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EMOTIONS AND POLICY

Teachers' Emotional Labour Amidst Policy Demands

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the interplay between emotions, policy and teachers' experiences within the Swedish municipal school system. Through an anthropological lens, it examines how emotions are not only personal experiences but also culturally and socially conditioned phenomena that influence teachers' subjectivity and the way they navigate the overall goals and expectations of the school system. Drawing on theories of emotional labour and technologies of governance, the paper analyses how increased workloads and unclear mandates affect teachers' subjectivity. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the implementation of educational policies within the Swedish municipal school system and the high expectation of building good relationships with pupils, affects teachers' subjectivity with a particular focus on teachers' experiences of emotional labour.

Keys words: teachers, education, emotion, emotional labour, anthropology, governance, policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers face a reality where emotions, power and expectations constantly interact and influence their daily work and personal well-being. In a society characterised by neoliberal ideals, where individuals are expected to be free, autonomous and responsible, schools play a crucial role in shaping pupils towards these ideals. The education system is expected to produce pupils who can navigate a complex world, while teachers themselves have to deal with conflicting demands and roles.

With an anthropological perspective and by following teachers at a school in Malmö, I examine how these professionals relate to and deal with the emotional and organisational challenges that arise in the wake of educational policies. Through an ethnographic approach, I seek to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' everyday interactions and the strategies they use to navigate the often conflicting environment.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the implementation of educational policies within the Swedish municipal school system and the high expectation of building good relationships with pupils, affects teachers' subjectivity with a particular focus on teachers' experiences of emotional labour.

The questions this thesis aims to answer are
- How are teachers affected by the high demands and constrained working environment in schools?
- How do emotions and policies interact in teachers' everyday lives?
- How do teachers navigate to build relationships with pupils?

The structure of this thesis will be as follows, I will start by presenting relevant research made close to my choice of subject. In the next part, I will present and discuss the different theories I am using for this thesis. I will start by delving into the cultural critique of emotions to continue presenting a theoretical framework of emotions and emotional labour, namely the theories of Sara Ahmed and Arlie Hochschild. I explain the concepts of emotion, emotional labour and emotion as a social good. I am analysing how emotion interacts with policies with the concept of "sticky objects". I will then go on with an explanation of subjectivity, where my understanding leans on Sherry Ortner, and the idea of 'psy' and the technologies of the

self, of Nicolas Rose. I then explain the technologies of governance such as audit and policy. This makes my base for further analysis.

The next part consists of an elaboration of the methodology; where I present how I have come through with this thesis, and the fieldwork before starting writing. There is a section for contextualising the Swedish municipal school with an overview of the reforms taking form after the 90's. The section also provides a discussion of how 'psy' has come to impact education in Sweden at large, within contemporary neoliberal society. I analyse relevant parts from the curriculum and the educational act through 'psy', so simultaneously there is a presentation of the main 'tools' that teachers have to rely on. The next section is more of a presentation of the tools that are closer to the school in question. Some tools are provided by the Malmö municipality, and some tools are designed by staff at the school, thus local tools.

In the next section, the focus will shift to the practical application of the theoretical framework, examining the tools and strategies employed by teachers within the school system to navigate emotional labour and policy demands. There are discussions of the implementation of inclusive methods within teaching, and how this inflation of additional accommodation affects the whole teaching. I talk of how the teachers navigate towards, or around policies thus with the same overarching goal: to meet the individual pupils' needs. Further, there will be an elaboration on how expectations are coming from all sorts of directions and how the teachers deal with that. These expectations are related to both policies and emotional labour; where I show how this interacts and intertwines with each other, getting the teachers even more emotionally involved. Last part, I analyse how the teachers talk about how they use their emotions in different ways to build stronger relationships towards the pupils and to be able to deal with the high demands they face.

The concluding sections will discuss the findings and their implications for further research.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

My research field has been influenced by the work of others, particularly within a Swedish context. While anthropology has predominantly examined areas surrounding teaching or education on an international level, there are notable contributions that inform my study. This section introduces relevant research for this thesis.

In anthropology, within a Swedish context, Åsa Bartholdsson (2007) has on several occasions examined how the exercise of governance in Swedish schools affects teachers. In the article "*When There is a Book to Stick to: Teacher Professionalism and Manual-Based Programmes in Two Swedish Early Childhood Education Settings*" (2020), Bartholdsson analyses the use of manual-based and/or evidence-based methods to develop children's emotional skills. Bartholdsson's study highlights how teachers in these contexts can experience a double devaluation of their professionalism, both externally through external actors and internally through a lack of confidence in their judgments (Bartholdsson, 2020, p. 17).

In *"En lektion i gemenskap – Ordning och (o)reda bland lärare i Malmö och Marseille"* Jeanette Hentati (2017) argues that cross-pressure occurs when teachers encounter resistance in their work, i.e., dissatisfaction that teachers experience when they feel pressured to follow or adapt to expectations or demands that are perceived as impossible to meet. Their desire to be useful and to put their vision into practice creates tensions that leave teachers feeling frustrated. Hentati compares two schools, one in Marseille and one in Malmö, both of which are cities that are facing major challenges, such as criminalisation and segregation. Educating pupils to become good citizens to achieve national unity is part of the mission of both French and Swedish teachers (albeit defined slightly differently).

Thedvall (2015) discusses with an anthropological perspective the management of preschool in the "Lean" way, evaluating work processes by numbers and colours, and examining how factory methods have been transferred to the school system.

Outside of anthropology, but with ethnography as a method, Helena Wallström (2018) and Elisabeth Nordvall (2011) are two researchers in education and special education who have examined mentorship. Their work has provided this study with an understanding of how much of relationship-building is systematised. Wallström (2018) focuses on how individualisation is reproduced through mentorship, while Nordvall (2011) highlights the significant impact of mentorship on pupils' engagement in their education and their support on both group and individual levels. Provided that the mentor has the necessary conditions, Nordvall shows how mentors often succeed in turning difficult situations around for pupils, ensuring they continue to stay in school.

Jonas Lindbäck's dissertation in child and youth studies employs an ethnographic approach to explore how structural and cultural changes impact pupils in school. In *"Värsta bästa skolan: Om unga i förorten och segregationen i skolan"*, Lindbäck (2021) addresses segregation by situating his research at a school in a suburb of Gothenburg. Although the introduction of school choice was intended to increase diversity, the opposite effect occurred. The dissertation highlights how pupils navigate the representations of their school and neighbourhood, and how they create alternative narratives that challenge dominant perceptions.

To grasp the idea of individualisation in Swedish schools, Monika Vinterek (2006) a professor of educational work, has dissected the concept, noting that the definition is often unclear and sprawling. Regarding the concept of inclusion, Mette Molbaek (2018) argues that research on the inclusive dimensions of teaching and the reality of inclusive classrooms do not correlate, and bureaucratic processes obstruct the flexibility required to manage a teacher's everyday life.

Ulf Lundström (2018) discusses the constant tension between autonomy and control that teachers experience. He describes how teachers' autonomy has been challenged by the extensive reforms in the Swedish school system since the 1990s. The dilemma is that teachers are expected to be independent and professionally autonomous while also managing demands for accountability and higher goal achievement.

The research presented here underscores various contradictions faced by educators. These tensions, central to my thesis, provide a foundation for examining the everyday practices of teachers within these conflicting conditions. However, my study focuses on emotions and emotional labour, investigating how increased workloads, governance techniques, and diffuse assignments affect teachers. My contribution lies in employing ethnography to explore how teachers navigate these conditions and how this shapes their subjectivity.

3. THEORY

In the following section, I will present the theories that will form the basis of my analysis of my fieldwork. I will start by briefly explaining the anthropological perspective on emotions and then present and discuss the theorists I use in my analysis. Here, I explain how Sara Ahmed and Arlie Hochschild view emotions, their value and emotional labour. After that I

talk about the understanding of subjectivity based on Sherry Ortner, but foremost Nikolas Rose's ideas about technologies of the self, to further present Shore and Wright's ideas of governance through policy and audit.

Emotions and emotional labour

In this thesis, my theoretical starting point has been to focus on emotions, which has also served as a methodological guide. In anthropology, emotions, or affects, are not only considered as private states but as something that moves and has meaning in people's lives. Catherine Lutz (2017, 2002) emphasises that emotions are not only individual experiences but also socially constructed and collective phenomena that are deeply rooted in cultural and political contexts. This view emphasises the importance of studying emotions as more than just personal experiences, but also as culturally and socially contingent phenomena.

The initial work on emotion aimed to critique the binary distinctions between emotion/reason, the bodily self/the immaterial mind, public/private and so on. This critique originated from feminist scholars and movements, highlighting the stereotypical association of women with emotion and men with rationality as if they were oppositional. Feminist intellectuals called for a deconstruction of these binary categories, as they often devalue women in that sense; by for example associating emotional work with unpaid work within the household. As Lutz (2002) argues, that is to help position women in that way.

In her book *"The Promise of Happiness"*, Sara Ahmed (2010) explores how emotions shape our subjective experiences and influence how we navigate the world. With a phenomenological approach, she follows the directions that emotions take her. Along with Lutz, Ahmed's (and my) interest lies in what emotions do, rather than what they are.

Ahmed analyses how the promise of happiness directs us toward various objects. She describes happiness as a form of world-making, an everyday habit of happiness, and examines how happiness is used to justify oppression through cultural norms. Ahmed focuses on emotions to explore "how subjects become invested in specific structures" (2010 p. 12) to the extent that they cannot imagine living without these structures and thus cling to them.

For instance, she discusses how multiculturalism causes unhappiness in a society, thereby placing whiteness at the centre of the 'happy' society. She returns to the British colonial

empire in India, where the only path to happiness was to teach the indigenous people how to be happy. The natives had to turn toward the colonisers' values to become happy. In today's multicultural Britain, she exemplifies this with the turban: one must give up their cultural attributes to become part of the British identity, where happiness is promised when you become 'British' (meaning to take off the turban), which does not have to be the case, leading instead to a feeling of being alien in the society.

Ahmed (2010 p. 27) suggests that happiness is intentional, meaning that happiness is often seen as the ultimate goal; it is "end-oriented", happiness is the intention behind doing something. This implies that happiness is already associated with certain things more than others, for example, a certain British identity.

Arlie Hochschild (1983) coined the term 'emotional labour'. In *The Managed Heart: commercialization of human feeling",* Hochschild explores how individuals, particularly in service professions, are expected to regulate their emotions to meet the demands of the job role. Hochschild describes how emotions are commercialised and used as a commodity in the workplace. She focuses particularly on flight attendants, who are often women. These professionals work to make passengers feel "at home" and learn how to behave in ways that benefit the company's profits. This can mean always smiling or being nice to a customer who has just treated them poorly. This phenomenon she calls "feeling rules", which is not something new to human beings but creates new ways of governance when emotions are engineered by large organisations. (Hochschild 1983 p.20)

Emotions, as described by Ahmed (2010), accumulate value when circulated and affirmed. Ahmed posits that emotions, much like commodities, can increase in value through exchange and affirmation. For instance, emotions such as happiness gain social value when affirmed by others. While both Ahmed and Hochschild view emotions as goods or commodities, their perspectives differ somewhat. Hochschild (1983) suggests that emotions are sold for a wage and governed by societal expectations (or institutions, companies). In contrast, Ahmed emphasises the process of affirmation, highlighting how emotions gain value and influence when they are affirmed by others.

Ahmed considers emotions to be social commodities, circulating and accumulating value much like capital. These emotions are seen as having social value and often move in predetermined directions. Hochschild and Ahmed illustrate this concept using the example of

a wedding day, commonly referred to as the happiest day of one's life. However, what happens if someone feels sad on their wedding day? According to Hochschild, this is governed by "feeling rules," implying a socially dictated manner of experiencing emotions during such events. Ahmed delves deeper into this by examining how happiness is affirmed on a wedding day, subtly guiding individuals to express certain emotions in specific contexts. If sadness surfaces during a wedding, it can evoke a sense of alienation, contradicting the expected joy of the occasion.

Ahmed (2010) introduces the concept of "sticky objects" to describe how certain objects, ideas or concepts can acquire an emotional charge that sticks to them over time. These objects become 'sticky' because they carry emotions that generate reactions and associations, giving them a special meaning in society: when emotions adhere to ideas, activities, policies, and so on, they become sticky with affect. This helps explain, for example, why social norms are so intractable and why social transformation is so difficult to achieve, even during times of great resistance and upheaval. When we invest in these sticky objects emotions attach to and evolve around them.

Technologies of Governance

Nikolas Rose (1989) with the book "*Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*" has contributed to the understanding of how modern Western society has developed individualised techniques of governance of the self. These techniques do not rely on authority and control from above but power is operating through the agency of the subjects. In particular, Rose examines disciplines within psychology. The so-called 'psy' disciplines have become central to our understanding of ourselves, others and society as a whole. Rose argues that the spread of the 'psy' disciplines is closely linked to changes in governance, in the rationales and technologies used by political power in capitalist liberal democracies. Rose talks of 'psy' to describe how psychological theories and practices have become integrated into the fabric of society, influencing how we understand and organise our lives.

According to Rose, individuals in modern society are encouraged to take responsibility for their well-being, personal development and success. This has led to a form of self-direction where individuals are expected to work on their self by internalising psychological norms and technologies. Rose describes this as a process whereby we have become "intensely subjective

beings", (Rose 1989 p.3) meaning that our subjectivity has become a central part of how we govern and manage ourselves in modern Western society.

To understand the bureaucratisation of education, I have been theoretically inspired by Shore's and Wright's work. These fundamental ideas illustrate how different technologies permeate the school system. To examine the effects of new public management and neoliberalism, including target- and result-oriented education, I refer to Cris Shore's and Susan Wright's (2015) argument about the growing culture of audit in modern capitalist societies. Shore's and Wright's theories, which build on the work of Rose, emphasise how individuals are managed through techniques such as measurement and evaluation to increase quality and efficiency.

Shore and Wright (2011) argue that policies not only act as constraining forces but also have a productive and performative role. They not only help to reflect the context in which they exist but also help to shape it. Through various sequences of events, a policy is expressed, thereby creating new social and semantic spaces, relations, political subjects and networks of meanings. Policies can be seen as insightful windows into political processes, where actors, agents, concepts and technologies interact in different contexts, resulting in the creation or consolidation of new governance rationalities, knowledge and power structures. Policies function as a fundamental organising principle of society, like family, nation, class or citizenship, providing a method to conceptualise and symbolise social relations, around which people live their lives and structure their reality.

Subjectivity

I understand subjectivity through Sherry Ortner's definition as "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects." (Ortner 2006 p. 107) Subjectivity is about how individuals experience and interpret the world around them, and it is through subjectivity that people act and navigate their social worlds. Ortner's work helps us understand that while subjectivity is influenced by cultural and social structures, it is also a basis for agency. Subjectivity is not only a product of structures but also a site of resistance and creative action. Ortner describes how cultural and social frameworks shape our feelings and ways of thinking, or "modes of subjectivity." (Ortner 2006 p. 126) By understanding subjectivity as both shaped by and shaping cultural and social practices, we can better understand the complexity of how individuals act within and against institutional frameworks.

The Western notion of an authentic self, "the true self", and the idea of certain emotions as more "real" are culturally situated (Ortner 2006), and anthropology (Lutz 2017, 2002) has taught us that emotions are not just something you feel but something that is created and shaped in a cultural context. Rose argues that the modern self is shaped by a complex web of power practices and that the free, rational and autonomous self is a creation of Western liberal society.

For my part, I am not particularly interested in determining what exists in terms of different ideas of the self, but rather how teachers navigate to create these selves, and what the feelings do and make us move. For example, for teachers, authenticity is an important dimension in their self-understanding and in how they relate to their professional roles. This is reflected in how they navigate the emotional labour, and how they use these categories to understand and explain their own experiences.

These theorists, Ahmed, Hochschild and Rose, point out that it is not the phenomena themselves that are bad. When the promise of happiness, emotional labour and self-governance are used to oppress, marginalise or ignore the well-being of individuals, they become problematic. It is not the responsible and emotional subject that is criticised, but the fact that the work is done under unreasonable and contradictory conditions.

4. METHODOLOGY

Below I will go through the methodology of this thesis. First, there is a focus on how I accessed, defined and gathered data and the second part has a focus on the reflexive process of positioning, navigating and interpreting, some challenges and ethical considerations.

The methods used are participant observations followed by semi-instructed interviews. This work has been carried out over two months over four months during the winter of 2023/2024. I have spent 3-5 days a week, following teachers in lessons, meetings, breaks and in between. One person declined an interview, I do not know why. I followed up on the interviews through email sometimes, after the time spent at the school.

Accessing, defining and gathering

I accessed the field through a friend, a former colleague. I was interviewing him for a minor exercise in a previous course. He told the principal at the school about me, and I contacted her through email. My friend is not a part of this paper at all. I have only used him as a safe zone, a friend to lean against when I felt lonely. The next process of access is also a part of defining and narrowing the field. Who I choose to follow along will also guide the focus of my thesis.

During the first week, I mostly sat in the coffee area. Most of the day, people were there for either a break, to refill coffee or to search for someone they were looking for, usually a mentor or a pupil. As mentioned earlier, emotions have also been a methodological guide, meaning I already had an idea of studying emotions and emotional labour, with a particular focus on how teachers build relationships towards the pupils. Already on the first day, I got confirmation that my choice of topic was relevant. One teacher assured me that I was in the right place saying *"Well, working on building relationships towards the pupils is what I do all day"*, and another one explained how she often spends up to half a day on solving social issues among the pupils in favour of her planning time.

After a couple of days, and a well-made decision to stop drinking coffee from the coffee machine I decided to explore more of my field - to be able to narrow it down. After looking at different timetables, I simply chose two teams that I wanted to get to know better. Even though the teachers themselves mentioned that these two tracks had slightly more challenges than others, I'm not so sure: I felt I heard this from all the teams. Perhaps I was also drawn to where the most critical situations were happening.

However, I noticed that the pupils, especially in grade 7, became both curious and anxious about my presence in the classroom. That was the thing, that the pupils are so relationship-oriented. It was hard to tell if the teachers were stressed about my presence or if they liked having one more adult in the classroom. Probably both since being observed can be awkward, but help is always good, such as handing out paper or clarifying minor instructions for the pupils. As I got to know the pupils, the teachers became more comfortable with my presence. Eventually, my focus became even more directed towards grade 7; I simply spent time with (usually) Frida, Emil, Erik, or Ingrid when they taught grade 7. I also participated in other lessons and other classes, but these four people are my main sources for this paper.

I attended at least one meeting per week, most often the meetings where they gathered in their teams, but not grouped by subject. Since these four people did not belong to the same team, I went to different teams every time, depending on who I joined for the day. During these meetings, I was mostly just listening to what they were discussing and sometimes asked some questions if I did not follow. Directly after (as for the lessons too) I went to a closed and empty room to write everything down.

Studying the school's policies involved reviewing various documents. I gained access to the school's digital network (I was able to use my old work email) to review their documents and governing tools. These documents will be described in more detail under "tools". The curriculum and various reports have also accompanied me during this time. I often read the documents in parallel with the fieldwork. Keeping the documents in mind allowed me to frequently pick up on challenges and their approaches to these documents, and connect them with their real experiences. Since I have worked as a teacher myself (I will talk of this soon) I do know the first two chapters of the curriculum by my bones. I am certain it helps when having limited time to process things.

I did four interviews of a semi-structured nature. I had some questions formulated around school documents, workload and relationship building that led to my interviews. I followed my question more or less freely. The interviews were 30 minutes to two hours long. The long one we decided to do while the teacher was putting together materials for the coming lessons. I recorded all interviews, with consent and transcribed parts of them afterwards.

Given that my research took place in Sweden, all written material required translation. I aimed to translate participants' statements accurately.

Positioning, navigating and interpreting

Reflect upon myself and my impact on the field creates awareness of the production of knowledge. (O'Reilly 2012:222) I have been working within the compulsory school from time to time for over ten years. That means, being open about my own experiences, that the teachers will position me in a certain way and I will position myself in a certain way. I have practised a lot of what I will be discussing in this paper myself. I have knowledge that might shorten my way to understanding, for example, what is going on (or not going on) within the

Swedish contemporary school system. I have put the curriculum to work myself once and I have my idea of how the extent of emotional labour affects the working conditions as teachers. Benson and O'Reilly (2022) understand the reflexive practice through positioning, navigating and interpreting. Using myself as a tool for research means that my presence influences the field and my interpretations are influenced by my experiences as a former teacher. By seeing my positional orientation as a hybrid, I recognise (Narayan, 1993, p. 683) that my position creates certain pathways for navigation that are useful; especially in terms of embodied knowledge. For example, it does not take me very long to realise where in the classroom I should position myself so as not to create unnecessary distractions, for the sake of the teachers and/or pupils, particularly in stressful moments.

Before I entered the field I wanted to look into the social aspects of working as a teacher in municipal schools, particularly in terms of recognizing the extent to which relationships and the emotional labour involved in building them are valued. I did have preconceived ideas of to which extent this work took place; but foremost how the emotional labour looks like. I thought I would find some teachers who ignored the high demands and I thought I would find teachers who were working all hours of the day trying to get their pupils on the right track in life.

I did find these kinds of teachers; with a variety. To give my thesis more validity and to make a more fair process of knowledge production I wanted to be able to represent this variety of teachers. I believe the first week of my fieldwork was crucial here. I could have decided to follow the people who invited me; the ones who gave me access directly but I decided to wait and talk more with people. This meant just sitting for long hours in the staff room, with a feeling of pretending to work. My preconceived ideas of teachers who ignore following the protocol (or at least are highly critical) or those who tend to find relationship work uninteresting, will not show their face to a researcher who is interested in emotions and policy at first. I also know, and it is a deliberate choice to say I know here, that there are no teachers who are not committed to their work: it just manifests itself in different ways. If that is the case, it is a very strange choice of work.

As I mentioned earlier, I have probably ended up among the teachers who teach grade 7 most often, because the critical moments are overrepresented there. It is in critical situations that teachers often express their challenges, or most often right afterwards. For things to make

sense, the core of ethnography is crucial to understanding the everyday conditions the teachers work in. The interpretation of the field means giving attention to detail and nuance and the very reason the "be there" (McGrahanan 2018).

Given that my theoretical framework involves emotions, there are ethical considerations surrounding these things to keep in mind. There were numerous incidents where I could sense the awkwardness when a teacher was yelling at a pupil who for the fourth time was disrupting their peers, realising that I was there writing everything down! There was one incident where I for some reason had to leave in the middle of a reprimand: which made me realise the importance of staying with the teacher as long as I could. Often there were many hidden reasons for outbursts; a stressful morning, no breaks at all, being up all night working etc. Being able to observe and participate in these moments underscores the strength of ethnography.

Ethical guidelines

The pupils aren't a part of my research: but they are within my field. Upon my arrival, I discussed the confidentiality of the pupils with the principal. There was no intention to include the pupils in my thesis, but there are some cases where the teachers interact and talk to the pupils. I have made them completely anonymous, sometimes referred to as pupilX and always with a gender-neutral noun (they).

Ethical guidelines for this study were obtained by the American Anthropological Association (American Anthropological Association, n.d.) I ensured confidentiality and anonymity for all participants by using pseudonyms. Obtaining informed consent was a priority, and I reiterated my research intentions and the voluntary nature of participation throughout the study. I have been open and honest about my work, meaning that I have informed everyone involved about what I am doing, how, and why. Usually, I asked for permission before entering a classroom to ensure it was okay for me to join. On one occasion, a person told me no because he felt uncomfortable with me being there during lessons when it was presumed to be chaotic and he didn't want me to see him when he was angry. Even though I repeatedly informed people about my role and asked for consent, I noticed that some tended to forget what I had said. Many times, they forgot that I was a student of social anthropology and thought I was there as a teaching trainee.

5. CONTEXTUALISING SWEDISH MUNICIPAL SCHOOL

In this section, I contextualise the Swedish municipal school, briefly review the massive reforms implemented in the 1990s, and then place the curriculum and school law in the broader context of neoliberal principles.

The reforms in '90s

In recent decades, Swedish school policy has undergone extensive changes. In the 1990s, the responsibility for schools was transferred from the state to the municipalities. At the same time, reforms inspired by market economy principles were introduced, which led to the marketisation of schools. This included the introduction of free school choice and the possibility for private actors to set up independent schools with public funding. These changes were driven by neoliberal ideology and new public management principles, which emphasised greater efficiency, accountability and freedom of choice. The aim was to increase quality by creating competition between schools. (Lundström 2018)

The former centralised school was considered ineffective and unable to deal with the problems that characterised schooling in the 1970s, such as lack of discipline and insufficient support for pupils. Citizens' influence over schools was also limited compared to other areas of society. The solution was proposed to be increased decentralisation, to give teachers, principals, parents and pupils more influence. A new governance model was introduced, based on management by targets and results and less detailed regulation. Municipalisation was carried out on the assumption that the state would continue to work for equal schooling, including through curricula, supervision and budgetary control. (SOU 2014, p. 15)

Until the end of the 1980s, Sweden had a system whereby pupils were tied to schools based on their geographical neighbourhood. Since the 1990s, segregation in Swedish schools based on socioeconomic background has increased (Lindbäck 2021). One factor contributing to these increased differences is the freedom of choice of school, which has led to pupils with similar backgrounds being grouped in the same schools. This is further reinforced by the segregated housing market, which affects which schools pupils choose. Performance has increased in disparity in the same way, although performance has increased in general in recent years, with free school choice also being a contributing factor; among others.

In recent years the re-nationalisation of the Swedish school system has been investigated and is being discussed among the political parties. The discussion centres on how schools should be financed and how resources should be allocated, taking into account the different circumstances and needs of pupils (Skolverket 2022).

Curriculum and Psy

'Psy' has an impact on the school system in that there is an increasing individualising; to foster the pupils into self-sufficient individuals. This is placed in different ways including the school as compensatory, the idea of inclusion and democracy along with the emphasis on the teacher with a guiding role to support the individual's needs.

According to Rose (1989), 'psy' is manifested, among other things, in how organisations try to get their employees more engaged in their work. One example of this is the democratisation of the workplace, a method aiming to ensure that individuals feel well and develop through their work. By promoting self-management, authorities and institutions can influence individuals' behaviours more subtly. Instead of using direct coercion, they create systems and technologies that encourage individuals to voluntarily conform to societal norms and values, thereby effectively guiding the subject and their personal development. Similarly, Ahmed discusses how we are directed by the promise of happiness along a more normative path. According to Ahmed, happiness is what holds our world together. The happiness turn can be witnessed in changing policy and governance frameworks and serves as a more genuine way to measure progress (Ahmed 2010 p. 3, 71). In various ways, we turn towards happiness to become that free, happy person.

This represents the neoliberal subject, which is free from state power yet subordinated to a network of technologies that shape individual behaviour and subjectivity. According to Rose (1989 p. 11), this development is a form of subtle governance where the individual's freedom to choose and act paradoxically becomes a way to control and shape behaviours in society.

According to the curriculum, the Swedish school has a compensatory mission, which means that the school should compensate for pupils' different conditions to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to achieve their educational goals. (Skolverket 2022) This goal is located in the Education Act in chapter 3 and aims to create an equitable school where each pupil receives the guidance and stimulation required to succeed (Education Act 2010:800). An

equitable education does not mean that teaching should look the same everywhere or that resources should be distributed equally. Instead, teaching should be adapted to meet each pupil's unique needs and conditions. The school's mission includes helping each pupil find their unique character, which is considered crucial for participating in society and contributing their best under responsible freedom.

Rose discusses how the education system has come to function as a compensatory force in society, with the potential to break "the cycle of poverty" (1989 p. 203). Through education, schools can play a crucial role in reducing the social and economic gaps that otherwise risk entrenching inequality across generations. This view is subsequently a widespread value among political parties in Sweden, where education has long been seen as a fundamental right and a path to both individual happiness and societal development, particularly linked to social democracy.

In this context, socialisation is not only about transferring knowledge but also about shaping individuals who can fully participate in society. Thus, the role of education is not only to teach in the traditional sense but also to develop pupils' potential in a way that helps them overcome the structural barriers that, for instance, poverty and social vulnerability entail. This reflects the idea that school is not only a place for academic development but also for social and moral education.

Moreover, teaching should be conducted in democratic working methods and prepare pupils to actively participate in societal life. It should develop pupils' ability to take personal responsibility and become independent individuals. In the 2011 edition of the curriculum (Skolverket 2011), a greater focus on the individual is emphasised, which means an increased emphasis on adapting teaching to meet each pupils individual needs and support their development. What the new curriculum (Skolverket 2022) will contribute is still relatively uncertain. Some criticism is that it does not create room for changes in teachers' daily routines, but that remains to be seen.

This perspective can be linked to a broader discussion about the school's role in addressing societal problems. Hentati (2017 p. 100) highlights how the school, in both media and political discourses, is often expected to contribute to solving major societal challenges such as segregation, crime, and poverty. This creates a cross-pressure among the teachers in her

study as they simultaneously strive to fulfil their goal of nurturing pupils into good citizens. Teachers in both Marseille and Malmö, whom Hentati has studied, point out that these societal problems are not something the school as an individual entity can solve, but external expectations still put pressure on them to do just that. The school is expected, on the one hand, to be a place for academic development and, on the other, an institution that should handle and mitigate the adverse effects of social problems in society.

As the Swedish Teachers' Union also points out, to use Hentati's terms, it is in this tension field that the Swedish school fails to fulfil its compensatory mission (Sveriges Lärare 2024a). The report highlights that the lack of resources prevents schools from providing the support that pupils are entitled to, leading to many pupils suffering and causing immense moral stress for teachers. The report also shows that the school fails to offer an equitable education, leading to increasing gaps between socioeconomically strong and weak groups.

The school curricula have always been characterised by a focus on individualisation, but the meaning of the concept has changed over time, particularly after decentralisation. Vinterek (2006, p. 47) categorises different types of individualisation, such as adaptation according to content, interests, level, and tools, and also emphasises the concept of responsibility individualisation, where the freedom of choice leads to increased responsibility for pupils and guardians to make their own decisions and choices. In practice, individualised teaching often means that pupils work more independently, with fewer group projects that frequently evolve into individual projects. The focus has shifted from the teacher as the central lecturer to a mentor supporting the pupils in their tasks.

At the same time, we see a tendency of 'psy' within the school, where psychological disciplines increasingly influence how school tasks should be defined and managed. This ethos of therapy means that psychologists and other specialists, rather than the teachers themselves, are increasingly given the mandate to decide how to meet pupils' needs. (Bartholdsson 2020, Rose 1989) This can lead to the undermining of pedagogical autonomy, where the professional judgement of teachers is overshadowed by expertise from psychological fields. Another report from the Swedish Teachers' Union (Sveriges Lärare 2024 c) on additional accommodations in Swedish schools shows that teachers' assessments of pupils' support needs do not guide the actions implemented. The report reveals that only one in four teachers believe their professional judgement is considered to a high degree when

decisions are made about additional accommodations, which the union argues indicates a shift in who determines the interventions to be implemented, often to the detriment of the pupils most in need of support.

An equitable education does not mean that teaching should be identical for all pupils or that resources should be distributed equally (Education Act 2010:800). Instead, teaching must be adapted to meet each pupil's unique needs and conditions (Skolverket 2020). After the reforms of the 1990s, the idea of inclusion in schools has also changed significantly. Pupils who were previously excluded from school should now be part of the school's structure with the support of special educators. Teaching should be characterised by diversity and scientific support, with groups being heterogeneous in terms of grades, knowledge, and the need for special support (Nilholm 2020). However, one can discuss whether schools have truly embraced this inclusion, as ability grouping and special teaching groups for pupils with concentration difficulties and/or reading and writing difficulties have increased (Giota 2013, p. 228).

The main focus, though, for this thesis is not the pupils and their development into good and responsible citizens with maximised potential, but the people who work to ensure this. However, teachers are themselves part of Western society and are also expected to be active subjects, and like most of us influenced by governing techniques of the self (Rose 1989). Teachers both emphasise that relationship work is the key to more pupils achieving the school's goals, but also that it represents the biggest challenge for teachers.

Rose's (1989) perspective provides valuable insight into understanding how pupils, too, are expected to navigate and manage their daily lives. As children, pupils might not yet possess the ability to do this independently, thereby creating a scenario where teachers (or mentors) are anticipated to equip pupils with the necessary techniques to work on themselves.

A teacher's mission usually extends beyond subject-specific teaching, where perhaps the most common issue in debates is the bureaucratisation of the Swedish school system. Mentorship constitutes a large part of teachers' working time, as well as the care and emotional labour teachers perform daily. In a high school context, Nordevall (2011) has investigated how the workaround teachers' mentorship for pupils looks, where I see great similarities with mentorship in secondary school. Nordevall (2011) shows how the mentor often succeeds in

turning difficult situations around for pupils, ensuring they continue to stay in school. Essentially, the mentor provides the support and guidance the pupil needs to cope with the demands of education, such as attendance, structure, and participation. Conversely, the mentor has a unique insight into the overall picture of pupils' education, knowledge that can be used to influence structures within the school to the advantage of both pupils and teachers.

Today, however, mentorship is obligated for high school pupils according to the Education Act (2010:800) but not at all for secondary school. Although the approach to mentoring in upper secondary schools is vaguely described by the Swedish National Agency for Education, it is not regulated at all in secondary schools but is entirely up to the principals to regulate themselves. Some schools have employees who only work with mentoring, while probably the most common is that the responsibility falls on the teachers. Along with the municipalisation in the 1990s, it shifted from a teacher to mentorship, where mentorship entails a more guiding role. With an increased number of pupils in high school, individual needs have also increased. The shift in primary school seems to have occurred sometime during the 2010s. The previously more common term "class supervisor" often suggests a more administrative role within the school, where the person has overall responsibility for a class in terms of organisational and disciplinary issues. It is a role that focuses on structure and administration rather than individual development. The now more commonly used term "mentor" gives a picture of someone more focused on guiding and supporting pupils' personal and academic development. A mentor is usually a supervisor who provides advice, support, and guidance to pupils, helping them explore their interests, set goals, and overcome obstacles. It is a role that emphasises relationship-building, a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. The purpose of mentorship, according to Wallström (2018) and Nordevall (2011), is to guide and have some kind of holistic view of the pupil. Nordevall (2011 pp. 27-8) describes how the Swedish National Agency for Education and public inquiries conclude the central importance of relationship-building for promoting pupil health.

This heightened focus on the individual often results in mentorship echoing society's broader trend towards increased individualisation. Meeting times and class conferences tend to centre more on individual problems than on pedagogical interventions that could potentially benefit the entire class. This inherent contradiction permeates the work of teachers, who frequently find themselves needing to balance the demands of meeting individual needs with the challenge of maintaining a cohesive group dynamic. (Wallström 2018)

The responsibilities of teachers in contemporary schools are increasingly dominated by a growing array of administrative tasks. Lundström (2018) highlights that these responsibilities are consuming an ever-increasing portion of teachers' time, thereby reducing the time available for direct interaction and engagement with their pupils.

This shift is partly a consequence of the school's management philosophy, which emphasises targets and results, aiming to ensure the quality of the entire educational process through systematic quality assurance practices. This approach entails regular follow-ups and evaluations, which has led to the development of a variety of techniques under an audit culture. Shore and Wright (2015) describe this audit culture as having evolved into a form of governance technology. Instead of being merely monitored, workers are encouraged to take active ownership of their roles, focusing on enhancing the efficiency of their work and their overall performance. Consequently, teachers are challenged to balance their roles as efficient bureaucrats, adhering to administrative expectations, and as emotionally engaged mentors, fostering meaningful connections with their pupils, above all because time constraints are increasing.

It is important to note that the division between bureaucracy and emotional engagement is not entirely clear-cut. In reality, these aspects are often intertwined in everyday teaching. Schools can sometimes be perceived as overly focused on grades, data, and documentation, which may suggest a lack of emotion. However, the increase in administrative work can also lead to a deeper involvement of teachers in their pupils' lives, blending bureaucratic efforts with emotional commitment.

6. TOOLS

Here follows a presentation of the organisation's various tools, such as mentorship, the different stairs and handrails. I will delve deeper into what the accessible classroom, additional accommodations, and the basic package entail. These tools are central to how the entire organisation is conducted and, therefore, equally crucial to comprehend for this thesis.

Organisation

The school I have been in for a couple of months is a municipal secondary school in Malmö. Lyckeskolan has a catchment area that extends over larger parts of Malmö, meaning that the pupils come from both socioeconomically disadvantaged and wealthy areas. Lyckeskolan is large, which means large pupil groups with diverse pupil composition, as well as many teachers. The teachers at the school are divided into teams based on the classes they mentor. A team consists of 6-7 people, where each teacher is responsible for a class together with a colleague. For example, all X-classes are in the same work team, so the team has a set of pupils from grade 7, grade 8, and grade 9. Team X mentors 7X, 8X, and 9X and teach mostly in those classes, depending on the time allocation of the subject. A Swedish teacher teaches the same class approximately every day, while a visual arts teacher only meets with pupils once a week. The same goes for the other teams.

The school also has a pupil health team that consists of special needs coordinators, counsellors, career advisors, school nurses, and resource teachers for special education groups. The counsellor was new, starting after the school had been without one for six months, in the middle of my fieldwork. The individuals who are frequently mentioned in conversations with teachers are primarily the special needs coordinators and the lack of special education teachers and pupil/teacher assistants. A special needs coordinator works foremost with assessments and preventative measures, whereas a special education teacher often works closely with the pupils who need extra support. The school has two special teaching groups. One group is a full-time service for pupils who belong to that group almost all the time, while the other is more flexible. In the flexible group, pupils attend some lessons, intending to gradually reintegrate them into the regular classroom.

Mentorship

The school's framework for mentorship states that "*the starting point as a mentor is to create good relationships with pupils and guardians.*" There is an emphasis on relational work, or emotional labour, rather than administrative tasks even though the framework constitutes foremost administrative tasks. Despite an almost non-existent role in various documents on the level of authority, the mentor's role can be seen in almost all of Lyckeskolan's guiding documents for different labour processes.

Typically, a class has two mentors. In the guiding documents used by the school, the mentor is often noted as the closest contact for the pupil/s and, in some cases, also as the teaching teacher. Not all teachers are mentors, but all mentors are teachers, with some exceptions for resource teachers. According to the timetable, each mentor has a scheduled 30-minute mentor session once a week with their class. According to the framework, a mentor is expected to support and be familiar with pupils' learning and development, document and investigate additional accommodations, monitor attendance, and organise, conduct, and document development discussions. During development discussions, it is the mentor, guardian/s and the pupils that are present, where teachers are allocated time for one or two half-days per term. Lessons are then cancelled after lunch.

Teachers/mentors have dual roles, but especially during team meetings, the mentor takes on a prominent role. The mentor, who has an overview of the pupils, is expected to lead discussions about the pupils. If there are concerns about a pupil, it is also the mentor who is approached for more information or to share information. Before development discussions, it is common for teachers to meet to discuss the pupils and what needs to be addressed, as it is the mentor who leads these discussions and is responsible for discussing the pupils' progress both academically and socially with the guardians.

Stairs

The School Administration in Malmö City has developed guidelines for the teachers within the municipality based on the Education Act. For the sake of clarity, these guidelines are referred to as stairs. One is about disciplinary measures and the other is about absenteeism, where the steps of the stairs represent who has responsibility over which instances. (The third guideline is formulated as a handrail, and is created by the pupil health team themselves at the school.)

The stair for disciplinary actions against pupils who disrupt teaching or behave inappropriately involves different levels of responsibility for the actions taken. The purpose of the stairs is to maintain order, study peace and psychological safety. It ranges from teachers, and mentoring, to principal and social services and is similar to the bureaucratic order of an accessible classroom I will talk about later. The aim is for school staff to know which measures can be implemented and the order in which they are carried out. It is not stated that it is the mentor who is responsible for various disturbances that may arise, but rather the

person on site, which is also in line with how the principals encourage the distribution of measures among colleagues. But in any case, the mentor is there as a contact person for the guardian, or the next available agency. According to the plan, the mentor is responsible for calling home, convening a meeting with the pupil and the guardian and pointing out what is expected of the pupil. In step two, the mentor is also expected to document the measures taken.

The stair for absenteeism looks the same and is related to compulsory education, that primary and secondary school is mandatory. There is no legal limit to the amount of absence that is allowed, not really at all unless there is a good reason. It is therefore up to the school itself to decide when a pupil has crossed the threshold of excessive absence.

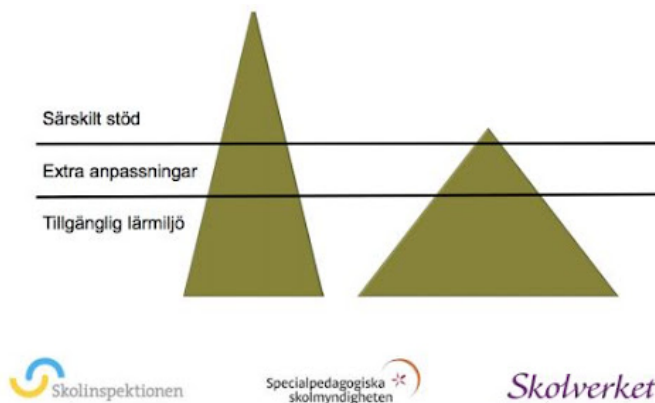**The accessible learning environment**

A common way of dealing with compensatory assignments is to work with accessible learning environments. An accessible learning environment aims to create the conditions for the school to be inclusive and to meet the needs of as many pupils as possible within the framework of regular teaching. It is about creating the conditions for working with the compensatory assignment through the Education Act. The National Agency for Education's general advice (SKOLFS 2022:334) emphasises that the principals, and thus teachers and other staff, have relatively great freedom to design teaching in a way that meets local needs. The accessible learning environment is nevertheless rooted in the idea of inclusion, that classes or groups should reflect diversity in terms of grades, knowledge and need for special support and should preferably not be grouped by level. What is included in the accessible learning environment will be understood through reading the additional accommodations and the basic package.

According to the Education Act "the pupil should promptly be provided with support in the form of additional accommodations within the framework of regular education."(Education Act 2010:800) This means that if a pupil still does not reach the criteria despite the work you have put into the accessible learning environment, the pupil(s) should receive support. Pupils who easily meet the grading criteria also have the right to receive the guidance and incentive[1] needed for them to further develop their knowledge.

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[1]Ledning och stumlans, ett vanligt förekommande begrepp i skolanen.

So let me explain what the workflow looks like to meet pupils' needs in the classroom. The easiest way is to show what this pyramid looks like. The thickness of the pyramid represents the number of pupils, with the flatter version being the preferred one. The base of the pyramid represents an accessible learning environment. The centre consists of additional accommodations in teaching.

Särskilt stöd

Extra anpassningar

Tillgänglig lärmiljö

Skolinspektionen   Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten   Skolverket

teaching. The top will symbolise special support, which will then be reduced if the teacher ensures an accessible learning environment. The school uses a guideline - a guide with procedures for what to do if a teacher cannot fulfil an accessible learning environment, which they call handrails. It is divided into four steps and will be elaborated on further in the following section. 1) the basic package 2) additional accommodation 3) investigations of various kinds, meaning assessments, observations etc. 4) special support.

The basic package

At the School, they have developed their own "basic package" of common routines aimed at fostering an accessible learning environment for all pupils. This "basic package" aligns with the provisions set forth by the Education Act and emphasises the necessity for all pupils to receive guidance and incentives tailored to their progress and needs. Among the many elements included, the package specifies that both teachers and pupils adhere to established rules of order and that teachers maintain a common structure within the classroom setting. Additionally, pupils are provided access to headphones and audio texts to facilitate their learning, and teachers are expected to utilise clarifying examples to aid comprehension, such as headphones and audio texts.

The common structures involve the teacher meeting the pupils at the door to greet them and collect their mobile phones. The pupils then go to their assigned seats and wait behind their desks until the teacher asks them to sit down. In the classroom, the teacher should have written the day's lesson content on the board along with the relevant times. Once the pupils sit down, the lesson begins, and the teacher goes over what will happen in the upcoming hour. At

the lesson's conclusion, after pupils have gathered their belongings, they are expected to stand behind their desks once more and await the teacher's signal to depart.

Teachers frequently explain this routine to the pupils as a means of delineating the start and end of a lesson and differentiating between instructional time and break periods. Many of the elements encompassed in the school's basic package can serve as examples of additional accommodations that a teacher may employ in their teaching practices, although they are fundamentally designed for implementation at the group level. Teachers also articulate that the basic package introduces a consistent structure within the classroom, providing pupils with clear expectations for each lesson and highlighting the importance of maintaining uniformity to cultivate an environment of calmness and clarity.

Additional accommodations

Additional accommodations are minor supportive measures that are typically manageable by teachers and other school staff within the framework of regular teaching (Education Act 2010:800). Additional accommodations are fundamental to how teaching is planned; what is included in the "basic package" consists of elements that might not be systematically implemented or applied at the group level in other cases. This varies from school to school.

Although there is a strong emphasis on pupils who do not meet the grade criteria, support should also be provided to those who need more challenge to progress beyond the regular teaching in their knowledge development. An additional accommodation is something that can be included in the work the school does to ensure all pupils' right to guidance and incentive, whereas in other places it might be targeted interventions. These accommodations are not static in that teachers are free to plan based on their own needs. Rather than a specific method, it is a collective term for the minor support measures that teachers implement in the classroom within the framework of regular teaching.

In the school's guidelines, additional accommodations are divided based on focus and structure, linguistic vulnerability, support in mathematics, promoting attendance, and social support, and based on smaller contexts, such as the use of a group room. Some examples of additional accommodation could be getting tasks explained in a different or extra clear way. It may involve extra support in starting tasks or understanding texts. The most used additional accommodation pertains to digital teaching materials for spoken texts and other software.

Occasional special educational interventions and extra skills training are also on the list of additional accommodations, as well as additional equipment, such as earmuffs, headphones, seat cushions and the use of a group room.

Most of what the teachers do when it comes to the accessible learning environment falls under additional accommodations in the planning stage, for example, they clarify their tasks. In other contexts, additional accommodations mean that some pupils get a small break; or that the teacher comes to them because they need extra help and clarification to start up.

This support is not only utilised when there are concerns that a pupil may not meet the grading criteria, but also to meet other criteria or social codes that are essential for the conditions of attending school. Additional accommodations are also used to ensure that pupils with different diagnoses, who are deemed capable of participating in classroom instruction, receive the support they need. This may include pupils with autism or ADHD, pupils with mental health issues, dyslexia/dyscalculia or that a pupil has insufficient knowledge of the Swedish language if they are participating in ordinary education.

Some classrooms have access to a group room that the teacher can utilise if desired. The group room is also seen as an additional accommodation; in the way it is spoken about but also how the usage is included in the documentation and evaluations. How teachers use the group room and under what conditions they use it varies. Some use the group room if they have a resource teacher who can be present and want to make sure the pupils are supervised, often for those pupils who are falling behind for various reasons. Some teachers allow pupils to use the group room without a teacher present, usually to create a calm environment in the classroom that would otherwise be disrupted by the pupil/s. One teacher argued that sometimes it would not be possible to conduct lessons without a group room, as it is necessary to isolate the pupil who disrupts too much, just to have time to focus on the pupil who shows a willingness to engage in the lessons. The group room is a practical if somewhat convenient solution to a significant challenge.

Having access to an extra adult in the classroom sometimes happens. Being a resource teacher usually means that teachers have overlapping schedules and that another teacher has set aside time in his or her schedule to participate in the lessons of others. This is very much determined by the schedules, but also by the needs of the classrooms, particularly in terms of

whether the pupils are disruptive or not. During the fieldwork, there was no direct plan with resource teachers, but it was up to the teaching teacher to organise it as best they could.

Investigations

In step three of the support framework, various types of assessments are primarily conducted: educational assessments, social and psychosocial assessments, and sometimes neuropsychiatric assessments. These assessments are designed to understand the specific challenges faced by the pupil in question on an individual level, to provide the appropriate support in teaching or to secure additional support from a psychologist, child and adolescent psychiatry services, special education teacher, special needs education coordinator and so on. The assessments are carried out by the pupil health team and/or the school psychologist. These assessments are targeted at individuals. Step three also involves teachers intensifying the additional accommodations for the pupil who needs them. Which in theory means to intensify what has been tried before. In practice, I seem to be as confused as some teachers about what it means. Observations are a part of this framework where the pupil health team participates in various lessons to observe both individual pupils and entire groups/classes. The focus of these observations can vary, but they are often based on problems identified by the teachers themselves. The principal can also decide on resource allocations. Resource allocation means, for example, that a pupil changes class for some time or that teachers are given lessons other than their own to help as resource teachers. At this stage, documentation is particularly important and often relied upon to clarify matters.

Special support

Unlike support in the form of additional accommodations, special support involves more significant measures that are typically not feasible for teachers and other school staff within the regular teaching framework. This does not mean that all support work carried out by someone other than the teaching teacher always constitutes special support. Occasional special educational efforts over a shorter period are not considered special support but are regarded as support in the form of additional accommodations. Special support is decided by the principal and documented in an action plan. Special support is usually provided in a special education group, as is the case in this school. The special support provided by the school to pupils is therefore not included in this study at all.

7. EMOTIONS AND POLICY

In this section, I largely explore the position of teachers within a field of tensions and contradictions, similar to the crusade described by Hentati (2017). A central part of the discussion centres on how teachers navigate these dynamics, focusing on the interplay between emotion and policy.

It highlights how additional accommodations are used in teaching, not only as pedagogical methods but also as strategies to meet individual needs and cope with an increased workload and the many demands placed on teachers. I highlight the paradoxical situation where teachers can feel diminished despite their great autonomy, and how they can feel unprepared or uninformed despite some knowledge often being taken for granted. The description includes how teachers navigate through, create and implement policies, sometimes adapting them according to their judgement or refusing to follow them. It also highlights how explicit responsibilities often intersect with unspoken expectations, further complicating teachers' professional roles. I pay particular attention to the emotional labour of teachers and how emotions and policy interact. Through self-reflection, teachers discuss these challenges and the strategies they use to deal with them.

Inflation of additional accommodations

Inclusive education aims to accommodate all pupils, regardless of their abilities or needs, within the same classroom environment. However, teachers often find themselves struggling to meet this ideal. After seemingly successful lessons, many teachers express frustration about not being able to reach all pupils. They struggle to balance the needs of those who have completed their tasks with those who need extra guidance, including pupils who do not speak Swedish. Moelbak (2018) underscores the importance of the didactic dimension to ensure all pupils' participation in learning activities. However, in practice, the relational dimension often takes precedence, reflecting the complexities of managing diverse pupil needs within standardised educational frameworks. The emphasis on standardised methods and evidence-based practices can further complicate efforts to create inclusive classrooms, highlighting the tensions between institutional policies and the everyday experiences of the teachers.

The additional accommodations required to support these diverse needs are often time-consuming and emotionally demanding where the pupil in question often needs individual attention. This often results in an internal conflict for teachers, which can be compared to Hentatis's (2017) concept of cross-pressure where their desire to support all pupils is not compatible with the challenges they face.

For instance, during Emil's lessons, I often sat next to a pupil who needed a lot of help in mathematics. The pupil had an easy-to-read maths book but still struggled with simple tasks. In a meeting with the teaching staff, the problems in the class were discussed. Emil mentioned that he had noticed me helping the pupil, but he rarely had time to sit down with the pupil because other pupils often threw pens at each other and the teachers. Emil started collecting the pens every lesson, which at least reduced the clutter on the floor. At the beginning of my fieldwork, there were often pens scattered everywhere, and pupils' computer bags were filled with them. The teachers agreed that maintaining order in the classroom required a lot of time and energy, which led to teaching falling behind and pupils not getting the help they needed.

 The pupil with the easy-to-read maths book was left on her own, with this book as an additional accommodation. To get the support the pupil needed Emil had to be close to constantly be assured that the pupil understood, but also that the pupil does not lose interest, which happens quite easily. Teachers report both a demand for and frustration with these accommodations, which are essential for helping pupils who stand out in various ways.

The demand for inclusiveness is difficult to meet when the needs of individuals differ too much, and the idea of inclusion creates a situation where this is not always possible or even creates an exclusive classroom. For example, while some pupils receive physical accommodations like special cushions to help with reading, the effectiveness of these measures can be questionable. Frida, a teacher, mentioned a pupil who benefits from "sitting on the floor", raising questions about the practical value of such accommodations.

The teachers argue, to emphasise, that the inclusive working methods are often not inclusive at all but rather a cover for lacking resources. Erik explains that last year there was a special education teacher employed, but after budget cuts, the school had to let her go. During that time, the special education teacher could take pupils who needed, for example, extra reading practice, to a group room and practice just that, reading. In addition, Erik describes a situation

where he has to keep an eye on the projects the pupils are working on and deal with petty fights behind him at the same time. Now, instead, Erik gets a pair of headphones and a recorded text.

The organisational dimension of inclusive teaching plays a critical role here. (Molbæk, 2018) It often involves a paradoxical situation where teachers are both steered towards teaching in a specific way and at the same time expected to be flexible. This can create a challenging working environment, where targets and results are sometimes prioritised at the expense of inclusive teaching, where grades are inferior to the teacher's ideas of inclusion. Inclusive teaching becomes a matter of time and space to manage these conflicting demands and expectations in a balanced way. A pupil with significant needs of support may experience failure time and time again, and the other pupils in the class are affected by the disruption caused by a pupil who cannot sit still or keep up with the tasks, or a teacher who does not have time.

When more pupils with diverse needs and abilities are included in regular classrooms, the decisions teachers make before, during, and after lessons become crucial for ensuring that all pupils can participate in learning activities. (Molbaek, 2018, p. 1050) While a class teacher's role traditionally involves addressing the group as a whole, it is also important to provide individual support. Many teachers manage this by delivering general instructions and then offering one-on-one assistance. They often find themselves in a challenging position, having to choose between managing classroom disruptions and delivering effective teaching.

During the very last lesson I observe, Ingrid is teaching her mentor class in Swedish. I met one of the pupils outside the classroom, where a special education group's classroom is located. The pupil (pupil X) is one who often engages in conversations but rarely manages to stay focused during lessons. I stop and chat with the pupil for a while and observe Ingrid running in and out of her classroom. Today, she doesn't seem like the fun teacher I usually see her as. I take the opportunity to enter the classroom when a pupil goes out to use the restroom and position myself in a corner. In passing, she mentions that pupil X couldn't behave, and I recall from a previous conversation that the principal instructed Ingrid to simply reject the pupil when things don't work out, resulting in pupil X standing outside banging on the door all the time. Ingrid doesn't have time to focus on it right now, although there is noticeably calmer in the classroom without the pupilX, there's still a lot to do, and the pupils are probably much more tired than I feel on this Friday afternoon. The pupils are having book

discussions, so Ingrid is quite excited about the fact that the pupils are "*actually discussing*" the book.

The challenges faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms underscore a significant gap between the ideal of inclusion and the reality of insufficient resources and support. The reliance on superficial accommodations and the pressure to meet diverse needs with limited time and resources create a situation where inclusive teaching is often unattainable. But as we will see in the next part; the teachers also handle the situation with many diverse needs in the same groups by making the same accommodations for everyone. The structural challenges create inflation of additional accommodations, and the teachers are fuelling this inflation by adapting all their teaching accordingly.

Frida argues that she prefers not to adapt her teaching to individual pupils, as there are too many who need specific accommodations. She explains, *"In the end, it's one person who has to ensure that 28 individuals get something particular. Then multiply that by four because I have four classes, and not many are the same; maybe you should use this and that... then it becomes very difficult."* Many teachers emphasise that while they are happy to sit down and give pupils the time they need, they are classroom teachers, not responsible for individual instruction (that was the former special teacher's job). Instead, they often aim to adapt teaching for all pupils by making general accommodations at the group level.

I have to note though, that this argument is a misunderstanding of the concept of individualisation within teaching. I am sure Frida knows this. As Vinterek (2006) has noted, individually accommodated teaching is not meant for the teacher to create a custom lesson for each pupil but rather to carefully adjust the teaching to meet various needs. Even if the needs are too great, making the work challenging, the exaggeration is nevertheless an expression of these challenges.

Frida's approach should be viewed through the discrepancy between idealistic visions and daily routines. As Molbaek (2018:1048) notes, there are inherent challenges in implementing inclusive practices in schools, revealing a gap between the envisioned inclusive educational models and the realities of everyday teaching practices. This tension is exacerbated by the pressures teachers face to balance predefined educational goals with the unpredictable and often non-compliant classroom realities (Hentati, 2018:18). The work 'on the ground' often

shows that the day-to-day work of teachers is not driven by targets and results, in the sense that the outcome should generate as high grades as possible, while the overarching structures of the school system are. The target and result orientation, in this case, rather establishes a standard whereas teachers struggle to get all pupils over the pass mark threshold before allowing them to develop their academic potential. This prioritisation puts the collective before the individual, but with methods that stem from an individualisation of the teaching. Hopefully, it frees up time to challenge the others; but in rowdy classes where resources are limited the pupils who assumedly can work by themselves often are left to handle their working situation by themselves.

Frida continues, *"I just try to adapt to everyone, for example, E-questions for all, not just for those who need it. I try to use images in all my lessons, not just for those who need it."* This demonstrates how Frida adjusts her teaching based on prescribed protocols, making individual accommodations into group accommodations and thereby changing her entire teaching approach. This approach ensures that all pupils, at least, receive a minimum standard of support.

Ingrid showed me an instruction she uses for an assignment about landscapes in social studies. She also made another instruction where she removed all the *"fluff"* and divided the assignment into smaller parts to make it clearer for the pupils. However, she shares the *"more easily read"* task with all pupils; it contains the same information, so why have two?

Collective accommodations targeting the whole class free up time, theoretically allowing teachers to provide individualised attention. Despite these advantages, teachers express concern that this standardisation can oversimplify teaching, particularly for pupils who need greater challenges than the average. A clear example is a class where one pupil is described as *"smarter than everyone else."* This pupil is often seen browsing through books after completing assignments faster than peers. Sometimes the pupil is given extra tasks, but more often, they are asked to help classmates finish their work. Emil, one of the teachers, questions whether it is even ethical to rely on "smarter" pupils in this way, especially when the instruction cannot be conducted at their level. He points out, *"It is not always evident that the capable pupils benefit much from helping the weaker ones."*

These strategies as *"bringing up"* the additional accommodations to a group level, although a compromise, reflect her commitment to ensuring that all pupils achieve at least a passing grade, despite the constraints imposed by the current educational system. As mentioned before, systematising teaching can create more time and space to handle demands. These are not particularly unusual practices. But as we can see, systematising additional accommodations and recognising different dilemmas in one's teaching can also be beneficial. It is when prescribed protocols are relied on without flexibility, assuming one can predict what is needed at the moment, that creates obstacles and fails to meet the challenges teachers face.

Teachers worry that the teaching may leave some pupils without adequate support and challenge, risking that they *"fall between the cracks."* While systematic teaching creates space for some pupils, there is a risk that others do not receive the guidance and incentive they need and have the right to (Education Act 2010:800) reach their full potential. The lack of conditions and resources means that pupils do not receive the support they need, often resulting in a drop in overall performance and a widening of the results gap. (Sveriges lärare 2024b) The limited time teachers have to work with each pupil individually affects their ability to tailor instruction to specific needs, creating a cycle where both pupil learning and teacher working conditions deteriorate.

Whose professional expertise

There are often differing opinions regarding additional accommodations and some teachers view them as self-evident, undermining their expertise in lesson planning. However, there's also recognition of the necessity to implement these accommodations to fulfil teaching responsibilities. Bartholdsson (2020) speaks of similar tendencies; where she exemplifies how new public management and a culture of professionalism tend to undermine teachers' professionality and that the methods developed by external actors are of greater importance than teachers' knowledge. Additional accommodations can serve as valuable tools to refine pedagogical approaches among educators, reinforcing the importance of structure and clarity in teaching, which most teachers would agree is beneficial. The accessible classroom, the basic package and additional accommodations all together form the basis for pupils to learn.

Although additional accommodations can be, as Frida noted, "anything" and are often agreed upon in a discussion between teachers and special educators and sometimes pupil/parent, the

principles itself is rooted in special education; mainly influenced by methods for pupils with diagnoses such as autism, ADHD and so on.

In a particularly rowdy class, 7X, the special needs coordinator and the school counsellor have been observing to better understand and manage the pupils' needs. During a meeting, the special needs coordinator reported her observations, noting significant differences in the pupils' behaviour between practical and theoretical subjects. She observed that the pupils could actively participate and sit still during physical education lessons, but the opposite occurred during maths lessons. One of the physical education teachers, who did not teach the class but attended the meeting, pointed out that this was not due to the nature of the subject but because the other physical education teacher could use the entire gym since his group was having their lesson outside. He also mentioned that he often had to help the other physical education teacher with reprimanding pupils who were causing disruptions in his part of the classroom. The special needs coordinator took note of this but reiterated that the pupils managed well in practical subjects. When the team asked the art teacher about his experiences, he said that he also had difficulty getting the pupils to work despite the subject being practical. The counsellor, who had also observed the class, noted that the pupils often lost focus after just a few minutes and did not follow simple rules like raising their hands before speaking. What these observations added to the initial problem formulation remains unclear. However, during this meeting, among other things, the ideas of professionalism were juxtaposed; the teachers were reduced to performers guided by (other) experts. They feel that their role as professionals is undermined when their observations do not hold the same value as those of the pupil health team, or when they are asked to follow guidelines that they consider to be common sense.

Initially, the teachers asked the pupil health team to come out and observe, and this is often something they bring up as desirable when they encounter challenges they cannot handle on their own. Observations also belong to step three in the handrails for an accessible learning environment. Most often, I perceive their request as an appeal for the pupil health team to understand the challenges the teachers face rather than concrete support on how to proceed. During the meeting, the pupil health team also confirmed how they have noted that the teachers have followed the basic package's process and especially that it is evident they are working with clarifying examples and step-by-step instructions. But the teachers should, one might think, already know which working methods they use and what has positive effects on

teaching. In that way, these meetings also serve as an example of how the teachers are governed through an audit, as Shore and Wright (2015) explain it, actively constitutes a subjectivity that relies on their agency to be complicit in the school's tools.

To give another example, Frida explains how the expectations of how her teaching should look contrast with how she wants to design it and the type of teaching she believes best promotes learning. Several teachers describe how their creativity is limited when classes are large and have different needs. For example, Frida explains how she believes that pupils learn much more if they write by hand, something she calls old-fashioned teaching. She means that when pupils have difficulty with, for instance, writing, they are given access to a computer as an additional accommodation. She tries to use paper and pen in her teaching sometimes, especially during experiments but also feels the need to follow the expectations of adapted and digitised teaching.

At the same time, teachers argue that they are not adequately trained in areas such as special education practices or additional accommodations—tasks they also consider to be "common sense". As one teacher expressed it, *"In my experience, it might have worked just as well with a regular teacher with more time."* suggesting that even with additional training, the fundamental issue may be a lack of adequate time and resources.

The teachers also expressed similar concerns regarding their mentorship roles, feeling unprepared for the demands these tasks entail. These arguments enforce a professional culture (Bartholdsson) the other way around where the focus on evidence-based practices reinforces the notion that professionals should concentrate on their specific areas of training. Consequently, teachers may more readily dismiss responsibilities they consider outside their professional scope. For instance, a teacher skilled in mathematics may feel ill-equipped to motivate a pupil who feels uninspired by school.

Navigating towards institutional goals

Lundström (2018) argues that autonomy within the Swedish school system has been significantly diminished by reforms influenced by new public management. These reforms prioritise accountability and measurable outcomes, often at the expense of professional autonomy.

In this paradigm, trust, which Lundström identifies as a foundational element for autonomy, has been sidelined by a prevailing culture that focuses on evidence-based practices and standardised protocols (Bartholdsson 2020). Schools are increasingly focusing on outcome achievement, with accountability frequently measured by grades, which are regarded as tangible indicators of success. For instance, the methods employed at Lyckeskolan are tailored to enhance these measurable outcomes, mirroring the broader priorities of the educational system. Despite these limitations, many teachers still feel they maintain a substantial degree of autonomy, feeling trust in their professional judgement and confidence in their roles.

For example, even though teachers at Lyckeskolan may occasionally deviate from prescribed tools, this should not be construed as an outright rejection of the overarching structures. Instead, it signifies a nuanced negotiation within these structures. I have observed that teachers often navigate around official policies to maintain order and clarity within the classroom. In one classroom, for instance, pupils have the freedom to choose their seating, while in another, pupils are not required to stand behind their chairs at the start of the lesson. A teacher might express to the class, *"I trust you because it works here,"* highlighting a personalised approach to classroom management. At times, the directive for teachers to adhere to specific teaching methods is disregarded; they resist and do not always comply with the prescribed tools. Some teachers argue that certain methods, like additional accommodations, are not always the most effective teaching strategies and instead create their structures or modify existing agreements. They do this not to build rapport with the pupils but because they *already have* a relationship where, based on their professional judgement, they identify the immediate needs of the class. This behaviour can be interpreted as an exercise of self-governance, demonstrating that teachers are not merely passive recipients of external directives but active participants in crafting the educational environment. (Shore) They devise their structures and make necessary adjustments that they believe will best serve their pupils, all while aiming for the overarching objectives of the curriculum.

Regardless of whether teachers choose to circumvent, oppose, or adapt the school's policies, they consistently align with the institution's values. During meetings or official discussions regarding challenges or problem formulations, it appears that the tools are assessed and prioritised, sometimes irrespective of the contexts in which they were applied. Consequently, evaluations are not necessarily linked to the real-world conditions teachers face. The focus on the tools in these evaluations indicates that the crisis in education is often perceived as a

failure to adhere to these guidelines, rather than a failure of the guidelines themselves. When teachers face major challenges that they cannot manage, the solution is often referred to as working more consistently with the "stairs."

When I first arrived at the school, there was a well-established rule that prohibited pupils from eating candy in the corridors and classrooms. This rule was designed to maintain a certain level of decorum and order within the school environment. However, during a thorough revision of the school's rules of conduct—a process that involved extensive discussions among the staff—it was ultimately decided to remove the candy rule. The reasoning behind this change was multifaceted. Teachers recognized that addressing instances of candy-eating was not only time-consuming but also had the potential to spark conflicts between staff and pupils. This potential for conflict was particularly concerning given the already demanding nature of teachers' schedules.

There were, of course, differing opinions on the matter. Some teachers opposed the removal of the candy rule, finding it almost absurd that secondary school pupils would now be permitted to eat candy in the corridors. For these teachers, the rule represented a basic standard of behaviour that should be upheld in the school. Nevertheless, the majority of teachers supported the change, arguing that they seldom had the time or energy to consistently enforce such a rule. It illustrates how teachers, as a group, participated in the policy-making process and made a decision based on the practical realities of their work. At the same time, it also reveals the autonomy of teachers, as their responses to the enforcement—or lack thereof—of the rule varied widely based on personal perspectives and experiences.

Teachers have often argued that maintaining a rule they don't have time to enforce is pointless. They pointed out that the emotional labour involved in enforcing such a rule is unevenly distributed among the staff. Some teachers might choose to ignore candy-eating, while others feel compelled to "*take the fight*" every time they see it. This inconsistency in enforcement leads to conflicts that are perceived differently by different teachers. For example, some teachers, like Emil, believe that enforcing these kinds of rules helps to build strong relationships with pupils by setting clear boundaries. On the other hand, some of his colleagues believe that enforcing such rules could harm their relationships with pupils. This debate around the candy rule also highlights a dissonance in how teachers perceive their roles within the educational landscape. Some teachers feel conflicted about enforcing rules they

don't personally support or don't have the time to enforce, which can lead to feelings of alienation and disconnection.

The school corridor, as a physical space, plays a significant role in this dynamic. It is a very "sticky" place in the sense that it is often a hotspot for emotional labour and tension. Corridors are where pupils have their breaks, often without any direct supervision from staff. They also serve as the main thoroughfare between classrooms, the staff room, working rooms, and toilets. Because of this, teachers inevitably find themselves in the corridors during transitions between classes, or their breaks. This adds another layer of complexity to the situation, as teachers might have only five minutes between lessons and are often faced with the dilemma of whether or not to intervene in time-consuming situations that arise in the corridor. This issue is a frequent topic of discussion among colleagues, particularly regarding whether or not they should act during these brief moments, especially when they are supposed to be on break.

In response to these challenges, the teachers developed a new set of guidelines. These guidelines were created to help teachers navigate the complexities of corridor management effectively and efficiently. Emil, one of the teachers, explains that these guidelines outline strategies for quickly addressing boundary-crossing behaviours without overwhelming the teacher. The primary goal is to ensure that teachers respond visibly to such behaviours, maintaining a united front in their reprimands while also preserving their well-being. It's worth noting that these guidelines did not come from a higher authority but were instead developed by the teachers themselves.

The removal of the candy rule, therefore, not only illustrates a shift towards a more pupil-centred, democratic approach in schools but also suggests a redefinition of authority and teacher roles within the educational system. This change emphasises the importance of relationship-building over strict control and discipline. However, it also indicates that the removal of a policy can, in itself, create a new set of expectations and behaviours among teachers. This new dynamic influences how teachers act, feel, and think, aligning their actions with broader guidelines or norms. Self-governance, in this context, is understood as a form of power that operates through the subjectivity of individuals, treating them as rational subjects capable of making their own decisions (Shore and Wright 2011). These guidelines represent a "technique of the self," where teachers exercise their agency to shape their working conditions and interactions with pupils. At the same time, they are also working towards teaching pupils

to become responsible individuals, in line with the school's curriculum, by instead of reprimanding them for eating candy. Hopefully, instead teaching them that eating too much sugar during the day is not good for your health thereby teaching them to take responsibility for their situation.

In practical terms, this means that when teachers find themselves in stressful situations, they often resort to what they describe as "*giving someone the look.*" This non-verbal form of communication allows them to express disapproval without engaging in a full confrontation. For example, if a pupil uses inappropriate language and the teacher doesn't have time to stop and address it, they might give the pupil a stern look or use body language to signal that the behaviour is unacceptable. In more serious incidents, teachers are expected to assess the situation and determine whether it needs to be addressed at a later time. However, this often leads to teachers passing the responsibility onto the pupil's mentor, asking them to handle the issue instead. While some view this as shirking responsibility, others argue that without a strong relationship with the pupil, addressing the issue directly might not be effective and could potentially worsen the situation for everyone involved.

Responsibilities and Expectations

One of many significant challenges in the teaching profession is balancing the roles of teacher and mentor, especially when time is limited. An example of how these roles get intertwined is the mentor's responsibility for managing absenteeism in their mentor classes. The mentor role involves following up on absenteeism according to Malmö city's stair of absenteeism. In cases of repeated absences, whether due to tardiness or high absenteeism due to illness or other reasons, the mentor is expected to contact guardians. If there are underlying causes for absenteeism, other authorities, such as the principal, counsellor, or school nurse, should be involved. However, in the seventh grade, a major problem is that a majority of pupils are late to several classes every day.

This issue was highlighted during a meeting where teachers discussed the high absenteeism among pupils. Since the meeting needed to be brief due to preparations for parent-teacher conferences, important members of the pupil health team and principals were absent. However, the discussion about absenteeism and tardiness continued beyond the allotted time.

In addition to absenteeism, other challenges arose, such as disruptive behaviour and low academic performance. To analyse absenteeism, teachers have access to detailed statistics showing the proportion of time a pupil is absent, which lessons are missed, and patterns of tardiness. It was stressed by the teachers that the recurring problem of pupils being absent or arriving whenever they please makes it difficult to start lessons effectively.

Frida and Andre, who are the mentors for the class, were the focus of many questions during the meeting, even though the entire team participated in the discussion. However, Andre kept a low profile and prepared for the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. Frida, on the other hand, felt overwhelmed by the workload and expressed her frustration, arguing that additional staff resources were needed to handle these challenges. She felt that this should not be her primary responsibility, due to the extent of workload, illustrating a typical challenge where the mentor's many small tasks escalate into a significant challenge that no longer fits within the work schedule. The collision between different demands creates a difficult work environment and a sense of inadequacy among teachers. The lack of productive lesson time among pupils further exacerbates the problem.

The issue is that all the teachers participating in the meeting teach the group, and addressing this is important for everyone. However, the responsibility according to the absenteeism protocol mainly falls on Frida and Andre. This creates expectations for them to act, despite the high work demands. At the same time, all teachers have their mentor classes with unique challenges to manage. They face the expectations of the absenteeism protocol, but also the pressure to act to support their colleagues, even though most of them recognise that the challenges are too big for Frida and Andre to handle and that more outside help is needed.

Navigating the line between explicit responsibilities and implicit expectations proves challenging. There are challenges in clearly defining the boundaries of the mentor's responsibilities and managing this within the context of limited resources. Teachers particularly note the delicate balance of becoming emotionally involved in the pupils' lives, where they sometimes feel they are stepping into the roles of both the counsellor and the parents.

One of the teachers at Lyckeskolan shares how he initially thought it sounded "*cosy*" when he was asked to take on a mentoring role during his job interview, imagining a "*lovely*" class

where they could engage in various activities together, like going on trips. However, in reality, mentorship has developed into, in the teacher's own words, a huge apparatus, referring to the unexpected and heavy workload that mentorship entails.

Wallström (2018) explores how teachers manage the challenges that mentorship brings and complicates the work of teaching even further. It becomes more individualised, more time-consuming, and less predictable. For example, Wallström highlights how teachers are expected to handle spontaneous mentoring situations, such as when anxious pupils need to talk on the way to lessons, which takes time away from the already planned activities.

Teachers at Lyckeskolan have very varied attitudes towards the mentoring role, with more or less enthusiasm about what it entails. Particularly distinctive are the mentors responsible for pupils with special needs, often those who require significant social support but who still fall within the grey area. Mentors are expected to resolve conflicts between pupils, and these meetings are often spontaneous and, in many cases, completely invisible to other colleagues.

It is very common for pupils to stay behind after class to have a chat with their mentor, often regarding poor behaviour that another teacher has noted. Sometimes these conversations also involve encouragement to continue positive behaviour. These moments are rarely planned and occur at the expense of teachers' planning time and/or breaks/transition times. In some cases, pupils also seek out the mentor to talk about something, often to complain about things they are dissatisfied with or to seek support in conflicts with classmates. Mentors often visit other teachers' classes to check on their mentees and, in some cases, leave notes or remind them of a meeting. Contact with guardians can also take up a lot of time, with some teachers reporting daily contact with their mentees' guardians to discuss how things are going in school.

As Nordevall (2011) explains, the mentor's role can have a positive impact on pupils' health, but there is no research showing that the mentor's role directly improves pupils' goal attainment. While results and grades are at the centre of the work, values such as safety and attendance are also in focus. If pupils are in school and feel good, hopefully, results and grades will also increase.

All of my informants compare mentorship to a form of parenthood in various ways. Comparing it to parenthood does not mean in this context that one is their parent - but rather that one is not. Parenthood entails care, and mentorship is sometimes perceived to share similarities with the type of care that parents are expected to provide, such as being a support

pillar, resolving minor conflicts, or ensuring that pupils are in school. Drawing parallels to parenthood becomes a symbol of this overlap of care and an expression of when they feel they are becoming too involved in the pupils' lives on an individual level. It often revolves around implicit expectations, strong feelings toward their pupils, and the need to address situations that are starting to go awry. One teacher describes how a hierarchy of relationships in the school affects pupils' behaviour. Pupils rarely listen to teachers they are not taught by, despite being in the same environment every day. He describes it as the one who has the most power over the pupil is the parent; thereafter the mentor and then the teaching teacher. This makes it difficult to maintain rules and discipline for pupils they do not have a relationship with. In particular, if the teacher does not teach the pupil at all. Mentors, who have a closer relationship with the pupil, are therefore expected to take greater responsibility for handling these problems.

The expectations among teachers regarding emotional labour are not explicitly established but are instead tacitly understood, arising from the dialogue and interactions among them; and the perception of what different tools entail. This sense of expectation develops as teachers receive praise when their classes are orderly and criticism when they are not, regardless of the underlying reasons for these improvements. As emotional labour gains importance in their roles, there are implicit expectations for teachers to navigate challenging situations independently.

The teachers repeatedly describe that the mentoring often escalates in implicit expectations, of which I ask Erik if he feels that he needs to take on so much work, as it often falls outside the framework of working hours. The framework is also individualised and does not take into account the extra work involved when there are many pupils in a class. It does not take into account the overall workload that arises when each pupil requires individual attention. He becomes somewhat taken aback and replies "*Oh...I think you're expected to manage your class.*" While principals encourage teachers to avoid overcommitting, there exists an implicit expectation that mentors should handle the problems that arise in their classes. At this time, Erik is a mentor in eighth grade. He explains that principals and colleagues often say that he and his mentoring colleagues have worked hard with their pupils, but he doubts it himself. "*Have we really?*" The reason for his doubts, he says, is that many pupils in the class have changed schools for various reasons, with most of those who took up much of his time no longer attending the school. Hochschild's (1983) analysis of emotional labour, combined with

Ahmed's (2010) concept of emotions as forms of capital, underscores the value of relationship-building as a social good. Relationship-building is a valuable social good, and being adept at it accumulates social capital. Hochschild's (1983) analysis highlights how this work is both mentally demanding and often invisible.

The expectation to build good relationships with their pupils can sometimes lead to mentors feeling inadequate, especially if they believe their strengths lie elsewhere, as in the case of Erik, who says, *"I mostly know about atoms and stuff."* This demonstrates a sense of being bad at their job when emotional labour becomes a large part of the expectations, something that does not always match their idea of what the scope of the teaching profession should include. It also demonstrates that explicit responsibilities often intersect with implicit expectations.

Emotional Labour

During lessons, the emotional support and presence of teachers are crucial for pupils. Frida explains in a meeting about numerous failing warnings in a class that she often keeps pupils who need support next to her. After going through the class list, I visualised a rather empty classroom with chairs placed around the teacher's desk instead. Frida believes that her presence is necessary so that pupils do not lose focus as soon as they encounter something they don't understand. She needs to be nearby, able to read the pupils' moods and adjust the level of what needs to be done at the moment. Frida's approach to classroom management exemplifies emotional labour. This setup illustrates how teachers structure their environment to fulfil emotional and academic needs simultaneously. The challenge arises when the number of pupils needing individual emotional support grows, making it difficult for Frida to maintain the same level of engagement with each pupil.

In Frida's situation, the emotional labour required to support multiple pupils can become overwhelming, as structural challenges and high expectations for emotional and educational support exceed what one person can reasonably manage. Budget cuts have led to larger and more diverse classes, further straining the ability to offer individual attention.

In a neoliberal context dominated by new public management principles, high expectations for teachers to build strong relationships often come at the expense of measurable things. This pressure is compounded by the lack of recognition of the emotional labour involved in

teaching. Emotional labour encompasses caring, attention, small talk, smiles, and the readjusting to a mood relevant to the occasion. These actions, though seemingly minor, are vital for creating a supportive learning environment. For example, remembering small things helps pupils create a stronger bond with you and shows greater trust in the long run. Frida particularly remembers one pupil. *"He came in one day and showed a picture of a puppy he was going to get. The next week I remembered it, so I asked him if he got the puppy. He was so happy, 'do you remember that?'"* Small subtle things become important in the long run. The distinction between remembering a pupil's puppy and, for instance, a neighbour's is that in the context of teaching, this act of remembering is part of emotional labour; it is performed as part of the job and thus holds exchange value (Hochschild 1983 p. 7).

As discussed, the teachers speak of emotional labour as the one common factor that helps pupils get on track, whether it is clearing the instructions out or getting someone to attend school at all. It is essential to recognise that teachers engage in emotional labour not just to meet curricular goals but also because they genuinely care about their pupils. This emotional investment is particularly evident among pupils who are considered "out of reach" without additional support, often those lacking adequate support from home. For these pupils, the aim is to make their school life more bearable and supportive. Despite these efforts, when pupils fail due to inadequate support from the school, teachers often feel an inevitable sense of emotional responsibility, making them turn away from the "sticky" stairs. This, I argue, is not to give up on pupils but rather the opposite, to acknowledge that, as one teacher put it, there is a *"system error"* caused by, i.e., high demands.

Erik shares his daily interactions with the mother of one of his mentees, a pupil who frequently breaks rules, arrives late, and has difficulty focusing in class. Additionally, the pupil has started associating with older boys who engage in fights. Erik acknowledges the mother's efforts and understands her concerns for her son. He feels a duty to ensure the pupil attends school, referring to the "safeguarding duty". This refers to the responsibility of school principals to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils during school hours. *"We have to step into the shoes of the guardians"*, Erik says, noting that when pupils are at school, the mentors sense a quasi-parental role during school hours.

The example of challenging pupils describes a situation where issues often stagnate at the mentorship level, without progressing smoothly up the stairs for disciplinary actions.

Responsibilities bounce back and forth in this process where the feeling of accountability governs how teachers/mentors navigate through their daily work. The stairs appear as a sticky object (Ahmed 2010) to which emotions adhere and highlight the emotional extent of this labour. Ahmed emphasises the role of emotions in guiding actions and investments in particular structures. (Ahmed 2010 p.2) Erik worries about pupils who are bullied, where the subtlety of the bullying prevents administrative intervention, i.e., he fears that nothing moves up the stairs. In these cases, he takes it upon himself to find solutions through conversations, showing support to affected pupils, and maintaining close contact with their guardians. During a meeting, Erik provides an example by describing how a pupil consumes energy drinks during lessons and behaves in a superficially friendly yet bullying manner towards peers. He explains that it is evident the pupil is asserting dominance over others. This ongoing behaviour, occurring daily, becomes a significant burden for some of the other pupils. Erik feels that the only intervention that might effectively address the issue is if the disruptive pupil were to physically harm someone. Until then he feels stuck on the stairs, investing his emotions in these particular structures.

Discussions during a meeting with the pupil health team revealed extensive documentation of the pupil's problematic behaviour over the past two years, including reports of bullying and declining grades. The meeting concluded that it was necessary to arrange a meeting with the pupil's parents. Despite Erik consistently raising these concerns before, he did not receive the necessary support to move further up the stairs for disciplinary actions until the pupil's grades began to decline. This situation illustrates how teachers often feel their words are insufficient without tangible evidence of academic failure.

This scenario is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern where teachers, like Erik, often find themselves in situations where the responsibilities within mentorship often evolve into emotional labour that is hard to resist because of its seemingly minor intervention. For instance, after a lesson, Ingrid called in a pupil who had done something disruptive. She spoke firmly, asking what he had done, letting him know that she was disappointed. The pupil denied the accusations, asking if he was going to get in trouble. When the pupils' feelings arose, she changed her attitude and calmly reassured him they were just trying to understand what happened. The atmosphere became lighter, and she reminded him that sometimes his loud laughter or shouting could be inappropriate. After the conversation, the teacher expressed frustration over the situation for not wanting to get angry with the pupil, but she

also did not have the full picture of what was going on. The conversation was simply investigating. She told me that someone else had asked her to talk to her mentee about what happened (I never asked who, but I assume it was the principal). It is expected that she conducts the investigative and reprimanding conversation because she is assumed to be closest to the pupil; she probably is, despite not knowing the full details of the situation. Such examples demonstrate how mentorship and its tools can be "sticky". As Ingrid follows the stairs for disciplinary actions (an incident has occurred, and it's the mentor's task to conduct an investigative conversation), emotional labour becomes intertwined with the process. She finds herself emotionally involved – sometimes momentarily, but often these situations evolve into longer processes. Ingrid recounts an instance with another mentee, from whom she eventually distanced herself, saying, *"It was too much for me, and I couldn't get the pupil out of my mind when I got home from work."* Both her explicit responsibilities and implicit expectations contributed to a situation where she, according to herself, became overly emotionally engaged.

Investments in emotional labour are confirmed, evaluated, and encouraged to affirm the direction of emotions, which thereby accumulates in value as social goods (Ahmed 2010 p.41). This commodification of emotions turns it into an exchangeable good. Erik, Ingrid and their colleagues are thus encouraged to manage difficult situations independently, often exceeding their official job responsibilities and even extending their efforts beyond working hours. Seeing emotions as social goods allows us to understand how these implicit expectations build up simultaneously as there are acknowledgements that the amount of investment needed is too much, including from the principals. When the tools become sticky, they are hard to resist.

The Authentic Teacher

The teachers are expected to engage in emotional labour, requiring them to navigate and express both their own emotions and those of their pupils. This process involves "*opening up*" and revealing personal aspects of themselves, which can be particularly challenging. For instance, Emil finds that his high school pupils are more interested in who he is as a person rather than just what he teaches, indicating a shift in the relational dynamics within the classroom. This shift in relational dynamics contrasts with his previous experiences in middle school and another high school, suggesting a possible cultural specificity to the expectations

in his current environment. Pupils frequently test boundaries, seeking to establish trust with their teachers, thereby fostering an expectation for teachers to be more personal.

Frida explains how she can be herself at work, and the importance of it in pedagogical terms. For example, she likes using sarcastic jokes with the pupils; humour is a part of her personality - I've noticed myself after spending two months along her side. Today, she was teaching the evolution of the human being and she wrote homo sapiens on the board. She tells the pupils that she mostly meets homo non-sapiens every day, implying that the pupils aren't so clever. *"I make some jokes from time to time. [..] they complain, then they laugh, otherwise it [teaching, order and connection] doesn't work."* Teachers frequently describe their efforts to be authentic, human, and genuine, recognising that to build meaningful relationships with their pupils, they must show these authentic parts of themselves, *"otherwise you become like a wall"*, impeding connection and rapport. They navigate their roles through what they perceive as authenticity while often making a distinction between themselves and their teaching personas.

Emotional labour in teaching involves navigating these frameworks and balancing different aspects of oneself. Ortner (2006 p. 126) elaborates that subjectivity often contains contradictory elements, allowing various ways of being to coexist within the dominant social order. Thus, while teachers may strive to be authentic, the concept of being entirely "oneself" is complex and multifaceted. Teachers may present multiple, sometimes contradictory, aspects of themselves as they navigate their professional and personal lives, as people do.

For instance, if a teacher brings work home in the form of thoughts or contact, it is often seen as a failure to separate themselves from their job. Building relationships with pupils is labour-intensive and demands a professional relationship, distinct from personal relationships outside of work. It holds value as labour; sold for a wage. Teachers describe having more patience at work than at home and controlling their moods while on the job. At home, they can be their *real* real selves. However, at work, the teacher believes they can use themselves as tools to create good relationships with pupils. This role is seen as something they can *"take off like a cardigan"* when they get home and put on again at work. This separation is crucial for their health, allowing them to unwind and recover, thus preventing burnout by limiting their teacher selves to the job. While they seek to be open and personal, they also maintain a distinction between their personal and professional selves to manage the demands of their job.

Dividing themselves in this way can be likened to Hochschild's (1983) distinction between deep and surface acting. In surface acting, individuals try to change their outward emotional expression without changing their inner feelings. This might involve smiling and being nice to a customer despite feeling frustrated or sad inside. Deep acting, on the other hand, involves individuals trying to change their internal emotions to match the expected emotions in a given situation. However, it is important to note that categorising emotions as "real" or "fake" assumes an authentic self that can conflict with a false self. Here, I align with Ortner's view of subjectivity as complex and navigational. Nonetheless, teachers talking about themselves as genuine or authentic is important for managing the high workload and expectations, which requires them to "split" their self and feelings in various ways. Teachers who engage in "deep acting" by caring too much, as Karl points out, experience stress from both managing tasks and moral stress over pupil' suffering without sufficient time to address it. Hochschild also argues that while the subject in a private context does not need to be disconnected from one's self when it involves the company's profit, an otherwise helpful way of managing emotions becomes "estranging".

Teachers control and manage their emotions to perform their duties, regardless of whether these emotions are "real" or reflect their "true" selves. Arlie Hochschild's (1983) concept of "feeling rules" refers to the expectations that dictate how individuals should feel and express their emotions in specific contexts. In her study of flight attendants, Hochschild observed that these workers are required to conform to strict emotional guidelines, such as always smiling and creating a welcoming atmosphere for passengers. In the teaching profession, similar emotional regulations exist, albeit in a less overt manner. Teachers are expected to exhibit emotions that foster a conducive learning environment, such as patience, enthusiasm, and empathy. Comparing this to Hochschild's (1983) study on flight attendants, who have strict feeling rules from above, teachers face expectations to act as *themselves*.

Emil claims he never acts. If he is mad at someone, he shows it, and the other way around; he can't pretend to be mad just to make a point. In the educational context, his emotions often surface around rules of conduct and the social expectations of educating pupils. But his emotions are of pedagogical relevance too. Emil uses his emotions strategically to capture pupils' attention and to foster trust. He can be mad just to make a point. By carefully assessing each classroom situation, he determines the appropriate emotional response to set boundaries

and teach expectations. Early in his teaching career, he could easily flame up in situations he now understands are not worth it. After years of experience, his knowledge becomes embodied. Even if Emil's emotions are genuine or not, they are intentional and affective. (Ahmed 2010 p. 24) For example, when he is angry with a pupil, he uses that emotion to set boundaries and communicate expectations. Emil acknowledges that creating good relationships with pupils often requires showing his human side, even if it means occasionally displaying determination to set boundaries.

This example also challenges the traditional distinction between 'deep acting' and 'surface acting', as described by Hochschild (1983). Emil shows that there is not always a clear distinction between playing a role and being authentic. Rather we see how the emotions move towards what matters for Emil.

Another example of how this process works in practice is how Ingrid describes how she uses her traits as pedagogical tools to create an inclusive classroom environment. She also speaks of when she fails to do so; on a Friday afternoon, Ingrid decided to celebrate the weekend with her pupils. She put on a video of animals falling to disco music and danced to it. *"I thought it was fun but then I had to eat it up. The others managed. But it's this particular pupil who did not manage it. And then I felt, have I made the right choice in terms of pedagogy?"* Ingrid explains how the pupil in question got caught up in her attempts to be funny, and could not concentrate on the teaching at all. The pupil's inability to cope with the humour probably has to do with other things too, but the situation affects Ingrid in a way where she adjusts her emotions; and her behaviour to include a pupil.

Ingrid (and others) believes that being herself and showing humour can make it easier for most pupils and contribute to a more accessible learning environment. Lightening the mood with a joke sometimes is part of creating a personal connection with pupils and making the teaching less rigid. When this approach didn't resonate with every pupil, Ingrid experienced a sense of emotional dissonance (Hochschild 1983) both in a sense where she becomes constrained in her personality, but also that it conflicts with her idea of an accessible learning environment.

The way teachers describe their authenticity can provide insights into their quest for authenticity in a professional environment that is often filled with challenges and conflicting

expectations. In a society characterised by an ever-increasing pace and demands for efficiency, finding meaning and satisfaction in one's work becomes even more important. Being driven by authenticity means not only to fulfil professional goals but also to even thrive in a workplace with often unreasonable and contradictory conditions.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted how emotional labour and different tools are intertwined and influence the everyday work of teachers. Previous research has pointed to contradictions within the education system, and my approach has been to explore these contradictions in the context of the school's mission, with a narrower focus on relationship work and emotional labour. I have discussed how the aims of the curriculum, such as inclusion, compensation, democratisation and individualisation, have been shaped by the increasing 'psy' of society. This has created a basis for understanding how teachers navigate and use different tools to ensure these goals.

Inclusive education aims to integrate all pupils in the same classroom, but teachers often struggle to balance the diversity of needs due to limited resources and time. The ideal of inclusion often clashes with practical constraints, leading to superficial accommodations and a gap between policy and classroom reality. Teachers experience a conflict between their professional expertise and the demands for accommodations that are sometimes perceived as undermining their pedagogical judgements. Despite recognising the need for accommodations to support pupil learning, teachers feel that their professionalism and creativity are limited by guidelines, lack of support and an overwhelming workload.

At the same time as feeling undermined, teachers also feel a great deal of autonomy in their work. They often resist the tools available to them and sometimes consider them irrelevant, but at the same time use them as a way to manage their workload and ensure that all pupils at least achieve passing grades. The balancing act between being a teacher and a mentor creates a significant challenge and a sense of inadequacy, especially when expectations from colleagues are both implicit and explicit, but high. As teachers engage with the tools and strategies they have, they also become increasingly emotionally involved.

To succeed in teaching and enjoy their job, teachers emphasise the importance of being 'authentic' and themselves. However, this creates expectations to maintain an authentic role in the workplace. The paper describes how teachers experience high workloads and limited resources, and how this affects their professional judgements and creativity. It also discusses how teachers adapt their practices to meet the needs of individual pupils and how they use their autonomy and creativity to build relationships, despite external constraints and guidelines. The emotional engagement of teachers when working with different strategies and tools shows this interaction.

Further research

Further research should explore these issues from a gender perspective, particularly in secondary schools where the proportion of male staff is higher compared to lower grades. This perspective is missing in my paper, especially concerning emotional labour. Additionally, the inflation of additional accommodations warrants further investigation, even beyond the field of anthropology.

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