

Den kulturelle skulesekken

Teachers of Art and Crafts and their negotiation of professional identities

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Setting the scene

Art and Crafts and 'Den Kulturelle Skulesekken' (DKS)

With the introduction of the *Norwegian National Curriculum of 1997(L'97)* (Det kongelige kirke-, Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1996), the subject Forming, was renamed Arts and Crafts, and was upheld as one of the largest core subjects in compulsory school. According to the new curriculum scheduled for implementation in 2006 (Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 2005) this still will be the case. The governmentally requested evaluation¹ of the school subject Arts and Crafts (A&C) after the implementation of the *L'97* (Kjosavik et al, 2003) shows that A&C is the most popular subject with school children.

As a sign of recognition of A&C's status in the school, resources are made available through the funding project 'Den Kulturelle Skulesekken' (DKS).² DKS is a permanent funding project aiming to bring professional artists³ into schools to co-operate with teachers, and by doing so, strengthening the education of pupils within the arts. It covers the areas; music, dance, theatre, film and the visual arts. Visual arts, which will be discussed in this paper, includes fine art, crafts, design and architecture, and corresponds with the subject Art and Crafts in school.⁴ Although the primary end result of this endeavour is meant to be a strengthened education for the students, the knowledge gain for the teachers involved is also an important issue.

¹ Requested by the Norwegian Research Council (NRF) and the Department of Research and Education (DRE)

² The official English translation is: "The Cultural Rucksack". I choose to use the Norwegian name, as the English translation does not cover the meaning that the Norwegian name, in my view, is trying to project — a view of culture as something close to the children, something they bring to school, and then home again every day as an integrated part of the whole learning process at school and at home. The English word 'Rucksack' does not carry the images the Norwegian word exudes.

³ Artists will in this paper, in addition to practitioners of fine art, include designers and architects.

⁴ 'Den kulturelle skulesekken' (DKS) holds lottery money in the amount of 160 million NoK in 2005, and the amount will increase in 2006.

Cooperation

An important aspect of DKS is the cooperation between teachers and artists, schools and culture institutions. This cooperation should be a case of equality.⁵ It is explicitly stated that DKS has L'97 as a point of departure and that the teachers and local schools should conduct the "process of ordering", i.e. to define the topic they find relevant to the curriculum execution at the schools and as such want brought into the subjects through the cooperation with other professionals. It is stated that one of the main goals for DKS is to; "... contribute to develop a holistic inclusion of artistic and cultural expressions in the realisation of the schools' curriculum aims" (Det kongelege kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet (KKD), 2003:17),⁶ and from this thought it follows that;" The schools' competency of ordering must be improved, and the culture sector must be made capable of developing activities and proposals adapted to the needs of the school sector" (ibid:18).⁷

The White Paper⁸ *Den kulturelle skulesekken* states further that teachers should both contribute to the projects and benefit from them; "It is a goal that the activities available from the culture sector not only benefits the pupils, but also contributes to inspiration and knowledge gain for teachers and as such create an increased understanding and knowledge of the nature, development and value of art and culture" (ibid:19).⁹

Is there reason to question the cooperation equality within DKS?

I have recently participated at different conferences and meetings concerning DKS, such as regional cultural gatherings, museum openings, and educational fora within University Colleges. These different institutions request knowledge concerning the execution of DKS, in particular knowledge into the cooperation between teachers and artists, schools and culture institutions. This cooperation is seen as the most eligible way to secure school children a best possible access to cultural knowledge and experience. The impression I am left with is that this sought for cooperation is understood differently in schools, culture institutions and by artists.

Even though equality in the cooperation is an explicitly phrased aim in DKS, evaluations (Adam, 2003; Antonsen, 2002; Aslaksen et al.; Danbolt and Enerstvedt, 1995; Fønhus et al. 2000; Haugsevje, 2002; Lindén, 2004) tend to show a different tendency. In some projects teachers do play the part, while in others they have a very limited role, or no role to play in the end, or they do not figure in the evaluations at all. It seems as though the teacher — in the process of trying to give the children access to professional art¹⁰ of high quality — has been lost in the throng. Some of the questions raised are: What do the discussions I have witnessed between artists and teachers concerning the execution of DKS signal for the professional

⁵ Det kongelege kultur- og kyrkjedepartementet. 2003. *St. meld. nr. 38 (2002-2003). Den kulturelle skulesekken.* p:9, p:10, p:11, p:13, p:17, p:18, p:19.

⁶ My translation; "... medverke til å utvikle ei heilskapleg innlemming av kunstnarlege og kulturelle uttrykk i realiseringa av skulen sine læringsmål" (KKD, 2003:17).

⁷ My translation; "Skulen si tingingskompetanse må betrast, og kultursektoren må setjast i stand til å utvikle aktivitetar og tilbod som er tilpassa behov i skulesektoren" (KKD, 2003:18).

⁸ In this paper the Norwegian Stortingsmelding is translated to White Paper.

⁹ My translation; "Det er eit mål at kulturfeltet sine tilbod ikkje berre skal kome elevane til gode, men også gje inspirasjon og kunnskap til lærarane og på denne måten skape auka forståing og kunnskap om kunsten og kulturen sitt vesen, utvikling og verdi" (KKD, 2003:19).

¹⁰ Art is in DKS used as a wide concept covering all areas of the project: Music, Theatre, Film, Visual Arts, Literature and Dance (KKD, 2003). This paper focuses on the Visual Arts. The Visual Arts is comprised by the sub fields; fine art, design, architecture and crafts, and the words art and artists in this paper will correspond to the actors within these fields in this paper (Mangset, 2004).

teacher? How does the inclusion of a professional artist into their teaching affect the art and crafts teachers' view of themselves and their knowledge? How do they incorporate this into their professional identity, and work? What has happened to the role of the professional Art and Crafts teacher in relation to DKS projects?

To achieve an insight into the role of professional teachers of Art and Crafts, a view into the current dominating educational paradigms and the public debate is needed. This might tell us of the motivations behind choices, debates and argumentation in and outside the educational field — both on a general, and a subject specific level. This also leads to a questioning of professional identity, as educational paradigms, public discourse and subject specific traditions will influence the teachers' practice and choices, and as such how they perform their profession and build their identity.

Paradigms within education today

The Norwegian educational system

The sociologist Skarpenes (2005) wrote his doctoral thesis within the field education theory. He describes the situation today as having an increased focus on the individual student over the collective knowledge base. He argues that this is the result of a more extreme form of reform pedagogic view. He introduces the concept of 'pedocentrism'. He suggests that the development has been on the expense of subject specific knowledge, that knowledge has been handled as exclusively a private and individual factor. Pedocentrism is when pedagogic ideas of upbringing become dominant within the education system, and the subject specific learning is seen as secondary (Skarpenes, 2005). Skarpenes' claim is that education has been centred solely on the individual — also learning. This move has, in Skarpenes' opinion, been executed to such a degree that education is arranged uniquely with an individual focus, based on a specific individual's situation and experience. The individuals' sense of feeling secure and self-realisation sets the parameters, and the teaching method and attitude becomes the main aims of education on the expense of subject knowledge. The knowledge offered has become a personification of the know-how, and the 'unbiased knowledge',¹¹ is lost (Skarpenes, 2005). He proposes that this trend is reflected in the increasing number of young authors writing about their own experiences and childhood (Time, 2004). This might be the only thing they know how to do. This has its roots back to the separate school subjects, such as art education.¹²

Bernstein (2000) takes a slightly different approach to the educational discourse. He presents the term 'generic' pedagogic and what he labels 'short-termism' in education. Instead of teaching discipline based knowledge, the thought is to make education correspond to the fast-moving society and as such promote the concept 'learning to learn'. This concept is based on the presumption: You need no disciplinary knowledge base if you have the tools to gain new knowledge in the situations that demand it. The danger in this, according to Beck (2002) is that you suppress the fact that even as the educational institutions promote this view, they themselves are rooted in discipline based knowledge. If you take away the discipline base, a vital part of the discourse will be missing.

¹¹ 'Unbiased knowledge' is my wording, here used to illustrate the knowledge oriented towards a common understanding. It is not to suggest any absolute truth in knowledge or science as such. It is just to highlight the opposite of personal reference.

¹² This is my assumption, not Skarpenes'. He discusses the school as a whole with a focus on the Norwegian subjects; Matematikk (mathematics), Norsk (Norwegian), and Samfunnsfag (social science).

Arts and Craft education

Since art and design education were introduced as a school subject, different views on knowledge and art have fought for domination (Efland, 1990). In Scandinavia two opposite views seem to have dominated the debate within this educational field, and they are still recognisable in the debate of today: The ‘usefulness centred side’, and the ‘individually centred side’ (Lindberg, 1988). In Norway, the ‘individually centred side’, represented by Lowenfeld’s books on child art and self-expression, was dominant for a long time (Lowenfeld and Brittain, 1971). Art and design education in Norway, in the 70ies and 80ies seemed to be mainly oriented towards self-expression. In Lindberg’s words (1988) this ‘charismatic attitude’ is recognised by its ideology of art as feeling, not reason. The value of the subject was placed within the individual moral upbringing and individual expression that art could constitute.

The Art Education theoretician Efland discusses dominant educational paradigms. He defines them as something that: “... covers the ways we think about the realities of schooling including students, teachers, curricula, and educational settings. It identifies goals to pursue and values to guide the selection and organization of content and activities” (Efland, 2004:692). David Carr, when looking into the Art teaching profession in England, finds it necessary to underline that some of the problem lies in the dominant educational paradigm of today: “Indeed, I would go so far as to argue that a conception of effective teaching as basically a matter of the acquisition of behavioural skills is the dominant political and professional educational paradigm of the present day” (Carr, 2000:5).

In light of Skarpnes’ concept of pedocentrism and Bernstein’s view of short-termism, interesting questions become visible in regards to Art and Crafts education: Could it be that this individually focused art education has become a breeding ground for the pedocentric view on the cost of subject knowledge and disciplinary identity for A&C teachers? The view voiced in Skarpnes’ findings, resonates in Carr’s suggestions that as long as the focus lies on raising the students rather than focusing on knowledge gain, the teaching profession will struggle. If subject specific knowledge cannot be claimed to be an important part of the professional practice — if general behavioural skills, to care, is all that is needed — how do you defend the professional status? Does this development signal a struggle for the professional A&C teacher identity, and what does this signal for cases of cooperation and debate with external professionals?

However, before any attempt of discussing these questions can be made, it is necessary to see where the educational debate within the Art and Crafts, and in particular the DKS project stands at the moment. Who is part of this debate, and what is the content?

Educational debate in DKS

The ‘visual arts’ in DKS, has become an arena where politicians, artists, pedagogical theorists, design- and culture institutions want to participate. This is recognizable in the current debate, where they express the wish for a more active role in the future and the day-to-day practise of the projects, and the extra resources available through, the DKS projects in A&C. Thus the increased fascination with the subject area A&C outside of school, is seen in discussions, of subject content, method and indeed philosophy that to a large extent is taking place outside of the educational practice field. Webb (1997), through the theories of

Cherryholmes, discusses what, within educational theory, are questions relevant to ask in the educational development discourse, and as such in concern to the specific debate concerning the execution of DKS:

- Who is authorised to speak?
- Who listens?
- What can be said?
- What remains unspoken?
- How does one become authorized to speak?
- What utterances are rewarded?
- What utterances are punished?
- Which categories, metaphors, modes of description, explanations, and argument are valued and praised; which are excluded and silenced?
- What social and political arrangements reward and deprive statements? (Webb, 1997:208)

A search of the major newspapers returns 95 references to DKS in the last year,¹³ only one of the entries discusses the teachers as a vital factor in executing the project, and a few of them mentions teacher courses. Most of the entries were authored by artists or artist organizations, and are mainly concerned with cultural institutions and the artists involved. Teachers were never quoted, and knowledge content was seen as related to the specific artist or institutions definition of it rather than the schools aims in *L'97*. As such: “This political conflict relocates the centre of debate outside the profession itself, leaving the professionals mere spectators” (Stronach et al, 2002:115). In this educational debate, the newspaper search suggests a displacement of the teachers, and as such the ignoring of their disciplinary knowledge.¹⁴

It is vital to point out that teachers do discuss the project as well, but more often in light of the subject aims and curricula and through educational journals and magazines that is not widely read by the public. At the same time, the A&C educational field is still struggling to define themselves. The Norwegian Research Council’s review of educational research within the field of A&C, operate with as many as 6 different names for the same area of interest (Ongstad, 2004:51). If the profession struggle with how to identify themselves, even with what to name their field of work, how will they be able to participate in a further debate where they have to position themselves towards another strong professional field?

What will this displacement of the teachers in the public debate, and the struggle within the field, herald for the teachers within the subject A&C and in future projects of ‘visual arts’ in DKS. Questions need to be asked. How does the ‘remoteness’ from the public debate affect the professional identity of teachers in A&C? Is this externally located debate in the best interest of the school children? Where does the curriculum figure in the mix? If it follows from this ‘pedocentrism’ and remoteness of debate, that the disciplinary A&C identity is lost, how do the teachers keep their professional identity when co-operating with other professionals in DKS, and how does this influence the cooperations within DKS?

¹³ Search of major newspapers in Atekst for the period; 11.10.2004 – 10.10.2005 <http://www.retriever-info.com/services/archive.html>

¹⁴ This trend is evident in an overview analysis of the material.

Teachers and professional identity

The view of education as upbringing, as reflected in the popular school slogan; “Schools. A safe place to be, a safe place to learn!”¹⁵ poses a problem both in the educational discourse concerning A&C education, and the future of the teaching profession. Does it cause a state of unrest within the teacher profession? If knowledge and know-how is individual and personified, how is the need for a professional education scene defended (Freidson, 2001)? Also, if the leading paradigm, as Skarpenes claims, holds an agreement of the pedocentric view, how do teachers reconcile this with today’s demands? Especially the demands for a stronger internationalisation (Nielsen et al, 2005); a broader knowledge base represented through various voices such as curricula, national tests and quality controls from external sources; or in the case of DKS, the external sources claiming ownership of the field?

Identities in flux

Carr (2000) and Stronach et al. (2002) claims that professionals, such as teachers, are still respected as sources of specific knowledge. The deciding factor for being perceived as such rests in the ethics and identity within the professional field. In teaching, there is a duality that causes some friction in the professional identity. 1) The vocational aspect — seen as the teachers’ view of himself as a chosen, an agent of good morals, human virtues, and an instrument for the good of society and 2) the introduction of the ‘audit culture’ — where external control mechanisms such as budgets, policies, national tests and school evaluation, performance related bonuses and the likes regulates the practice. The internal self-regulating ethics of the profession comes in conflict with the external claim for regulating efficiency. Stronach et al. claims, the vocational aspect of teaching, still holds some relevance even within the demands from the external sources, and that this serves to fragment the identity of the teacher: “As a result, the professional is moralized both by being ‘reduced’ to a singular meaning and employment, and simultaneously inflated to improbable symbolic importance” (Stronach et al., 2002:111).

Research into teachers’ professionalisms suggests that there is no final role or a blueprint for the professional teacher to fill as such. Even though the outside view might see the collective professional, the identities of the teachers are in constant flux: “...we claim that the question of ‘professionalism’ is bound up in the discursive dynamics of professionals attempting to address or redress the dilemmas (etc) of the job” (Stronach et al., 2002:109). Does this apply to the Art and Crafts teachers within DKS? Or is the question more fundamental: as to whether the teaching occupation is recognisable as a profession at all? There are different understandings of what a profession is, and also whether teaching is a profession or a vocation (Carr, 2000), or both.

The teacher is from outside the profession seen not as an individual, but as a part of the collective individual - *the teacher*. He is restricted by both the generic nature of *the teacher* and at the same time, having a function as a solitary signpost for moral standards in the classroom, and claiming ownership of knowledge within the specific field such as A&C. If the leading educational paradigm within art education, is individually centred to such a degree that art education is seen as moral upbringing and care more than subject specific knowledge, might not the education as a societal factor where knowledge is a common goal — and as

¹⁵ Many Norwegian schools use the slogan: Skulen. Ein trygg plass å vere, ein trygg plass å lære! The place as a caring haven is the pivotal point. The nurturing environment first, and learning as the second phase.
<http://www.borgebarneskole.no/visjon.htm>, <http://www.miljolare.no/trivseloghelse/elev.php>
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such recognisable outside the individual — be lost? Is this the end of the discussion? Does the generic nature of *the teacher* prevail as a personal standard for the individuals inhabiting these professional identities?

Wenger and negotiation of meaning

Wenger (1998) to some extent mirrors the view of identities in a flux, through his social theory of learning. He sees social participation as the basis for learning and knowing. Through a group of people's pursuit of a shared enterprise, with resulting practices that are the property of the group, a community will take shape. Some components are necessary to describe what constitutes learning within this social participation: meaning, practice, community and identity. These factors come together in the form of *communities of practice*. These *communities* exist throughout society, and professions are one of the ways in which they constitute themselves. Wenger's theory covers learning in the world at large. In this article some of the thoughts are pinpointed for further exploration. The basic presumption in Wenger's theory is that teaching is a practice, and practice is a prerequisite for meaning. A practice, in our case the teaching profession, will need meaning in the broad sense. It has several levels: negotiation of meaning, participation and reification, and the duality of these factors.

Negotiating identity

The negotiation of meaning is a constant process involving participation and action. Meaning is seen as existing in a constant development, where living in the world, i.e. existing in the community is the vital factor. This negotiation of meaning is also vital to identities within the community. Now, these identities will also, along with other abstract practices or actions, be objects of reification. In other words, the teacher turns into the collective professional; the teacher, with a concrete meaning ascribed to the more evanescent quality that inhabits the practice. If this was the end, reification could be a hampering of development, but as the constant negotiation of meaning allows for changes in this concrete meaning the duality makes these processes fertile.

Identity to Wenger (1998) is both narrower and broader than the *community of practice*. It is limited to an individual, but embraces a wider influence than the practitioners and practice within the *community*. Through a larger context, the identity is negotiated. This view is mirrored in Stronach et al. (2002), where development and change is seen as principal points in the denouement of the professionalisation of teaching. The focus is seen to be that of change, and identities are made in the perpetual action and discourse of the 'individual collective professional', not in a final 'nourning' of the collective teacher. "...we prefer to read the professional as mobilizing a complex of occasional identification in response to shifting contexts. These mobilizations amount to a kind of internal employment of professional selves" (Stronach et al., 2002:117).

Challenges for DKS cooperations

When actors within projects in DKS meet, they will prior to meeting the individual designer/architect or A&C teacher, be influenced by the view of the generic nature of *the teacher* and *the artist*. According to Evetts (2003), influence will come from both: 1) micro level - groups and actors, 2) meso level - organizations and institutions, and 3) macro level - society, state and market. In this theory *the teacher*, the dominant view, is constructed through

the discourse, not only within the community as such, but in its involvement with the discourse of the world outside, as it is available to the participants (Burr, 2003). Stronach et al. (2002) writes of how teachers within the professional collective identity use mini-narratives to construct a day to day identity at micro level to handle the demands directed at them from the meso and macro levels (Evetts, 2003); “Within their overall self-presentations, professionals offered mini-narratives of identification; unstable, shifting, sometimes contradictory or expressed as conflict” (Stonach et al., 2002:116).

Bernstein claims that ignoring the educational disciplinary theory base, exclusively in favour of experience of the ‘real world’ as *the artist* is in favour of, will serve to impoverish the educational discourse (Bernstein, 2000). The problematic nature of the view of art as something being far removed from the ‘sphere of intellectual school work’ might pose a problem in the negotiation of identity for the A&C teacher who have to inhabit both worlds, but also in the cooperation between *the artist* and *the teacher*. A&C teachers struggle to establish a professional identity that is supposed to embrace educational disciplinary theory, subject specific theory and artistic practice.

‘The art teacher’ is in a position where he will negotiate his identity, not only through the generic nature of *the teacher* but in relation to *the artist*. In the art world, the current dominant discourse is that of the charismatic role of *the artist* (Mangset, 2004). This corresponds to a large extent to the ‘charismatic attitude’ that has dominated the school subject in Scandinavia (Lindberg, 1988). Even though some alternative roles do exist, the prevailing, strong identity within the art scene, and also in the larger discourse in the press, is that of *the artist* as an agent of visions and of fighting the established for the good of us all. The individual identities of the professional A&C teachers are recognised by negotiation, polarization and uncertainty, while the artist is more in tune with his vocational calling and as such has the luxury of leaving uncertainty in his approaches or values behind (Mangset, 2004). The conviction of having a calling, figures prominently in the identity of *the artist*, and this, combined with a belief in the innate talent as something not learned or cultivated, leads some to even see school as inhibiting artistic talent (Mangset, 2004).

It becomes clear that A&C teachers and artists represent different approaches to the project DKS. In a cooperation their educational paradigm differs, and as a result their view on professional knowledge. In a public debate that is a part of consolidating the DKS project, it is important that all sides are heard. If the subject specific educational theory is ignored in favour of pure practice experience, or vice versa, DKS will lose some of its richness. The debate is denied access to alternative theories of practice and as such new avenues of understanding. It becomes vital to focus on the equality in the cooperation, and as such secure that both sides are represented to ascertain the best possible quality in future projects.

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Summary

Den kulturelle skulesekken vart oppretta for å gje elevar i grunnskulen erfaring med kunst og kultur av høg kvalitet. Prosjektet skulle føre til eit likeverdig samarbeid mellom lærarar i skulen på eine sida, og dei profesjonelle kunstnarane på den andre. Tingingskompetansen skulle ligge hjå skulen, og prosjekta skulle vere i tråd med læreplanen og skulen sine læringsmål. Spørsmålet etter å ha lese ulike evalueringar av DKS prosjektet, er om dette finn stad.

For å kaste lys over mogelege komplikasjonar i ei slik målsetjing vert det i denne artikkelen diskutert korleis den offentlege debatten kring prosjektet artar seg. I tillegg er det valt å sette fokus på aktørane i samarbeidet, gjennom å problematisere profesjonsidentiteten deira. Korleis fungerer Kunst og handverkslærarar i høve til eit samarbeid utover sin eigen profesjon. Kva er det som hender i samarbeidet der ulike profesjonsidentitetar skal fungere innanfor rammene av DKS prosjekt?