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First teachers – stratification in Swedish schools

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First teachers - stratification in Swedish schools¹

Abstract

This article is about professions in transformation and the empirical case is the teaching profession. More specifically, it is about an attempt to strengthen the profession by introducing a new career step, first teachers (FTs). The aim of the study is to scrutinize what first teachers do and how they establish the position in the school system. Four main categories emerged that most actions could be sorted into: coordinating, policy formulating, knowledge generating and instructing. Most of the activities might be related to the collegial level. We use the term appropriation to capture the fact that the FTs both took over existing and novel tasks. The introduction of first teachers has led to a restratification process which in turn has helped strengthen the professional autonomy at a collegial level. The empirical investigation was carried out in a qualitative longitudinal study.

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Introduction

Throughout the last de there have been recurrent reports on how professional workers have lost power and influence or even been *proletarianized* (Braverman 1974; Oppenheimer 1974). Some papers discuss the development within the school sector and for example describe the development towards a more extensive use of New Public Management (NPM) in different countries (Leicht, Walter, Sainsaulieu, & Davies, 2009; Roach, Smith, & Boutin, 2010) observing less autonomy for the profession workers (Codd, 2005; Evetts, 2003) or hybrid roles (Kirkpatrick & Noordegraaf, 2015; Kurunmäki, 2004; Postma, Oldenhof, & Putters, 2014). There has been a change in the governance structure leading to a decrease in teachers' power, while strengthening of the power of the principals and administrators (Jarl, Fredriksson, & Persson, 2012; Marks & Nance, 2007).

Somewhat paradoxically observations have also been made indicating that we put more faith in professions and the positive effects of the strengthening of professions (Evetts, 2003). This might also be the reason for why we also observe attempts to strengthen professions; both attempts from occupational groups making efforts to become "a profession" (Brante, 2015) and other actors, like state initiatives (Waring, 2014). In Sweden, for example, we have seen state initiatives to strengthen the teacher profession through introducing teacher license (accreditation) and introducing a new kind of teachers, First Teachers (FTs) (being the focus of our study). The latter an outspoken attempt to create new career pathways and make the occupation more attractive. This raises questions regarding how new elites within professions emerge and how professions are stratified (Freidson, 1985).

The literature on the stratification of professions is dominated by studies investigating and discussing health care professions with a dominance of physicians and nurses (in managerial positions). A study of a new position for nurses showed that one result was tensions and conflict stemming from intra professional rivalry (Currie, Koteyko, & Nerlich, 2009). Studies of physicians and medicine indicate that some professional workers might be able to establish an elite position at the collegial level and become highly influential and dominate structuration of collegial work, while others become "rank and file" practitioners (Freidson, 1985; McDonald, Checkland, Harrison, & Coleman, 2009; Waring & Bishop, 2013). At least physicians operate in a strongly stratified profession with a high degree of acceptance towards the professional hierarchy, which makes it problematic to infer the results of these studies to a "flat" profession like teachers where equality among practitioners is a strong imperative (Öberg, Bull, Hasselberg, & Stenlås, 2016). There are only few studies from outside the medical domain but one from the school sector indicate that elite teachers might end up isolated (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997). A basic question is of course then if the reasoning is valid also for other professions, a question also raised by others (Croft, Currie, & Lockett, 2015; Waring, 2014). This is in line with Waring's (2014) argument that it is important to recognize the specific "professional-organizational intersection" in order to understand how and why professions re-stratify and the outcome of these processes (se also Bourgeault, Hirschhorn, & Sainsaulieu, 2011).

Since our case is about introducing a new position, we regard the situation as one where the teachers enters a liminal space (Croft et al., 2015) in the sense that there is not a set role with a set identity. When reviewing the literature our conclusion is that there is a lack of studies focusing intra professional stratification (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Evans, 2011; Frostenson, 2015). We argue that there is a need for studies "explicating practice" (Llewelyn, 2003),

focusing on processes of professionalization (Muzio, Brock, & Suddaby, 2013), where teachers and other relevant actors are studied in detail (Parding & Berg-Jansson, 2016). We therefore argue that there is a need for studies shedding light on how professions change and what happens “inside” professions. We add by studying the introduction of FTs in the Swedish school system. *The aim of the study is to scrutinize what first teachers do and thereby advance our understanding of processes of stratification.* The empirical foundation is a longitudinal qualitative study based on interviews, observations and shadowing.

Our case is intriguing since it focuses a reform where the state's outspoken ambition is to strengthen the teacher profession by creating a new kind of teachers, “first teachers”. Unlike most professions the Swedish teaching profession might be characterized as flat without an internal hierarchy except from principals; the latter a category that has tried to position themselves as a profession on their own (Jarl et al., 2012). As indicated in the beginning the reform was initiated through national legislation meanwhile it is the municipalities, private school companies and third sector organizations that act as principals. The Swedish school system has been described as goal oriented and decentralized. Also regarding the FT reform there was room for local actors to design and create a local strategy for the FT positions (as we also observe they did). The reform is an attempt to make new career pathways with a significantly salary increase (60000 SEK/yr, on average about 15-20% increase). The role of these FTs was, however, vague and was interpreted very differently in the municipalities studied. Still, the legislation states some dimensions of the content of FT positions. Besides that funding the state also specifies that FTs must continue to teach and that the teachers appointed must be highly skilled. However, in the memorandum (U2012/4904/S) it is also stated that FTs might, besides teaching, be involved in among other things introducing new colleagues, lead improvement work, be responsible of examination and be head teacher of certain subjects.

Theoretical frame

In this section we develop the theoretical frame of the study. Since we are studying attempt to establish a new role within a profession, in the following we will focus on (i) core characteristics of professionalism relevant in this context, (ii) different analytical levels where professional influence processes appear, and (iii) the notion of stratification and its relation to inter- and intra-professional elites. In line with the aim of the study we are interested in what the actors actually do. The aim of the framework is to provide a starting point for capturing the actions and whereabouts of the appointed first teachers by identifying relevant dimensions of professional work.

Definitions of professions often rely on the relationship between professional knowledge, professional workers, and clients (Brante, 2010), as professional work is about applying abstract professional knowledge to specific client problems (Abbott, 1991). A central notion is the complexity of the specific situation demanding the professional worker to make use of relevant knowledge in order to interpret the situation and intervene in a sufficient manner.

Freidson (2001) puts an emphasis on how professional work is characterized by the exercise of collegial control within the profession. This can be contrasted by bureaucratic control where control resides in an administrative hierarchy, or market control where clients ultimately decide. Moreover, professionalism depends on established jurisdictions within which professionals maintain monopoly in performing tasks. There are thus recognized boundaries between the professional workers' sphere and other domains, like the bureaucratic (Abbott, 1988). Apart from core professional work, then, Abbott (ibid.) identifies boundary

maintenance and defense as relevant professional forms of work. Such boundary maintenance is directed towards extra-professional actors, protecting the monopoly of the profession.

There are also, however, internal boundaries that need to be considered, as developments within a profession may lead to new divisions of labor. For example, if a certain part of a profession's work becomes routinized it may be cut off from the professional core. Such degradation of professional work often leads to new divisions of labor where new professions emerge. Both the recognition of the systemic dimension of professions and the work that has to be done in order to maintain or obtain autonomy stress the importance to recognize that a profession is not only the sum of autonomous independent practitioners, but is also defined by the extent to which they manage to create and sustain an inherent order (Freidson, 1985).

Drawing on the empirical example of physicians Freidson (1985) described how external pressure was handled through a profession internal re-stratification. With more internal hierarchy and by the help of an elite acting as advocates the medical profession managed to safeguard its boundaries. Some practitioners lost autonomy, giving it up to the elite practitioners. However, this was "compensated" by the maintenance of the autonomy of the profession as a whole. In order to exercise control over authority and autonomy, career pathways, specialization and collegiality (Wallace, 1995) the profession needs to sustain an internal organization.

Recognizing autonomy on different levels

Using different conceptualizations different authors have pointed at three different levels relevant to consider when scrutinizing professional stratification (Freidson, 1985; Frostenson, 2015; Waring, 2014); we here describe them as *work*, *collegial/organizational* and *policy* level. The basic argument is that professions might be stratified with elite professionals either orienting themselves towards administration or towards knowledge production. Still forming part of the professional system they take on tasks related to knowledge production/implementation and by that safeguard the profession and buffer attempts to control the profession:

Those (professionals)... control, codify, refine, communicate, and augment the profession's body of knowledge and skill: their activities maintain control by the profession over knowledge and technology and discourage "expropriation" by outsiders. (Freidson 1985, p 30).

By taking control over administration they take control over the *context* of professional work, and by taking control over knowledge production they take control over the *content* of professional work (Waring, 2014). While the basic argument is that the elites still represents and strengthens the profession this is not accomplished without also causing tensions and conflict. Elites working on different levels and with different bases in knowledge and administration will tend to develop "macro" perspectives on different issues, while practitioners continue to be oriented towards "micro" perspectives (Freidson, 1985; Scott, 1982).

Most often discussed and also a central dimension of the definition of professions is the *work* level. This refers to the autonomy regarding the day to day work situation where the professional worker interacts with clients. A focal issue is to what extent the professional worker plans and conducts the day-to-day activities in an autonomous way owning decisions on measures to take and efficient strategies to cope with specific situations. When it comes to the teaching profession the work level has been described as rather autonomous: teachers have owned the class room practice (Helsby, 1995) (Hargreaves, 2000). Even on the work level we

might observe elites. For example “star players” (Waring, 2014), skilled practitioners who have earned a reputation based on excellent practice and their position is stronger than that of colleagues, and they enjoy a greater deal of autonomy. Moreover, they impact the collegial level through being a good example, indicating best practice and tutoring and they may encourage a broader perspective of the professional practice (Scott, 1982).

When we turn to the *collegial/organizational* level the traditional literature addressed this to a more limited extent, partly because of the focus on “pure” professional workers with the standing reference to lawyers and physicians in the beginning of the 20-century (Freidson, 2001). However, these more traditional professions have merged into a context where they in organizations work together with other colleagues (Bévort & Suddaby, 2016). Professional work in this setting has to be related to overall planning, strategies and mutual adaptation to rules forming part of the organizational environment, but also regarding the conduct of the execution of professional work. For teachers this means having to relate to curriculum, budget practices and coordination of activities (Frostenson, 2015) and at this level we find what Waring labels *managerial elites* (2014). The principal is a typical example of a managerial elite. Some will be steadily founded in the profession, while others might lose the connection to the profession and gain new managerial identities or get stuck in an identity confusion (Croft et al., 2015). Knowledge elites in this level will be more related to knowledge production, spreading of knowledge and safeguarding of standards and hence be more firmly rooted in the profession. While they might “chase” (McDonald et al., 2009) colleagues in order to advance and develop professional work they also buffer and restrict managerial initiatives (Scott, 1982; Waring, 2014).

The *policy* level highlights a profession’s involvement in overarching questions such as legislative concerns, legitimacy and rights to conduct the professional work. For the teaching profession, specific issues regard national curriculum, clients’ right to choose schools, grading systems, and decisions regarding entrance to the profession (Frostenson, 2015). In other settings professions have been described as more proactive and influential both on a national and international level. For example, several studies have described how the accounting profession, through national and international associations, has been successful in dominating the policy level (Caramanis, 2005; Cooper & Robson, 2006; Suddaby, Cooper, & Greenwood, 2007). The administrative elites are typically involved in policy processes, political settings and professional associations at this level. Professional at the policy level might also play a significant role in the restructuring of professional work in a way that allows further hierarchical bureaucratic control (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2011); they might turn out to be co-opted and hybridized.

The theoretical discussion helps refine the aim further. Central questions to address are the questions of what tasks the FTs do and is perceived as first teacher related, is there a new division of labor emerging within the profession and how what does the introduction of FTs mean in relation to principal and other staff more aligned with the bureaucratic structure? Further questions regard to if and to what extent FTs tasks can be perceived as content or context oriented and how they are related to the outlined levels.

Method

Our ambition in this study is to explicate practice (Llewelyn, 2003). Our phenomenon in focus is a new position within the school system and the novelty makes it suitable to approach the empirical phenomenon without readymade explanations to test or expectations about

outcomes. We therefore designed a longitudinal study where each school was followed over time (between 6-17 months).

Empirical data was gathered by a multi-methods approach from a multiple case study, similar to Barley (1996) notion of collaborative ethnography. In the initial phase of each case, several interviews were made in order to get an overarching understanding of the case. Following this, subjects willing to allow themselves to be shadowed were identified, and all in all we shadowed 12 teachers for approximately one week each. Consecutive interviews with teachers, first teachers, and administrative and managerial staff were held, and in the cases where access was granted follow-up observations were made. (For an overview of empirical data, see Table 1.)

Table 1: Overview of data

Case	Number of interviews		Shadowing (no of weeks)	Observations (no)
	Management/ Administration	Teachers		
1	8	9	3	9
2	3	7	2	4
3	4	10	2	6
4	9	10	2	6
5	7	8	1	10
6	2	9	1	11
7	5	5	1	7
Summary	31	58	12	40

The ambition in this study is to identify generic strategies and activities undertaken by FTs and other actors. Therefore, while the context of individual cases has been taken into consideration analytically, the emphasis is on reoccurring phenomena between cases. The emphasis in this paper is mainly the material regarding the first teachers, encompassing in all 35 interviews, 10 weeks of shadowing, and 40 observations. Other data have, however, also been significant, for example by providing confirmation of activities and understanding the context within which the first teachers work.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. In analysis, the NVivo software was employed. We initially coded the material in order to create a broad categorization of the large volume of data. Some of these codes were determined beforehand and other emerged in the analytical process. Moreover, as a consequence of the longitudinal character of the study, some codes appeared later as a response to changes in the working conditions on the teachers, as new management initiatives appeared during the research process.

Empirical observations

We described in the introduction that the FT position was a state initiative with some general ideas about what FTs could do. An outspoken ambition with the reform was to strengthen the teacher profession and make the job more attractive. The years before the reform the Swedish school system had been debated because of a decrease in international comparisons (like PISA) and few applications to teacher educations. Because of the decentralized organization of the school systems where municipalities or alternative (often businesses) act as mandator the actual introduction of the position became a task to organize for principals and local administrators.

Contextualizing actions and whereabouts

When we categorize the material we can observe that the appointed teachers to a varying degree had the opportunity to control the content of the position. Some were freer than others, but if there were directions, they were most often not very clear cut. It is however important to note that it is impossible to talk about a unified strategic pattern regarding the FT positions that spans schools and municipalities and is consistent over time. It differs between schools and also within municipalities and within specific schools over time. While there often was an opening for the teachers to fill the FT role with content, one can also arrive at the conclusion that describing FT-role as a position is somewhat problematic. In some cases there were a rather clear description of the meaning of the position, oftentimes not and sometimes the lack of description was matched with an attitude from the FT that nothing in addition to ordinary teacher work was to be expected. The latter also illustrating that it differed a lot between the teachers what the ambitions were and how much effort they were willing to put into realizing their ambitions. The municipalities in our study introduced the reform in different ways which affected how the FTs could influence the content of their role. At some schools the teachers were told to describe in their applications what they would want to do and realize as FTs, as described in the quote below:

“..and then they announced two positions that we were to fill with content, what do you want to make in order to improve the school? What would you like to do if you would become first teacher? And then I specified my application towards Swedish language”(FT)

One of the municipalities differed from the others since we could observe a more ambitious strategy to form and control the first teacher positions. The interviews with the FTs but also the observations of the meetings indicate a much more elaborated municipal strategy to advance and change pedagogical work. The first teachers became a part of this and the content of their positions were more refined compared to the other case. Still, as the quotation illustrates this does not mean that there wasn't room for interpretations.

“We were assigned a definition of tasks by xx but it was rather vague, I think. It turns out as it turns out. It is not as if I know that I am supposed to do this and that.”(FT)

It differed between schools and municipalities to what extent the appointments also were accompanied with additional resources granted by the municipalities. At two of the schools the first FTs appointed could spend 20% less time in class, while the FTs appointed later did not have that opportunity. The argument for not allowing this reduction of teaching duty was argued to cost the municipality too much. What followed when more teachers were appointed in the following steps was that the ambitions and expectations expressed by the municipality were lowered and also that less or no extra resources (resulting in less time in class) were added.

Some FTs did not express any specific agenda for the FT work and more viewed it as recognition of an excellent teaching effort. However, most did. Based on the interviews two main categories of ambitions among the FTs were identified. One expressed ambition was to get more engaged in the development of teaching. For some this regarded specific subjects or other dimensions of teaching, like the use of specific teaching methods or the work with targeting reading comprehension. The other category was an ambition to get a more prominent role in the management of the school and to work with the strategic dimension. This could be about forming part of the school management team or be a part of a pedagogical strategic agenda launched by the municipal administration.

What the FTs actually do

We started out our analysis by listing all the activities in the empirical material that could be characterized as related to the first teacher position. A second step was to create broader categories. Four main categories emerged that most actions could be sorted into: *coordinating, policy formulating, knowledge generating and instructing*. Before describing the definition and content of each category it is worth highlighting that one core activity for all first teachers was a continuation of teaching. This was also one of the prerequisites in the state initiative. All FTs in our study were also active as teachers as their main obligation. A few respondents motivated their position arguing that they had special teaching assignment with the example of teachers with a track record with handling “tough classes” or with skills handling special needs. Still, most teachers did not perceive their actions on work level as examples of FT actions. In relation to the work carried out before the FT appointments teaching did not differ, which might have added to the perception that this alone was not something being a part of the FT reform. Below we describe the four categories and relate them to the different levels outlined in the theoretical section.

Coordination is about relating different activities to each other. Most of the activities regarding coordinating were related to the collegial/school level. Nevertheless, we also observed examples at work level. At some schools the position of being a first teacher was tied to the heading of teacher teams, which also meant a more formal position, often leaning more towards administration than content of work. Other examples of administrative tasks on work level was administrating national tests, ordering teaching material and coordinating the local group of teachers. Our general conclusion is that the FT position did mean some actions and tasks at the work level but that it still was to a limited extent.

At the collegial/school level there were more examples of coordinative efforts. Many of the FTs were appointed to the school management teams, headed by the principal. Some had also previously been part of the team, but several were assigned based on their appointment to FT. In one of the studied schools they did not have a school management team and introduced it as a consequence of the reform. What we observe is how positions and tasks were provided and reserved for FTs. While we regard the work in the school management team as an administrative task in itself, we also, based on our observations on meetings could categorize the issues dealt with at the meetings. The categorization of the content of school management team meetings for example indicate that coordination was one of the main issues dealt with. It regarded planning of activities like scheduling, planning activities not part of the everyday school day and staffing.

Formulating policies regards turning specific issues into planned action. Policy formulation was an extensive category of activities at the collegial/school level. The observations of meetings indicated that this was one of the main issues discussed. Examples of more administrative issues were to decide on rules regarding excursions, when children are allowed

to leave school and the use of teacher cell phones. Policy formulation also regarded knowledge and content oriented issues such as what skills development programs should contain, interpretation of new grading system, how to standardize assessments and what role FTs should have. The issues dealt with were both actualized through questions raised as a consequence of problems or ambiguities identified in the day to day work and as an effect of changed regulation on a national level or new guidelines issued by the municipal administration. In the latter case the formulation of local policies was a part of an implementation of hierarchical control initiatives. Policy formulation did sometimes stretch to the policy level above the school level, but hardly ever to the level above the municipality.

Generating knowledge is about identifying and bringing new knowledge into the organization. At the work level we observe activities like FTs participating in courses and projects in order to enhance their own skills as teachers. We also observe how knowledge generation was an activity at the collegial/school level. The difference compared to the work level is that the ambition was that the generation of new knowledge was not only about enhancing one's own skills, but about providing a foundation for advancement among colleagues. It spanned from being head teacher with a clear focus on subject, to pedagogical leadership like heading Montessori pedagogy or leading the work with a formative assessment approach. In some cases the direction of the work at this level was given by the principal or administration, but in several cases it was the teachers who had stressed the importance of a certain direction.

Some of the FTs were also connected to universities. Others were commissioned to scan for new knowledge within certain areas in order to guarantee that the schools were up to date regarding knowledge and policies issued by the National Agency for Education. To some extent knowledge generation was also related to the policy level. Examples of this was teachers participating in research projects located at universities and conducting investigative work on the overall municipal level on the behalf of the political board.

Instructing is about teaching and coaching colleagues. Instructing is observed both at work level and collegial/school level. Several teachers described, and this was also observed during our shadowing, that the FTs often were approached by colleagues regarding specific issues within their expertise. They tutored, often informally and during chats in the hallway or canteen. It could be about teaching material, technology, teaching strategies or how to handle incidents.

We observe instructing at the collegial/school level as well. FTs participated and led activities like skills programs, subject oriented activities and pedagogical practice guidance. Several of the teachers had an outspoken ambition to work with instructing colleagues, since they had special interests in certain areas like computer assisted teaching, Montessori pedagogy or reading comprehension. In especially one of the cases instructing was aligned with the municipal administrations ambitions to realize school development. The FTs can in that case be described as change agents, first they were instructed in teams on the municipal level and in the next step themselves being instructors on their schools. Several of the FTs were also involved as instructors in the programs initiated and funded by the National Agency for Education.

In relation to principals the first teachers took on a position that in most cases can be described as alleviating, for example regarding the principals' commission to be pedagogical leaders. In some of the cases the FTs were described as taking on a more extrusive role.

However, in many cases this was not that much about taking over tasks as actually making certain that someone cared about it. The principals position was often described as rather

burdened with administration and that you hardly ever “find the principal in a class room”. To get more engaged in pedagogical advancement was therefore often hard for the principals.

Another example of an existing practice where FTs received a more prominent role was regarding responsibility for skills development. In one of our cases it was an outspoken strategy by FTs to get to plan and execute these activities. These activities had previously been handled by principals, teachers and representatives from the municipal administration.

Discussion and conclusions

Our empirical account has been straight forward and descriptive. Here, we first we sum up some of the core observations and then turn to the questions raised in the theoretical section in order to provide a foundation for more elaborated conclusions. One more general observation is that we have observed a great variety when it comes to the ambitions of different FTs and the activities they get engaged in. Our interpretation is that this is an expression of professional workers moving in to a true liminal space (Croft et al., 2015) where there isn't any accepted templates to rely on. In the following discussion we argue that what we observe is a process of restratification, which for the appointed has meant a new and more influential role in the school organization. The FTs became an elite. Although it differed between the FTs how their role played out, on a general level there were at least a few entering a more prominent position at all schools. Since most of the activities are not administrative and the FTs hardly can be described as “co-opted” we argue that what we observe is a strengthening of the profession. Still, this conclusion needs some further elaboration.

We observe how most teachers performed a range of tasks as a consequence of being appointed to FTs and we here use the term *appropriation* to capture what happened. By the use of the concept of appropriation we want to address that FTs established themselves in an organizational space through taking over established tasks and obligations, but also by covering novel issues and responsibilities not yet covered. The use of the concept of appropriation also allows us to reflect upon how appropriation was accomplished. We observe that appropriation both were accomplished through a *strategic* endeavor and through acts of *delegation*.

Stratification and appropriation

The categorization of actions shows how the FTs actions to a great extent were related to the collegial/school level. As described they formed part of the school management teams, they headed teacher teams, provided guidelines and coordinated activities. These tasks were to a great extent performed earlier on as well, but now the FTs took on a more prominent role in their execution. It both meant taking over the tasks from principals, but also from other teachers. Appropriation therefore in these cases meant moving into established areas and arenas, like becoming members of existing school management teams, take over responsibility of skills programs, and head teacher teams. However, to some extent it was also about defining and performing new tasks (create a FT network), dealing with things that had not been dealt with properly before (pedagogic leadership) and about establishing new arenas (school management team were introduced). Our interpretation is therefore that the introduction of the FT position, although it varies to extent and degree, meant that the appointed teachers formed part of a new elite in the sense that they to some extent replaced ordinary teachers and hence became a “spokesperson” for the profession. The empirical categorization also shows that appropriation both regarded administrative tasks and knowledge and content oriented tasks although the content oriented tasks dominated.

We use the concepts of *strategy* and *delegation* in order to conceptualize *how* appropriation is accomplished. Delegation refers to when other actors delegated task to first teachers, hence they did not themselves actively seek or “fight” for them. Principals and municipal administrations in the studied organizations handed over responsibilities and created arenas for the FTs. Of course, the introduction of the FT position in itself might be interpreted as a way of delegating to the teachers being appointed. More specific examples are principals arguing that the FTs can become more active pedagogical leaders, formerly a task attributed to the principals, and instead the principals could focus more general leadership and administrative tasks. The assignment to school management teams is another example. Still, although to a more limited extent we also observe teachers delegating tasks to FTs; the latter often with the argument that “*since you have a first teacher position you might as well do that*”. These tasks were often what one could characterize as “scut-work”: being important for the exercise of professional work while not belonging to the core. In relation to ordinary teachers FTs therefore both took on more strategic work and more simple tasks.

Regarding *strategy* this refers to active acts based on ambitions expressed by the FTs. As indicated it varied to a great extent how active the FTs were in finding ways to realize what they wanted to do. Several of the FT respondents did not express any elaborated or great efforts. Instead they argued that they would not do anything else than what had been agreed upon when appointed and only to the extent conditions allowed. Nevertheless, some of the FTs tried to accomplish certain things in order to realize their ambitions. Already before the reform they had been active in pushing some issues and been trying to realize those ambitions. One example in one of our studied cases is the attempts to create a FT network. This was an initiative made by some of the FTs, but was also supported by the principals and the municipal administration.

We conclude that the content of the FT position varied although on a general level we can observe an appropriation of organizational space. Two important contributing factors were the degree to which the employer (head and municipal administration) delegated and provided conditions for appropriation and the degree to which the FTs had an agenda of their own on what to accomplish. Still, in some cases it is even hard to talk about a position in the sense that it differs from other teachers day to day work. In some cases with no extra requirements and the FTs does not have any ambitions to do anything additional and no extra resources are provided, it is more of a pay check raise than anything else. Notwithstanding, as observed in (most) cases, the first teacher appointment was turned into a position with outspoken requirements, FTs expressed ambitions and some resources were provided to facilitate the arrangement.

Conclusion

We argue that the introduction of the FT position can be understood as a process of stratification: the FTs became an elite. We argue that the introduction of FTs led to a hierarchization of the acknowledged flat profession of teachers. Still, what we observe mustn't be understood as a zero sum game within the profession. Our study underpins the conclusion that the teacher profession at large advanced its positions. The observed decrease in teachers' power and autonomy (Jarl et al., 2012; Marks & Nance, 2007) at least seems halted. We elaborate a bit further on some dimensions of these statements. Our discussion of the empirical observations shows two dimensions of the restratification process that is worth highlighting in relation to extant literature. The first regards the relationship between the teaching profession and principals and administration. The second regards how the introduction of an elite affected ordinary teachers.

To start with the relationship to principals and administration we observe a more clear division between administration and profession. In the introduction we described how principals in the Swedish context have made efforts in order to establish themselves as a profession on their own, distanced from teachers (Jarl et al., 2012). Since we have illustrated how first teachers have taken on more pedagogical leadership tasks and how they also are more involved in the coordination of day to day activities at the schools, we argue that this is a step towards a more distant principal role in relation to the ongoing everyday work of teachers. The teaching profession, through the FTs, handle more of their own content oriented issues and to some extent coordinative tasks, while principals act on a more general and administrative level. What we observe is rather a re-professionalization, instead of a de-professionalization (Codd, 2005; Evetts, 2003), and because of the content orientation of the tasks, it is also hard to describe the new elite position as a hybridization (Noordegraaf, 2015) or of co-optation (Waring, 2014). For principals the role became less hybrid as well. They focus more on pure administrative tasks.

What about the processes of stratification within the profession? According to the restratification thesis there is an obvious risk for ordinary teachers to turn into a more routine oriented “rank and file” position (McDonald et al., 2009; Waring & Bishop, 2013). However, this is not what we observe. Since we have described how FTs take on both more strategic positions on the collegial level together with more simple “scut work”, what remains for ordinary teachers is the core of teaching: class room practice. In line with the description of how teachers tend to own their own class room practice and manage to keep reformers out and “teach in a box” (Hargreaves, 2000; Helsby, 1995), the result of the FT reform seems to be that ordinary teachers can keep on teaching with less disturbances. The FTs take on the buffering role observed in studies of other contexts (Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald, & Pettigrew, 1996; Jacobs, 2005).

These observations would then be in line with Freidson’s (1985) argument that stratification is a way of a profession to strengthen their position in relation to other professions and domains. What we observe in addition is that stratification in fact led to a de-hybridization of the roles of teachers and principals. While the stratification thesis mostly has been described as potentially causing internal conflicts and tensions (Currie et al., 2009; Freidson, 1985; Waring, 2014) and possible conflicting roles of elites torn between professional and administrative logics (Waring, 2014), our study indicates a more relieving outcome. Regarding the relationships inside professions tensions was not the outcome. One potential explanation from our empirical material could be that the focus on everyday work would be the prime goal for many professional workers. The cost of less influence on a collegial level would then be a small price to pay. In a similar manner the principals, who in all cases were positive to the reform, “hive off” some of the obligations regarding pedagogical leadership. As indicated in our empirical material, the task of acting as pedagogical leaders seems to have been more of a bad conscious (constantly pushed out by more imminent concerns) than a practice. The introduction therefore facilitated the development of the principal position into a more focused administrative position, which in turn might be in line with the professionalization project of the principals (Jarl et al., 2012).

Our study does not provide answers regarding why there is a lack of conflict. However, one might speculate that a contributing reason is the observation that the introduction of FTs for teachers and principals caused more focused and less hybridized roles. An overall conclusion would then be in line with Waring’s (2014) observation that it is important to take into consideration the local situated point of departure for the establishment of the FL position.

What we observe is also more in line with the argument that administration and profession mutually benefit from each other rather than pose threat (Bourgeault et al., 2011).

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Table 2: Summary of findings

<p>Level:</p> <p>Actions:</p>	<p>Work level:</p> <p>Actions are related to practicing teaching and concern the individual practitioner and fellow colleagues. Hence it is a local situated work related context. Typically it relates to everyday work and specific client issues.</p>	<p>Collegial/school level</p> <p>Actions on a more general level and is often related to several "local contexts". Typically actions revolve around systematization, standardization, planning, coordination and adherence to strategic changes.</p>	<p>Strategic/Policy level</p> <p>Actions relating school matters to other societal concerns, questions regarding accreditation, priorities, knowledge production and more general directions within the field.</p>
<p>Administrative "context"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Order books/equipment -Handle national tests -Head teacher teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Specific assignments: e.g. issue equality plan -Coordination: scheduling, staff planning, recruiting -Member of school management team -Take part in work aiming at a more equal school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advancing systematic quality work -Project involvement: e.g. internationalization, school drop-outs -Provision of official statement -Engage in ordering and refining of first teacher position
<p>Knowledge oriented "content"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue being an excellent teacher -Generating/enhancing personal skills: e.g. courses, fairs, pay attention to/take part in research -Handling specific clients (tough classes, special needs) -Tutor colleges (formal/informal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Head teacher (subject) -Scanning/updating knowledge and mediate to colleges -Pedagogical leadership (e.g. Montessori orientation, formative assessment, inclusion) -Specify grading guidelines -Create platform for specific topics (like reading comprehension) -Instructing colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Manage and execute skills development programs -Develop strategies for collegial learning -Active role in municipal, regional and national networks -Research projects