

LEISURE-TIME TEACHERS IN A CHANGED PROFESSION

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Abstract

This exploratory research focus on teaching and learning on the basis of Swedish leisure-time teachers with more than thirty years of experience. The purpose of this research was to bring to light the role of the Leisure time teachers, both in the past up to the present day and into the future. Based on important concepts for professional development, the qualities decisive for a long and sustainable career as a leisure-time teacher are sought.

In interviews ten leisure-time teachers describe their professional careers on the following question areas: teachers, children, parents, leisure-time centers and mission. The outcomes are discussed in relation to the professional concepts of knowledge, autonomy, responsibility, collegial decision-making, confidence and trust, closing off and professional development. The results show that there are a number of success factors for why the interviewees stayed in a profession that has undergone and is subject to significant changes. Children, challenges, leisure-time pedagogy, flexibility and teamwork are considered to be important qualities. One factor that in certain cases meant that one did not change profession is that there are no clear career paths within the profession. Change that has occurred regarding the focus of the work is perceived mainly as positive. Leisure-time teachers emphasize that the collaboration with the school has resulted in greater confidence in their own mission and competence. From this research some critical research areas are revealed, such as, children's possible perceptions of learning requirements at the leisure-time center.

Key words: *leisure-time center, leisure-time pedagogy, professional development, leisure-time teacher.*

Introduction

Leisure-time teacher is a relatively young profession that has undergone major changes over the years since the first students were admitted to the leisure-time teacher-training in Norrköping in 1964. In the first dissertation treating the professional role of leisure-time teachers, Johansson (1984) describes the professional role as similar to that of parents, preschool teachers, adults and companions. At the time of the research, the mission of the leisure-time center was mainly the care and supervision of children in their early school years at the end of the school day. The center was to be a complement to the home, and in reality to a large extent, it was an extension of the home environment. Gradually the leisure-time teachers have had to re-define and reconstruct their professional role. The education has been changed, policy documents have been updated, children groups have become denser, and the leisure-time teachers have many times received increased work responsibilities (Saar, Löfdahl, & Hjalmarsson, 2012). Today more than 80% of 6 to 9 year-olds in Sweden are enrolled in leisure-time centers (Saar, 2014). Against this background it is surprising that relatively few investigations and research projects have addressed this activity and professional group.

Since the profession was introduced, relationship-focused pedagogy has taken up much of the teacher-training program for the leisure-time center (Hansen, 1999) and leisure-time teachers might often take on the role of the "vulnerable children" advocate (Karlsudd, 1999; 2012). That working with children's social competence is central to the profession, is confirmed

in a study that compares preschool teachers, leisure-time teachers and compulsory school teachers (Gustavsson, 2003). A later study (Dahl, 2014) has noted that despite this focus, a thorough discussion and analysis of working with children's relationships is lacking.

In the first doctoral thesis on leisure-time center activity authored by a leisure-time teacher (Ursberg, 1996), it says that in school, the teacher, the work/subject and control of the child are central. For the leisure-time teacher in the leisure-time center, it is the child, play and the child's own control that are central (Haglund, 2015). The school culture has completely overtaken the meeting of these two cultures in the past twenty years, shows a study a few years later (Calander, 1999). Another study demonstrates three different regions where leisure-time teachers take on different positions, the *school-focused*, the *integrated* and the *socially-focused* practices (Haglund, 2004). That the professional identity has developed along different lines is confirmed in a later study (Andersson, 2013). In contrast to Calander (1999) who warned that the leisure-time teacher's professional identity could develop toward a school-pedagogic profile by being present in the school, Andersson (2013) argues that today's professional identity is also developing in a leisure-time pedagogy direction. The researchers differentiate four different categories of professional identities, *the back-up teacher*, *the social competence teacher*, *the school-complement leisure-time teacher* and *the traditional leisure-time teacher*.

Overall the leisure-time centers are governed by the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), which emphasizes that the education must start with the pupil's needs and stimulate the pupil's development and learning, as well as supplement the education in the preschool class and school. The instruction in the leisure-time center should be based on the values and mission as provided in the overarching goals and guidelines in the curriculum. The National Agency for Education *General Advice and comments* (2014) provides further support for the leisure-time activity. With today's policy documents, the mission of the leisure-time center has clearly come closer to the school activity (Andersson, 2010). The leisure-time teachers who have worked for three decades have experienced major changes, and it is therefore interesting and critical to document their experiences gained over this period.

Profession Theory

Within the research on professions, there are different definitions of the specific characteristics that distinguish a profession. In order to reflect upon and discuss the leisure-time teaching profession, Brante's (2014) concept of the *profession's knowledge* being the most central, is chosen in this study. Professions are occupations that distinguish themselves both historically and socially; they have changing tasks where various circumstances influence the content and function of the profession. According to Brante, professions are often described as follows:

...they possess a certain discretion, are organized in special ways and often control the division of labor within the profession, they have collegial decision-making, uphold ethical standards, establish confidence and trust with their clients, use an esoteric language, etc. Furthermore, they devote themselves to "closing off" their practices by seeking a professional and knowledge monopoly (Brante, p. 203).

The leisure-time teaching profession cannot be counted among the classic professions, such as, for example, medicine, but rather it belongs to the new professions called semi-professions. The education forming the base for this semi-professional training for a leisure-time teacher is at a college or university, categorized under the science area of educational sciences. The professional autonomy of the semi-professions is limited and has attained its status primarily through political decision, not through scientific discovery (Brante, p. 264). The leisure-time teacher's knowledge primarily leans towards an academic education and is perhaps characterized by more tacit knowledge rather than scientific activity. In this investigation, an attempt is made to make this tacit knowledge more scientific and more visible.

Knowledge is important for how a professional group can assert itself inside and outside a profession. Some professions stand on common scientific ground, where theories and explanatory models help the different professions to solve problems and take action, for example, professions such as medicine and psychology (Colnerud & Granström, 2015). Autonomy can be studied in relation to the government and at the level of the organization, and based on the individual level in relation to colleagues and other professional groups. In this investigation, the concept autonomy is discussed in relation to the latter mentioned level. A concept close to autonomy is discretion, which in this context refers to the profession's scope for action (Parding, 2010). Andersson (2013) emphasizes that responsibility can be a better and more precise concept to use and can suitably re-place the broader concept of autonomy. According to Aili (1999, 2002) responsibility encompasses how the professional groups strive to win the public's confidence by developing knowledge systems that lead to the professional groups being able to solve problems, not only to maintain, but also to move boundaries in relation to other professional groups (Aili, 2002). Studies about professional development treat such topics as changes in knowledge and competence in professional life. Rönnestad (2008) writes about professional development with focus on change through the life cycle. Professional development can also be understood as change in a professional stance. This means how the person acts cognitively and emotionally, perceives one's professional identity, values ethics, and understands one's professional role. Other examples of professional development can focus on stress, burnout and meaningful strategies.

Since this research evaluates leisure-time teachers' professional role and professional practice over time, the concepts presented in the research on professions are used. These have been scrutinized in the analysis and discussion, and are presented together in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Professional concepts for analysis. (Colnerud & Granström, 2015; Aili, 1999, 2002; Rönnestad, 2008).

Knowledge	Common knowledge that characterizes the profession and rests on scientific ground and systematic theory.
Autonomy and discretion	Claim for self-determination in their professional field. Right to scope for action within their profession.
Responsibility	To strive after gaining confidence through developing a knowledge system that can solve problems and thus win user and public trust.
Collegial decision-making	Joint decisions that serve as guidance in the profession.
Confidence and trust	To believe and trust someone (the profession).
"Closing off"	Mark off professional groups from other professions, for example, by requiring certification in order to practice. Closing off strategies are used to attain professional status.
Professional development	Change in knowledge and competence in professional life.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to bring to light the leisure-time teacher's professional role at present and over time, by increasing knowledge about the motives for this choice of profession and about experiences of this professional practice and activity. This research also leads to proposed questions for further research.

The following questions form the basis for the research:

- How do experienced leisure-time teachers perceive the leisure-time center and their professional role at present and over time?
- What are the qualities in their tasks and activity that can be critical for a long and sustainable career in the profession?

Methodology of Research

Evaluation and research have common points of interest in many ways. An overarching and essential similarity is that researchers and evaluators can make use of the same methods for data collection and analysis. In this explorative research, we have chosen to treat evaluation and research as similar operations, which Karlsson (1999) defines as evaluation research. There are a number of different evaluation strategies where, for example, certain models evaluate products and other processes (Langerth, Zetterman & Strömdahl, 2001). The type of evaluation model used, influences the opportunities for different interest groups to get their needs and interests noticed and attended to (House, 1993). Of course, there are also clear differences between evaluation and research. One such difference is that many times evaluation occurs within a much narrower task framework than the theoretical framework used by researchers. Thus, the evaluator usually is more controlled than the researcher. In the present research, there are no requirements placed by a supervisor on the results, though the research has the goal of describing and organizing the experienced leisure-time teachers' professional knowledge over time.

Question Construction

Based on the purpose and support from policy documents for leisure-time centers, six question areas were formulated (Figure 1) with several open-ended questions in an interview guide. The first area, teachers, contained questions about the choice of profession, education and what is perceived as positive and negative in the professional career as a leisure-time teacher. Questions about job satisfaction, critical moments at work, thoughts about changing profession, etc., were handled. The second area, children, explored how children and the groups of children were perceived and how these impressions possibly changed over the years the interviewed teachers have worked. Further questions addressed what expectations and requirements were placed on children and youths in the past and at present. Additional questions treated the definition of the children in need of special support. The third area dealt with the contact with parents. Are there differences in the contact regarding quality and extent in comparison with the past? Can one see a change in the mission and how it is carried out? Educational activity made up the fourth question area and treated the center's content and mission. Questions about the teacher's work tasks in school and activities in the leisure-time center were formulated here. The concluding areas offered space for questions about the profession's mission and future research.

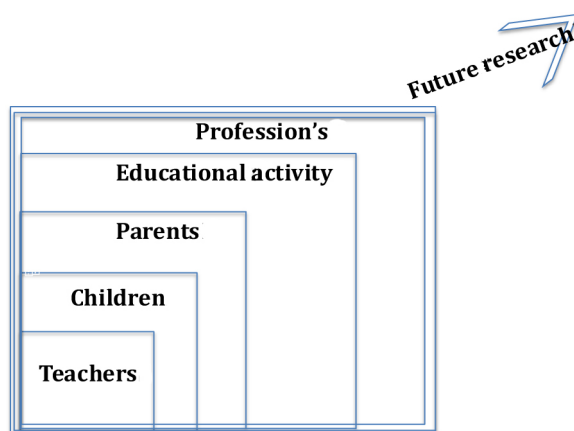


Figure 1: Question areas in the interview guide.

Before the interviews began, a pilot interview was conducted with a leisure-time teacher who had over thirty years' experience in the profession. After this interview the questions were developed and clarified. The pilot interview was carried out of two scientists (the authors) that on this occasion adjusted questions so that the consistency of the upcoming interviews was guaranteed. Sample interview was conducted for two hours in the spring term 2015th.

Selection and Design

In total twelve leisure-time teachers working in the profession were invited to participate, whereof ten chose to participate in our interviews, two men and eight women. All interviewees had worked in the profession over thirty years and had not left the work with groups of children for other types of tasks. With the help of the interview guide, the ten leisure-time teachers were interviewed. The interviews took approximately one hour each and were recorded on tape. The teachers who participated in the interviews came from two counties and represented different types of leisure-time centers. All who were interviewed approved the compilation of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and categorized on the basis of professional concepts. We found no significant new categories that could challenge the professional theories.

Results of Research

The leisure-time teachers' experiences are reported according to the same topics as shown in Figure 1, where a connection was sought to the theoretical concepts of professions used in the investigation.

Teachers

Choice of Profession and Education

The interviewees had become acquainted with the education through siblings, friends and/or by participating in a practice period. All the informants were young when they underwent their education during the 1970s and 1980s. The choice of profession was random for one person, but for most it was a more or less conscious choice. One respondent describes how s/he wavered and decided between two alternatives, which the quotation below can illustrate.

I was interested in mathematics and social relations, and therefore chose between economy and leisure-time teacher. I made my decision on the starting day. Should I bike to the leisure-time program introduction or to the economy program introduction? My stomach said leisure-time teacher, so I biked there.

Several of the informants had done an introductory practice at a leisure-time center right after high school, and they experienced this as positive guidance. Several of the interviewees were interested in working with children and also gladly with slightly older children. Some had already worked with children and youths in clubs and organizations. The work approach that characterized the leisure-time center was attractive, and several saw the breadth in the education and professional field, such as, the possibility to work with children in need of special support.

I saw that one could learn in another way and that knowledge could stay. I myself was a bookworm in school but I never liked that way of learning.

When the education began, none of the interviewees had any thoughts about quitting. The choice of profession had to do with appeal, not career and salary, point out the informants. The leisure-time profession at that time was relatively unknown, and the professional role was perceived as unclear. Much time was thus spent in defining for oneself and for others the profession's content. With regard to this, the informants were pioneers, and they were also careful to mark the border to other similar professions, such as for example, the leisure-time leader or the childcare worker. This type of "closing off" and delimitation is described as very important for professional identity.

Driving Forces in the Profession

All the informants state that it is the children who make the profession exciting. Working with children's development and learning gives job satisfaction and is perceived as purposeful. There are valuable encounters with the content of language, art and play. They believe there is a little excitement in not knowing exactly how a work task should be solved. Children, freedom and satisfaction are keywords used in describing the work. All expressed that they had fun on the job. The responsibility for a new group of children was perceived as exciting and as a positive challenge. It is not clear if everything will go as planned; what is central is that everything is based on the children's best, emphasize the informants. Another advantage highlighted is the active work of indoor and outdoor activities. These are clear examples that the professional concepts of autonomy and discretion are important for the leisure-time teachers. They have the right and the possibility to shape their own scope for action.

Factors indicated as positive are that the compulsory school program provided new challenges and that new tasks give a sense of going forward. In working with children it is important to "keep up" and detect what is "new" going on, state the informants. This professional development demonstrates changes in knowledge and competence. Something mentioned as a problematic aspect in the profession is when carrying out the profession is not taken seriously by the surroundings. An expression like, it is important to fight and stand up for the leisure-time center, is an example of collegial attitudes and decisions among those working in the profession. There is a common will to defend the profession one represents. All informants state that it is important to point out that the leisure-time teacher's profession cannot be confused with the teacher who has the traditional teaching mission. The informants claim to have their own knowledge, and here appears the process of closing out other professional groups in the school system.

That which is consistently mentioned as positive and that provides work satisfaction is the perception that children learn and develop in a positive direction. When a child suddenly functions in a group after a hard effort, there's a strong sense of satisfaction. Similarly, when the children feel comfortable and come with suggestions and it is possible to follow the children's

ideas, then this is something that can be called entrepreneurial learning. The informants emphasize that their work deals with providing alternative skills through alternative forms of learning.

Many of the interviewees state that they love this profession. The feeling of meaning something and of making a difference is emphasized. The leisure-time teachers describe themselves as fundamentally well-planned, and at the same time flexible. The ability to motivate and instill enthusiasm is a common feature. When the informants describe their strengths in their work, it is often a special interest or specific competence that is mentioned. It can be mathematics, creative activity, working with the school garden or sports, etc. Many work consciously in order to create a team spirit in the leisure-time center and emphasize that some activities must be done together. These competencies are part of the knowledge that characterizes the profession. The informants give the picture of being well-acquainted with the curriculum and policy documents, which provide security and stability in their work. The areas highlighted as particularly important are learning, democracy and equality.

Holding on to One's Choice of Profession

A contributing factor to maintaining one's choice of profession and leading to one's contentment, are the colleagues and a strong work team; the sense of a common development and the leadership are considered important. The leisure-time teachers state that the work is varied and that they decide over their work even if there is the perception that this has diminished in recent years. Few have considered changing profession, but once in a while some have had thoughts about choosing another type of center or of changing to a completely different line of work. Someone has considered continuing education in the same area in order to deepen one's knowledge, while those interviewed thought it was hard to see a clear career path within this professional field.

Several of the informants have further education in different areas for the benefit of their professional field. The interviewees say that to be able to act credibly, one must stay updated with the pedagogy.

Children

When the leisure-time teachers compare children and groups of children over their thirty-year perspective, some differences appear. The informants state that there is an increased individualism among the children today, which the quotation below reveals.

Children are more egotistical and get tired of being in a group. They want to be off by themselves, take it easy and be left in peace when they come to the leisure-time center.

The leisure-time teachers state that the centers do not contain play and projects in the same way as they did before. At the same time, criticism has emerged that children are not being allowed to be children, they do not play enough and they have more requirements that are also constantly measured. The leisure-time teachers clarify that it is the school program where one sees the performance requirements most clearly, but at the leisure-time center there are no performance requirements. Some think that the children are not accustomed to being outside in nature, and they have too many sedentary activities. The children's weekday has instead expanded with new activities where the computer is the new time-zapper. Another statement that comes up is that children today do not depend on adults to control their day or do what was promised.

According to the informants, children have possibly more knowledge today, when they easily get facts with the help of different media. Often children have greater knowledge in certain areas than the teachers have, for example, with technology and computers. Children

travel more today than they did thirty years ago, which means they have different experiences and knowledge from the staff. They can, however, have a harder time with more immediate information, such as for example, their own phone number or their own shoe size.

There are considerably more children in need of special support in the leisure-time center than there were twenty or thirty years ago, unanimously state the interviewees. The number of troubled children has increased, and this becomes most evident in the school. The reasons mentioned for this are that there are greater requirements and that children do not live up to adults' expectations. Other reasons are the larger groups of children and the smaller facilities which are not as functional as earlier. Another reason is the increase in diagnosing and that the acceptance for this diagnosing is greater, which the teacher below expresses.

There are many diagnoses and combinations. One almost searches after a diagnosis. Before one was afraid to have one's child diagnosed; now it seems like one seeks an explanation in the form of a diagnosis.

The informants tell about when they started their professional careers in the early 1980s, the children received the support they needed and the children's needs were not in conflict with others as what happens today. The question of who needs help the most was not the case. Something viewed as problematic is that medicating children has become all the more common today and it places an increased and unexpected responsibility on the teachers.

Parents

When the leisure-time teachers reflect over how the contact with parents has changed over time, all the informants express that parents are more stressed today. Parents work more and there are many activities, demands and imperatives in order to get everything done in the day. The children spend longer days at the leisure-time center, and the children and parents participate in several activities after the leisure-time program is finished. Many parents arrive at the leisure-time center with their mobile phone at their ear at the same time as they drop off or pick up their children. The parents' focus today is much more on their own child, rather than on the common activities, friends and the surroundings.

It has become increasingly common that the teachers must maintain contact with two families, for a single child, which places greater demands on information and communication. Now leisure-time teachers use SMS and email in some of their parent contact. Despite more children and less time for each parent, the leisure-time teachers perceive that they still have good contact with parents. Generally the parents pick up their children every day and there is the possibility to talk a little. The leisure-time teachers present the goals clearly and feel secure with their policy documents valid for their program. Parents are aware of the goals for the program and show confidence and trust in the center. When parents show their appreciation, the leisure-time teachers feel job satisfaction and pride in their work. This is an example of confidence and trust from the users that strengthens the leisure-time teachers' profession. The quotation below is an expression of this view.

Before parents looked upon us as taking care of their children; today the parents have the understanding that we have another mission.

Parents are often more critical toward the school's program than toward the leisure-time program. The informants state that the school has been debated and criticized intensely in the past few years and a number of changes have been carried out.

The leisure-time teachers in the profession perceive the parents at present to be more anxious about the children's situation. The group of parents worry about going to school and worry about the child at home alone for a while. The informants may sometimes feel that the

children are over-protected. Concern also exists within the school administration with the fear of police reports and complaints from the parents. This in turn affects the work situation for the leisure-time teachers, as one informant expressed this below.

Before I could go out alone with a group of children. Now we cannot go out to the woods without being at least two adults despite I have a mobile phone with me.

Educational Activity

Even if the care is an important part of the work at the leisure-time center, the mission to be a complement to the home is not central as it was earlier. The activity is organized in order to have a meaningful leisure-time, though the center is no longer characterized by big projects and extended themes. There are, however, different variations of smaller themes and projects. The role that is similar to the social worker has diminished, state the informants, and they revealingly mention that “today the family has to manage on its own.”

The informants tell that when they work at the leisure-time center, the children do not see them as “school teachers.” With the interaction during school time they must remind the children that “now it is school,” particularly if they use the leisure-time center facility. In school the framework of the traditional classroom functions as an aid to mark the differences in tasks.

The leisure-time teachers stress that they are “closer” to the children than the school teachers are, and mark the differences in the teacher role. All the informants say that they are good with children’s social interaction and that they like the collaboration with the school. The leisure-time teachers think that it is the children who are the winners in the collaboration with the school, where the whole view has increased and the leisure-time teachers also meet the children during school time. Meanwhile, the time for each child has decreased, and there are many work tasks to be accomplished, which has led to one becoming better at organizing the activity. Some of those interviewed tell that they can change the planning in something, which one of the informants describes as an improvisational pedagogy. In the school this is harder where the activity is more controlled, states the informant.

Although the activity today is perceived as all the more fragmented, many express that the work has become more fun. Several informants state that one must have more grit now when there are so many children in the center. It is important to manage the feeling of not knowing exactly where all the children are.

One of the informants replies that there are no longer visits with other leisure-time centers where they can exchange experiences and plan a little more “event-themed” activities. Earlier meetings among leisure-time teachers were more common which strengthened the professional association, but that time is over, conclude those interviewed. Now that discussion has moved to online forums, such as Facebook.

Doing homework has been marginalized for a long time; there is a lack of time to help children with homework. It is important to work in a well-functioning work team with good colleagues, say the informants. The work is divided up by switching with each other; when one person has it tough, then another one steps in. Some describe how they help each other between the professional groups. It is important to strive after balance and equality; decision-making is invisible and hierarchies are disliked. It is seen as important to create a relaxed atmosphere where colleagues can be supported. The facilities can lead to some problems when they must be shared between two different activities. In the earlier centers, a project could be left until the next day and it was possible to continue where the work had stopped the day before. Activities that took more time and required more space and staff have disappeared. Such examples are creative projects, textile and woodshop, and construction activities. At the same time, one of the informants states that the attitude toward the facilities is a generation issue. Today the facility issue does not lead to a prestige contest as it did in the collaboration with the school twenty or thirty years ago.

Profession's Mission

Today almost all children attend a leisure-time center and expectations come from many sides. Focus on the children's goal achievement has been reinforced. Some informants say that it is thanks to the school that leisure-time teachers have the status that they have today. One of the interviewees expresses this the following way.

We have been "will-o'-the-wisps" but now we have a clearer role, and it is well-established in various policy documents. We talk about systematic qualitative development; we are not victims anymore.

The school has changed professional role, contributing to the work being more fun and at the same time more stressful, state many informants. One of the informants states that the leisure-time center can be likened to the last folk home, where different children interact without being ranked. That the center is free from rating is seen as positive. Some are positive toward teacher certification, while others see that as questioning the competence one has already acquired.

The Future

All the professionals feel that the leisure-time center is always going to be needed. There is a constant, or rather even a greater, need for care. All the informants believe that the center is important and statements such as, "one must be out there, go ahead, develop and show what we can do," are some comments that exemplify a future outlook. One informant expressed the same desire with the words below.

I will try to fight on. See the positive. We are needed and we are good. There is no being put aside.

The interviewees mention the fact that the next generation of leisure-time teachers will teach a school subject, and they wonder how the leisure-time pedagogy will be in the future. They clarify their role as bearers of culture and prepare themselves to hand over their experiences to a new generation of teachers in the leisure-time centers.

Discussion

All teachers have enjoyed their work and have seldom considered changing their profession. The description consists of a professional career characterized by job satisfaction and a sense of the work being important and valuable. The work with older children and a possibility to be based in a free and flexible learning style have also been factors strongly contributing to this choice of profession. The autonomy that earlier strongly distinguished the profession has now been limited, but there is enough today to nurture their sense of well-being and job satisfaction. Negative factors in their choice of profession are when the surrounding professions undervalue the importance of the leisure-time center. In recent years when the mission of the school has expanded, the interviewees believe that the status of their own activity and profession has gained value.

That the leisure-time teaching profession has undergone great change over thirty years becomes evident in the interviews with these professionals. The profession is still under reconstruction, since the new education program awards certification as a compulsory school teacher in the leisure-time center (new profession position) for teaching in the art or music school subject.

The leisure-time teachers' knowledge is clearly made up of practical, applied pedagogy. Developmental and group psychology, knowledge about social interaction, leadership and

conflict management are some examples of the areas forming the foundation of the knowledge representing this profession. The leisure-time pedagogy represents a work method where participation, equality and community are concrete examples of work forms included within the competencies that leisure-time teachers possess. Leisure-time teachers have succeeded in administering this profiled knowledge for over three decades, while the education has undergone comprehensive revision.

In this broad repertoire of knowledge that the profession has at its disposal, there is even a special competence for children in need of special support. In many centers it is the leisure-time teachers who take the greater responsibility for the group who need special support. However, the professionals emphasize that they must deepen their knowledge when they sense the demands of an additional medical duty, which has come under their responsibility.

Over the last few years, many leisure-time teachers have received school teaching tasks and are then responsible for part of the instruction during school time. The space for special competencies that are not included in the school's traditional view of knowledge and skills then become increasingly difficult to assert.

The leisure-time teaching profession has been described by many as a changing, flexible and relatively free profession. Whether the activity is indoors or outdoors or which activities should be prioritized are things that the leisure-time teacher together with the children and parents can consider as their own responsibility. Now when the school is a clearer feature in the leisure-time activity, the professional group in a way has broadened its scope for action, while in another way it has limited it. Planning for school time to a greater degree is subordinate to lesson plans and narrower goals that lead to a traditional school-directed pedagogy being applied. Regarding the time taken up by the leisure-time center, the space for planning has become less, the economy tighter and the groups of children increasingly larger, which has led to certain limitations in the scope for action, state several of the informants.

The leisure-time staff who were interviewed are all careful to safeguard their responsibility and to avoid claiming someone else's area. With work tasks which involve the compulsory school teachers' responsibility, the leisure-time teachers strive to work based on their own knowledge. Possibly the clear border with the other tasks is a reason why the informants found a balance in their professional field and with high job satisfaction stayed in their profession. Perhaps if the leisure-time teachers hold on to the same goal as earlier, it would not be possible to remain working in the center where a number of aspects have been changed.

Over the three decades highlighted in this investigation, the leisure-time center has changed organizational form from childcare to school. By "closing off," the leisure-time teachers mark off the boundaries to childcare worker, leisure-time leader and pupil assistant, and they safeguard their position. The leisure-time teachers have acquired higher status by being a clearer part of a common educational organization. They share the curriculum, and they have received other tasks in the school.

It appears that the leisure-time teachers with many years in the profession, have the ability to adapt to a new professional role with the changing conditions that are valid now for the profession. The changes have foremost involved a movement toward the school activity, new collaboration models, larger groups of children and lower staff density.

Aim of this investigation was to seek out the factors and conditions that led to the professionals staying "faithful" to their work for over thirty years. Clearly the children give added value to the profession. The working leisure-time teachers in the investigation like the challenges in the center and defend the leisure-time pedagogy and its mission. In this work the teachers embrace the policy documents valid for the center. The professional group is well acquainted with these policy documents. Maintaining collegial decision-making in a work team with stimulating colleagues are factors that contribute to contentment and job satisfaction over the years. The leisure-time teachers feel respected as a professional group and sense that they have the confidence and trust of many. All interviewees have a special interest or a particular competence within an area that is not necessarily an area without a strong foundation in the

program. The interviewees are also positive toward continuing education, and they perceive the parents as an important support and work therefore consciously toward maintaining good contact with the parents. The above italicized keywords may be important success factors for a long and sustainable professional career.

One thought in contrast is that the interviewees have put rather little time in reflecting over the changing work forms and the consequences of these, but we consider this explanation to be less likely. Several of the reports from the National Agency for Education point to problems with large groups of children in combination with few staff (School Inspectorate, 2010; National Agency for Education 2000; 2005. Andersson (2013) warns that large groups of children can lead to the program only being able to guarantee supervision. The activity needs support in order to be able to respond to its mission of complementing both the preschool class and the school program.

The ten respondents see themselves as the last culture bearers at their posts, and they want to hand over their experience to the next generation of leisure-time teachers who are partly educated in something other than the leisure-time teachers themselves.

Research Questions that Become Visible in the Results and Analysis

A common comment from leisure-time teachers is that there are no measurable goals in the leisure-time program. Differences are allowed at the leisure-time center, and other abilities and skills than those measured in school are prized. It would therefore be interesting to investigate whether this is so in reality, or whether the leisure-time center is a normative activity in completely different aspects. Possibly the children perceive the same requirements as in school or perhaps other requirements when they are at the leisure-time centre. The research question can therefore be formulated as, how do the children perceive the leisure-time center requirements on learning. A direct result of this investigation is that one has started a study on the children's view of learning in the leisure-time center environment.

The interviews present a clear idea that leisure-time staff and school teachers differ from one another markedly in terms of knowledge view and view of the learning situation. Another research question approaching this is to investigate the compulsory school teachers' view of the leisure-time teacher's function and professional role. Another interesting group to interview is the leisure-time teachers who have terminated their employment on the grounds that the conditions of the profession changed.

Conclusions

The leisure-time teaching and the profession are still subject to strong pressure to change. Teacher assignment in school activities has increased and children's groups have grown. Despite this experience, leisure-time teachers have a certain freedom, and the status of the profession has increased. The unique core of the knowledge still exists and leisure-time teachers' trying to maintain a clear line against the school. Leisure-time teachers with several years in the profession have an ability to adapt to new situations. Of those employed at the leisure-time center, where the number of pupils is greater than the number of students in the high school, only half have the adequate education. It is therefore critical to continue to research the factors that can strengthen the leisure-time center, its education and recruitment.

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