employment of the teachers and the schools and a parliamentary committee was established to draw up proposals for a new national curriculum, introduced in 1994. Ingrid Carlgren, a member of the committee for the curriculum of 1994, discusses how goal steering in the early 90:s was “put forward as letting professional freedom substitute steering by regulations” (Carlgren 1994, p. 25). As Carlgren puts it in an article in a later article dated 2000, “restructuring created a situation where teachers were supposed to discuss and select content as well as methods and formulate goals as well as criteria for grading” (Carlgren 2000, p. 359).

The so-called school development agreement of 1995, a five-year regulation of the teachers' employment conditions, also contributed to the restructuring process and decentralisation. In this agreement, individual salary setting was introduced, regulated work time was set, and local reorganisation of the schools as well as new pedagogical work methods were emphasized. The idea of professionalism was strongly formulated in the text enclosed with the agreement. The rhetoric pointed at 'extended' responsibilities, 'extended' professionalism and greater autonomy for the local schools, and described the professional teacher as the key to 'school improvement'. (Sundkvist 2000 pp. 236 – 237).

Third era: Reforming adult education: Quasi-markets and 'flexibility'

With the start of the national government five-year programme, The Adult Education Initiative (AEI), a third era can be distinguished. This programme, comprising some 100 000 educational places for adults, had four important perspectives – (1) the renewal of education and labour market policy, (2) equitable distribution and (3) increased growth and (4) was meant to contribute to the development and renewal of adult education both in terms of content and working methods as well as in the exchange of ideas and experience between municipalities and educational organisers (Ministry of Education and Science, U99.001). As formulated by Rubenson: "The goal is that over a five-year period, adult education will be reformed and developed so that it will be better able to meet the challenges that the individual, working life and society will be facing in the new millennium". (Rubenson 2001, p.333)

These ideas are similar to those formulated in the 1994 curriculum (Lpf 94) and in the 1995 school development agreement. However, although the governmental strategy behind the AEI was based on a notion of decentralisation, the focus was on the municipalities and their *organisational* structure. The AEI became a joint task for the State and the municipalities. The government financed and monitored the initiative on a national basis and each municipality was responsible for its own local organisation, planning and implementation. Unconventional methods were encouraged. The municipalities could choose between organising the education themselves or in conjunction with other municipalities or educational organisers. (Ministry of Education and Science, U99.001).

However, through the money provided in the AEI, the government supported the development of so-called meso arenas, and of a competitive market with a range of 'providers'. This shift of franchising is described by Beach (2003) as a way in which politicians use a constructed quasi-market to mediate between the interests of the state, private capital and the public and in which education is reduced to a market commodity with a price. The two municipalities where Gustav and Anna work have, from the start of the AEI, both chosen to develop a model with a municipal board as a purchasing agency for the supply of adult education, and a number of educational organisers as providers. In Anna's municipality komvux holds 30% of the 'volume' today (read 2004). In Gustav's municipality komvux was, in 2001, turned into a freestanding company owned by the city council, and in 2002 the company lost its mandate in the tendering processes. Gustav today has a different job.²

² All but one of interviews for the work life history study of Gustav were carried through before he lost his job, as most of the co-production of the text.

The trajectory of municipal adult education: Same goals but altered meanings

As was stated earlier, the field of municipal adult education has had the “same” goals through though its trajectory:

- 1) equality
- 2) democracy
- 3) economic growth
- 4) the satisfaction of individual preferences.

I.e. the words are the same, but in the time-space of 1968 – 2004 the concepts have changed meaning. The idea that adult education is linked to (3) the development in/of the labour market and that it provides economic growth, i.e. the idea of human capital, is still a core idea, as are the ideas of (1) equality and (2) democracy: ‘a second chance’ is needed in a democracy, not everybody has had a fair ‘first chance’. These are arguments that still flourish in policy documents about adult education. But, just as Lundahl has shown in her analysis of Swedish policy texts on education produced during the 1990:s, the concept of equality is not discussed or problematized – rather there is a silence on the issues of social inclusion and exclusion. One of her interpretations is that “...social equality is just a sign or a signal, emptied of its former meaning.” (Lundahl 2000, p. 192). A silence about new kinds of inclusion and exclusion can be inferred and articulated, partly through new categories of success and failure – the majority of selected policy texts explicitly include students “that are motivated, alert, inquiring, self-governing, flexible, responsible ...” (ibid.).

Not surprisingly, the idea of (4) the satisfaction of individual preferences has had an upswing. With the Swedish membership of the European Union the concept of the individual and his/her lifelong learning has become central (cp. Abrahamsson 2001). In the work-life history texts, there are several examples that changes of meaning connected to the goals, new shades of meaning of the concepts, are a source of frustration.

On professionalism

Initially, a distinction between ‘professionalization’ and ‘professionalism’ might be put forward, in accordance with Hargreaves & Goodson (1995), who, in their *Teachers’ Professional Lives: Aspirations and Actualities*, define ‘professionalization’ as a social and political project or mission designed to enhance the interests of an occupational group, whereas *professionalism* has to do with *something which defines and articulates the quality and character of people’s actions within that group*. In this paper, themes of professionalism in the work-life history texts are the centre of my attention and focus of analysis. Thus, the focus of analysis is on themes that have to do with ‘the quality and character of people’s actions’, and more precisely, my focus is on new situations and changes and stabilities as regards to ‘quality and character’ of actions in these situations.³

³ My using of the word *situation* is from the way the concept is used in time-geography. (See e.g. Hägerstrand 1982 and Nilsson 1994, p. 41.) In ordinary language the word situation refers to “a position of condition at the moment” or a position or condition with regard to surroundings”. Both formulations, and the second most clearly, indicate that a situation does not present itself in general but has to be seen from the vantage point of somebody or something... In a more limited and apprehensible sense, *a situation takes shape as such only in relation to a defined direction of change or action*. (Hägerstrand 1982, p. 325, my italics.) My discussion on new situations (See the title of this paper) is in relation to ‘defined direction of change or action’.

The question of changes of teacher professionalism in relation to the restructuring of education has been discussed and scrutinized by many, from various angles and aspects, e.g. old professionalism vs. new professionalism (David Hargreaves 1994), and (new) extended, 'enhanced' professionalism vs. (new) de-professionalized, imposed, and proletarianized professionalism (Apple 1989, Densmore 1987, Hargreaves 1994, Hargreaves & Goodson 1995, Klette 2000). But, as Day (Day 2000, p. 127) puts it: "Much more empirical work needs to be carried out on what it means to be a professional over a career span". In his analysis of stories in which fourteen teachers attending a part-time Master's degree course wrote about how their personal and professional lives had been affected by the 1988 Educational Reform Act and subsequent policy initiatives, the data demonstrates that "notwithstanding considerations of the changing balance of power, deteriorating conditions of service, ideologically driven economic market imperatives and increased intensification and complexity of their working lives, teachers have retained commitment to the moral purposes of teaching." Although there had been considerable personal cost, there was no suggestion from any but one of the fourteen teachers that teaching had become 'just a job'. (Ibid. p. 125)

On poiesis and praxis

The notion of 'just a job' can be analysed by help of the Aristotelian twin conceptions of action/practice: *poiesis* and *praxis*. Praxis refers to activity with a goal within itself. Its aim is not the 'production' but rather the formation of activities in a certain way. Its force is internal and includes the complex of ethical issues relating to intentions, motives, purpose and reasons. Its purpose is correct judgement or judiciousness, some "morally worthwhile good" (cp. Coulter 2002). Praxis is 'doing action'. This is opposed to poiesis, 'making action', i.e. an activity whose aim is to bring something into existence. Thus, the force of poiesis is a productive force, an activity that develops into a product. The notion of 'just a job' suggests a technical and instrumental attitude, a poiesis deprived of praxis – i.e. deprived of ethical issues and concerns of correct judgement or judiciousness or something morally worthwhile good. I'm not sure that this was 'the case' for person no. 14 in Day's study.

As Ramirez has argued, praxis and poiesis are inevitably intertwined (Ramirez 1995, p.123, p. 146.)⁴ In the work-life history texts, personal and professional standpoints (read praxis) are often articulated, related to the means in which adult education is to be 'produced' (read poiesis) during each era. The question is what can be chiselled out, concerning the intertwinement of poiesis and praxis.

Three eras in the trajectories of Gustav and Anna

Era 1:

Gustav, who, in 1974 at the age of 25, began teaching math and physics at evening classes at komvux, describes how "he was one of the youngest in the class" and recalls "the motivated

⁴ For a good review in English on poiesis/praxis, see Coulter's article (2002): "What counts as action in educational action research?". My way to these conceptions has been via Ramirez (1995), whose writing is in Swedish.

educational reserve” and the “goal-oriented students who expected a lot from the teachers”. He talks about the spirit of the time: “I happened to begin when there was this spirit of the time, when komvux was being built up and expanding”. Connected to this spirit of the time was Olof Palme, the minister of education at the time, and Gustav refers to him and the spirit of education (Swedish: ‘bildningsanda’ and ‘kunskapsanda’) that he mediated. Gustav talks about the high level of ambition of the teachers at the komvux where he taught, and he remembers how he was challenged and sat at home in the kitchen during late evenings, preparing his math examples and different explanations:

- There was a high level of ambition and the teachers regarded it as very important that the time in the class was well spent. I thought it was very stimulating to explain math and physics, and I spent a lot of time preparing good lessons, thinking about how I should explain things in different ways.
- We teachers saw it as very important to keep this high standard, so that the students could achieve their grades and go on and do well at the next level. It was simply a question of quality – the students wanted the maximum from their classes. These students studied because they wanted to – they had ambitions and the teachers saw it as their roll to make the studies efficient and interesting.

With praxis and poiesis as analytical tools, we see how the poiesis where Gustav initially started his teaching at komvux was a matter of ‘making’ adult education of high quality, preparing good lessons, producing different explanations, matching high expectations, and the praxis he develops is closely intertwined to this role.

Anna’s depiction expresses similar features. She started teaching at komvux in 1968, at the age of 25. She talks about the fact that there were many students at the time, that hadn’t gone to school more than 7-8 years:

- At the time there were many older students in our classes, for whom school subjects were easy. They were quick-witted, but they had, naturally, quit school after the eighth grade. When they came back to school, to komvux, after say 10 – 15 years, they were highly motivated and they did brilliantly.

Anna initially taught mainly at comprehensive school, but from 1976 she has solely been teaching at komvux.

- I thought it was a completely different kind of work, only teaching adults. Adults are interested in a completely different way.

She describes how she planned her teaching carefully, and how it was important for her to master the content they worked with in class.

- My classes were praised by the students. I am good at narrating and I spent much time preparing my lessons, finding interesting material, e.g. in my history classes: pictures of architecture, slides, maps ... to illustrate.

Both Gustav and Anna emphasize that their teaching was directed to match the requirements in the national tests and that these were also the expectations of the students. Anna:

- At that time, the national tests in English tested grammar proficiency – so we worked with that in class and we constructed similar tests, so they would be well prepared. I think it is important in order to understand why we worked the way we worked with grammar: At that time the goals were different, e.g. with grammar proficiency. And the grading at that time was group-referenced, and the average grades at the end of the course were not allowed to differ more than one or two tenths from the average grade at the national tests. We worked in accordance with the curricula – it is important to understand that.

Both talk about assessment criteria conferences, about the problems of measuring and the focus on equitable grades. In Gustav's city there were several komvuxes and once or twice per term all the math teachers met at a conference, where the themes were what parts to focus on in the course, to what extent, test constructions and basis for grading. Gustav talks vividly about this – they had 'intense discussions' at these meetings. There was always a teacher or two who was really upset about some part of the test, having to give the students a test constructed in this or that fashion. And Gustav reflects critically on this, as well as something that was not focused at the time being: there was little or no discussion on approaches to knowledge: "That was so to speak every teacher's own business". But Gustav draws a parallel to teacher education at the time being, which didn't either focus on approaches to knowledge, but was normative and illustrative.

Anna expresses her concern for constructing equitable tests, but problematizes the content of the courses. She has a lengthy description of 'the boring English textbooks and workbooks', which served as the way to attain the goals of the course but which 'made a stimulating discussion impossible'. During teacher education she had had two 'gurus' and was influenced by them to only use the target language and that conversation was very important, something she struggled with to accomplish in various ways, despite the 'boring textbooks'. She also points to the fact that in the subject History, there was a lot of facts to be checked at tests, so that the students got equitable grades. Gradually, she got more and more frustrated about this, but found no good solutions on how to do things differently. The courses didn't have many hours, and there was a lot to cover, in accordance with the course syllabus, but the situation hindered opportunities for good discussions.

Anna has an exposition on komvux' conditions up until the late 80:s. Komvux was housed in the building of a upper secondary school, and the teachers at komvux had no workroom. For her, it is evident that the 'development' of adult education came when they moved out of the building, when they could arrange better schedules for the students and when the teachers got a workroom where they could place their materials, and could plan together and produce things together.

To sum up: It is noticeable that the 'professionalism' developed by both teachers, i.e. *the articulated quality and character of their actions*, is related to the articulated requirements at the time. With poiesis and praxis as analytical tools, we can see a praxis developed through the poiesis – a praxis closely intertwined with their roles and their work. However, there are also indications about thoughts from both teachers that things weren't perfect. Whether such thoughts are to be regarded as a question of professionalism or not, depends on, as I see it,

whether professionalism is valued in favour of the poiesis side of professionalism or the praxis side of professionalism.

Era 2:

In the text on Anna there are several descriptions of the transition years of the late 80:s and early 90:s. One part has to do with changes in the constellation of the groups of students – there were more young people, people who expressed their thoughts and meanings. One part has to do with a growing altered view on teaching and learning – 1982 adult education was given a curriculum of its own, and she sees the effects of this, somewhat delayed. One part has to do with a school leader who had visions and ideas on adult education, and was eager to implement the policy expressed in the curriculum on adult education. One part has to do with new ways of learning and working due to new technology.

She visits a conference on ‘learner autonomy’ arranged by the National Agency for Education, where she first feels insulted by the way the head speaks about teachers as old-fashioned, who thought all students had to do ‘the same things’ in the courses. However, after her initial irritation by the tone and the argumentation used by the head, she and her fellow language colleagues began working with various approaches to individualized study forms. They work hard, but it is stimulating, and eventually their komvux becomes a model komvux, with an Open Learning Centre as a part of their language education, and with many educational visits from teachers and school leaders from other parts of the country. In 1994, at the introduction of the new goal steered national curriculum, they ‘were ahead’, as Anna states. She also talks about the encouragement from the school leadership at their komvux, but she also talks about disagreements the language teachers had with the school leader. But he ‘listened, evaluated our arguments and once [regarding a principle issue] conformed himself’. Her point is here that they *had* continuous discussions on how to go about doing things in a ‘good’ way.

Concerning teaching in the subject History, Anna speaks about much more personal uncertainty of how to go about finding altered ways of teaching and learning. She contrasts English to History. English is a skill-oriented subject: History is about understanding contexts and historical developments, and also the understanding of the importance of certain dates (e.g. 1789) and certain kings (e.g. in Sweden: Gustav Vasa). She was, as described in the part about Era 1, a good narrator and her history classes were praised by the students. Yet, she ‘suffered’ because the students were much more active in English classes than during History classes. And she felt guilt, as a lecturer during the years of ‘learner autonomy’ and after the introduction of the 1994 curriculum, was considered as something ‘bad’. Yet, she found it very difficult to help the students ‘autonomously’ grasp concepts and contexts. She says that often the students are much more conservative than the teachers.

- As a teacher, you need to know why you do things in this or that way. You need to know where you are heading, and why it is better doing this way, rather than that way. You must be able to argue for your way of doing things and help the students in this change. It took much longer for me to find good ways of re-organising my teaching in history, and to find a way that both I and the students are content with.

With the analytical tools *praxis* and *poiesis*, her description of her way of finding new work forms in the subject history is much more a struggle between these two activity forms, than when it comes to finding new forms to teach English.

Gustav's depiction of 'Era 2' has similar ingredients. He speaks about working differently during the 90:s than in the 70:s, due to changes that have to do with 'changes in society' and 'changes in the attitudes of the students – who were younger, more demanding and more active'. 'You have to teach differently to reach them', he says and continues: 'They want to *do* things. They don't want to sit and listen'. He speaks about different 'school development projects' and collaborative work forms from the 90:s, and how he got involved with distance learning on the Internet. He talks about the changes of views on knowledge and the discussions at the time of the 1994 curricula and relates to the greater part of the 90:s as 'very stimulating' and the 'golden years': He travelled to London and the USA thanks to internationalisation projects, and he got involved in different networks on grading in accordance with the new curricula. He worked with contract teaching, teaching courses at various companies, and was involved in developing education programmes, initiated by him and his colleagues, but also puts forward that he worked very hard during these years. He describes all these interfaces, projects, discussions on teaching and learning and his teaching in the different places as 'very fun' and 'very stimulating'.

His discussions on altered ways of teaching can be summarized in the following:

- I have gone more and more to work with questions that arise from the group. The meeting with the group has been the big drive for me in my work. The questions they raise, different ways of thinking and goings about to solve a problem or understand something, the discussions about these things.
- I'll give you an example of what I did this week: I was teaching word problems related to equations and somehow the students found that it would be fun to construct own problems. We agreed that they could work in groups with this and their tasks were copied for the others in class. Each group presented their task. Different alternatives came up, and also some incorrectnesses. We had real, authentic discussions. This is just an example, but it says a lot about how I have worked lately. And it is very far from how we did things when I once began teaching.

During the series of interviews I had with Gustav in 1999, he compared attitudes to teaching and learning of the nineties with the attitude during the years when he first began. He says that today, on the one hand, there is a much greater uncertainty and critical questions raised on teaching and learning and knowledge, both from researchers and from teachers. He compares it with the years he went to teacher education, when the question was much more on learning to do things in a certain way. However, on the other hand, there are now a lot of other people than researchers and teachers who think they have the answers concerning teaching, learning and knowledge. "We're losing authority and influence on these issues", he says. He talks about notions, recipes of doing things in certain ways, and problematizes independent learning, which is seen as a successful concept, by the local politicians. He talks about many students who need a lot of guidance and need much time with a teacher and a

group in order to develop knowledge and succeed with their studies, and is irritated that the courses have reduced time, compared to earlier.

From the depictions of Gustav and Anna, there is evidence of 'expanded' professional opportunities, and hard work. It is also conspicuous, that their respective praxis, i.e. their intentions, motives, purpose, is part of the picture of the stimulation when 'making' things differently, in new settings, together with others. They talk about work as 'fun' and 'stimulating'. Yet both also raise issues indicating doubts, related to correct judgement/judiciousness concerning ways 'make' good teaching and learning in times of uncertainty. Whether such doubts are to be regarded as a question of professionalism (in this era of 'extended' responsibilities, 'extended' professionalism and with the teacher as the key to school improvement) depends (once again), as I see it, on whether professionalism is valued in favour of the poiesis side of professionalism or of the praxis side of professionalism.

Era 3:

Let's start with the summary. An alert reader has of course noticed that the summaries at the end of *Era 1* and *Era 2* both end with a conclusion that the two teachers have 'made' things (i.e. produced adult education) in accordance with various expectations, but that there have also been some occasional doubts, of the kind as 'Is this a good way to do things?'. I have at the end of both summaries stated, that whether the doubts of the teachers are to be regarded as a question of professionalism, depend on whether professionalism is valued in favour of the poiesis side of professionalism or of the praxis side of professionalism. The same counts for Era 3, but this is the era when things get really 'bad'. As such, it is the most interesting period regarding analysis on professionalism and poiesis/praxis, but an 'awful' period, in the views of both teachers. This is the period when the teachers' poiesis and praxis are in conflict, and this is the era when adult education, in the words of Beach, is reduced to a market commodity with a price (op. cit.). The two municipalities where Gustav and Anna work, chose, as stated earlier, from the start of the AEI, to develop a model with a municipal board as a purchasing agency for the supply of adult education, and a number of educational organisers as providers.

Anna describes a development where the English teachers had started a project with mixing students from different levels in the same classes. They had a project leader who organized the groups and who took care of the administration. After a year, the project was concluded, but the teachers were to work in the same fashion without a project leader and also with more students per group. Anna compares the discussions the teachers had with their former head master, who listened and valued their arguments.

- We invited our school leaders several times, we stated our arguments why this wasn't good, but no one listened or valued our arguments. This was the way it was to be. It was a very different situation from before.

Shortly after, four teachers from komvux decided to start their own enterprise. These were colleagues that had gone through the same development as the rest in Era 2, and it was sad and upsetting. More upsetting was, however, the head of the school board, who visited them and encouragingly told the komvux teachers that they could do the same.

- He was our head official and he encouraged us to go private! It was a most remarkable situation.

In Anna's municipality, in the period from 1997 till 2002, komvux went from being the public service of adult education to a competitive situation, and in 2002 komvux had 30% of the 'market'. At the same time, a certain pedagogic concept based on flexibility, without a time schedule for different subjects and without fixed terms, came to be prescribed by the order board in the municipality and favoured by the school leaders. It resulted in a conflict among the teachers and a statement from the school leaders that all staff at the school should organize their work in that manner.

- All our structures to meet the needs of the individuals that we *had* built up during the 90:s were torn down... In a meeting we were told by one of our school leaders that the goal of our school was flexibility. Most of us were startled and one teacher asked: 'Isn't flexibility *a* means, can it be a goal?' The next meeting our head master clarified that 'yes, flexibility is a means', but there was no reason for why they tore down all the structures we had built up, and there was no way we could have a discussion... The students were confused and this just didn't work, and it was us teachers who were to make this work, without possibilities doing things differently. It was really a terrible situation – we were told that those who didn't want to work in this way could leave.

Some teachers gave notice and quit, some got 'burned out'.

- One highly appreciated math teacher who resigned asked our head master if she wanted take part of her experiences of the 20 years that she had worked with adult education. The answer she got was whether she had worked for 1 year or 20 years didn't matter... That was the answer she got. Our knowledge was irrelevant ... And as a matter of fact, after the AEI, it is not necessary for providers to have educated teachers.

Anna who at that time (read the early 2000:s) had taken on to be the teacher union safety representative contacted the Labour Inspectorate, who came to the school and made an inspection. The school leadership got four remarks of measures to be taken, and the most important measure, as Anna emphasizes, was that the school leaders must investigate organizational factors concerning burden of work, in order to prohibit ill-health, and to take measures.

- This was the situation, there was no organization at all. The baby had been thrown out with the bathwater. No schedule, no courses, just flexibility and counselling.

After the inspection the municipality came up with an action plan, and for a year all the staff at komvux met in groups with a professional counsellor, in order to establish a new organisation. When I started my interviews with Anna, the year of the action plan and the counselling groups was just completed. She was very happy about the development.

- I am very glad that it *is* possible to turn things around.

In terms of poiesis and praxis, the following analysis can be made.

- 1) The situation is a clash between values and beliefs, Anna's and other teachers' praxis – this is not good, not right.

- 2) The situation is a clash between 'built up things', i.e. accomplished poesis, structures that have been built up through the years, in accordance with a) curricula (cp. Carlgren op.cit) and b) school development expectations (cp. Sundkvist op. cit.).
- 3) The situation is also a clash in terms of 'old' and 'new' work order – measures have to be taken with reference to the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Before further analysis on professionalism, let's first take part of Gustav's work-life history during Era 3. Gustav also talks about how komvux decreased during the years from 1997 and onwards, due to the restructuring with a purchasing agency for the supply of adult education, and a number of educational organisers as providers. In the interviews from 1999 he wonders whether there will be a komvux in a few years and talks about the local politicians' views on komvux as something old and conservative. He is very concerned about the reduction, talks about experienced and excellent teachers who have had to quit, and wonders about the purchasing agency that is being built up, the costs of having such an agency and many providers.

- This is not economical. If you want to produce things in a cheaper way, you rationalize. In our municipality now we have a lot of providers, all with half empty rooms and premises. Nowadays I'm the only teacher at my school teaching Tuesday evenings – I cry inside when I think about it. We used to have a dynamic environment, full of students, every evening. Now they are scattered all over town.

Gustav reflects critically on the meanings of words 'in the way of talking' and the prevalent ideas on flexible study forms:

- There is an irony in this talk about individualization and this talk about flexibility, flex-courses to meet the needs for the individual... What this is about is not putting the individual in the centre, the way I see it. Flexible study forms demands a lot from the students, and requires patience, and a lot of my time as a teacher is spent encouraging people and talking about things in general. This is not putting the student in the centre or the individual in the centre, as it is said – it is putting *the form* in the centre. Most students want structures and they want regular courses but we have to give them these flex-courses because that is the form that is favoured by the order board. The students don't "choose" these kinds of courses.

The idea of making something 'new' and 'flexible' and different from 'the old' is apparent in both Gustav's and Anna's depictions. Gustav problematizes and talks about the pedagogical advantage of group teaching.

- When you have a group, the students know what to and when. Many need, like and want those structures, they need the discussions and the explanations. Flexible studies means that you have to sit a lot by yourself, alone with your books. It is something different when you study regularly in a group. You discuss things together, it is easier to learn and understand, and easier to get results that way.

He is also very critical on the 'notion that is around', that 'older teachers' (i.e. teachers in his age) are 'anxious', 'reluctant to change', 'conservative' and that younger teachers have much more ideas, and that his organisation is 'traditional'. He points to the fact that he and his

colleagues have developed a lot of routines, procedures and 'things' in accordance with the curriculum and the school development treaty.

- Ideas is what you get through experience. Me and my colleagues have had many trainee teachers throughout the years. We are the ones who have taught them what you must think about, be aware of. Ideas are what you get through experience and developing things with others. Now when I have these flex-courses I can feel secure because I know the questions that students have when they turn up. I feel like "Mr Flex", because I know all these different things and can adapt myself. I don't think it is a good study form for many, but I can handle the situation due to all my experience. When a student in physics turns up, I can quickly advise him or her which material to take out, and how to go about.

Gustav lost his job in 2002, together with 300 other staff, when the freestanding municipal company owned by the city council lost its mandate in the tendering process. Most of the staff had guaranteed tenure as public employees, and due to these costs (estimated 150 million Sw kr/year), the evaluation of the tendering process, the procurement competence of the order board and the city's way of dealing with the restructuring of adult education was scrutinized and harshly criticized by the City Auditor.

In terms of poiesis and praxis, the same analysis' as that of Anna, can be made:

1. The situation is a clash between values and beliefs, Gustav and other teachers' praxis – this is not good, not right.
2. The situation is a clash between 'built up things', i.e. accomplished poiesis, structures that have been built up through the years, in accordance with a) curricula (cp. Carlgren op.cit) and b) school development expectations (cp. Sundkvist op. cit.).
3. The situation is also a clash in terms of 'old' and 'new' work order. The critique of the City auditor, in brief, is that the cause of events due to the tendering process 'undoubtedly has had negative consequences' for a) the students, b) the staff of the city and c) for the city's taxpayers, since the municipality has to foot the costs of the former staff.

Discussion

In their *Teachers' Professional Lives: Aspirations and Actualities*, Hargreaves and Goodson (1995) put forward that teacher professionalism in a complex, postmodern age must, apart from (1) technical competency and subject knowledge, also concern (2) discretionary judgement over the issues of teaching, (3) opportunities and expectations to engage with the moral and social purposes of what teachers teach, (4) commitment to working with colleagues in collaborative cultures, (5) commitment to active care (6) a self-directed search for and struggle for continuous learning related to one's own expertise and (7) the creation and recognition over high task complexity. Hargreaves and Goodson don't use the analytical concepts of praxis and poiesis that I have used, but the seven principles that they put forward have, the way I view it, a strong connection to the praxis side of professionalism.

The depiction of Era 3 in the work-life histories of Anna and Gustav show a new confined situation, as regards to the *poiesis* developed over the years as professional teachers in komvux, responding to curricular and demands for change. Their respective *praxis* as articulated in Era 3 is in conflict with the new ways of organizing work and adult education and the prescribed 'making' of things work there, and their critical argumentation is broadly speaking in line with the seven principles of teacher professionalism as defined by Hargreves and Goodson. However, by advocates of change (e.g. people buying adult education in a municipal order board), the critical thoughts and 'attitude' expressed by Anna and Gustav can be regarded as old-fashioned, traditional, conservative and not-flexible.

Following Beach & Carlson's discussion on 'the discursive order of change', benefits of change and a lot of the argumentation on change is founded upon a play of opposites – 'finding new pathways' versus 'old' and the importance of 'breaking fixed patterns' (Beach & Carlson 2004). This, Beach and Carlson argue, can be seen as an example of what Ball has stated as being the way new policies often feed off and gain legitimacy from the deriding and demolition of previous ones (Ball, 1998: 125) and of the way new languages in use support or rather even perhaps constitute what can be called a new orthodoxy, where only some 'solutions' and not others are possible (Beach & Carlson 2004, who refer to Ball 1998, Fairclough 1992, Potter 1996 and Beach 2000). To me, a discursive order of change together with a quasi-market situation, imply problems regarding professionalism.

On the one hand a development as that of Era 3 can be seen as an attempt to steer the professionalism of teachers towards a certain kind of professionalism – a quasi-market orientated professionalism. Included in such a professionalism would be an open-mindedness to 'change' – and think, talk, act and work in accordance with the 'solutions' prescribed within the discursive order of change, in order to be on the market at all. On the other hand, people who have seriously been involved in developing things (i.e. 'finding new pathways' of *poiesis*) and who have done that in an interplay with their *praxis* (e.g. in accordance with the principles formulated by Hargreves and Goodson) don't tend to be willing to look at their accomplished work as something 'old', just like that. Especially not when they already (and for a longer period of time) have 'worked hard' developing forms of individualization and flexible learning.

How can one remain 'professional' in accordance with one's *praxis*, if one disagrees with new ways of going about, and communicating your views seem to be impossible? One way is to act as Anna, and turn to legal authorities and have situations tried, in order to see if there is a possibility to change things more in accordance with one's own *praxis*. This is rather risky (the order board might not like it, and your organisation might not be on the market soon). It also requires a lot of courage.

Another way could be to develop the skills of being a street-level bureaucrat. Following Lipsky, teachers can be regarded as belonging to the professions of 'street-level'. For this group great autonomy from organizational control is possible, resistance of top-down control/pressure as well as special coping mechanisms is developed, due to the experiencing of many and various demands on the professional group and the experiencing of own limited resources (Lipsky 1980). Such a 'new' group of professionals in a quasi-market situation

would be a group being able to talk in accordance with the ‘the discursive order of change’ when needed, in order to help their organisation to remain on the market, but don’t bother too much in order not to get exhausted and who do things in accordance with their praxis, when no ‘controller’ is around. As is stated in the presentation of this conference, “one central feature of professionalism is the use of discretion, which means that the professionals' work cannot be measured or entirely controlled”. Developing street-level bureaucrat strategies of discretion in a quasi-market – how about that as professionalism?

Indeed, such a strategy is different from the expectations raised in Era 2, when goal steering was “put forward as letting professional freedom substitute steering by regulations” (cp. Carlgren op.cit) and when “restructuring created a situation where teachers were supposed to discuss and select content as well as methods and formulate goals as well as criteria for grading” (cp. Carlgren op.cit). But is a ‘street-level bureaucrat strategy of discretion in a quasi-market’ a praxis which one at a conference on ‘Professionalism, Trust and Competence’ could talk about as an Aristotelian praxis, i.e. doing some “morally worthwhile good” (cp. Coulter op.cit.)? Or is it time to rethink professionalism – and adapt to ‘the discursive order of change’? Such a question requires, as I see it, a critical discussion about the praxis of educational researchers.

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