

Kulturskolen: A Collection of 'Artist Teachers' or a Multidisciplinary Community of Practice?

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Abstract: This chapter explores three teachers' descriptions of leadership and management challenges that they have encountered as kulturskole teachers in the context of Norway. The purpose of this study is to illuminate tensions that appear between the teachers' philosophy of work and the kulturskole as an organization, and furthermore the challenges these challenges entail from a management perspective. The research has taken a qualitative approach, with the data material generated through written narratives. Through a narrative analysis, in dialogue with the data material and theory about professionalism and management, the research participants' reflections are examined from a hermeneutic-phenomenological perspective. The discussion extends into reflections on findings related to the teachers' professional identity, which reveal a strong connection to their art form and desire for professional independence, while at the same time a sense that a unifying kulturskole community is lacking. The study shows that the research participants describe commonalities in values and teaching philosophies across the different art forms. These commonalities can, according to the study, create a basis for common goals for the kulturskole as an organization. A central leadership challenge appears to be in creating a community of practice, which may help to balance the teachers' roles as autonomous specialists and the development of a multidisciplinary yet unifying community.

Keywords: community of practice, education, kulturskole, leadership, professional identity

Citation of this chapter: Hellandsvik, A. S. (2021). Kulturskolen: A Collection of 'Artist Teachers' or a Multidisciplinary Community of Practice? In B.-T. Bandlien, I. O. Olaussen, M.-A. Letnes & E. Angelo (Eds.), *MusPed:Research: Bd. 3. Utdanning i kunstfag: Samarbeid, kvalitet og spenninger [Arts education: Collaboration, quality and tensions]* (Chap. 4, pp. 103–125). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.152.ch4>

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Monday starts with the kulturskole¹'s staff meeting. For an hour we discuss an upcoming concert for the guitar pupils, the need for better ventilation in the visual arts studio, and how to recruit students to study classical instruments. I keep glancing at the clock – I am eager to get to work in the dance studio. The meeting ends, and after small talk with other teachers, I get to the dance studio. I feel at home. Today I have five classes, starting with the 4-year-olds working up to the 18-year-olds at the end of the night. My mind goes back and forth between planning the lessons for the groups and planning the upcoming performance. How will I get four-year-old little Sara to feel safe to let go of my hand today? What about my jazz class, some of the students are struggling with the new choreography, will they be ready in time for the performance? Should I do the costume fittings for the level two ballet class today? I might have ordered the wrong size of green tutus. I run over to the next studio, and ask my dance teacher colleague if she has heard from Lisa's parents about switching from my colleague's class to mine, or did it clash with her football training? I then remember that I promised three of the graduating girls that I would give feedback on their audition solos today. At 3 pm the first students arrive. The kids keep coming and going until I finish at 8 pm. On my way home I run through the classes in my head, making mental notes on how it went. My phone buzzes, reminding me of the meeting with the principal tomorrow morning. I need to prepare some thoughts on how the kulturskole can co-operate with local institutions. Maybe we should work with primary schools? Or maybe the elderly? I drive home, thoughts dancing in my head.

1 The kulturskole in Norway is a location for performing arts education, which spans a wide range of artistic practices, teaching young children to older teenagers. The kulturskole in Norway started as music schools in the 1950's. They later included other arts subjects as dance, visual arts and theatre, and evolved into becoming multidisciplinary art schools. Exactly how and when this change happened is an unexplored part of history (Berge et al., 2019). In 2016, the Norwegian Council for Schools of Music and Performing Arts (Norsk kulturskoleråd) published a new curriculum framework plan for the kulturskole, *Diversity and deeper understanding*, and within this state that the kulturskole should provide both talent development for students at a high artistic level, but also provide a broad arts education for children and youth of any level. The curriculum framework is intended as a management tool and a foundation document for the development of national standards in the kulturskole sector (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016).

This narrative is written from my own experience as a kulturskole teacher. Being a teacher in a Norwegian kulturskole means juggling several tasks at once. You must be a specialist in your art subject, with competency teaching beginners to pre-professionals. At the same time, you should have an understanding of being a part of a multidisciplinary school, a community of teachers from several art subjects. You must work autonomously and at the same time be able to co-operate with others. Tending to all of these aspects can lead to challenges, mismatches and gaps. At the same time, a finding noted by multiple researchers is that the kulturskole teacher often has a complex professional identity with a strong connection to their own art subject, but often faces difficulties holding many part-time positions and the need to take on several jobs (Aglen, 2018; Angelo, 2014; Björk et al., 2018; Holmberg, 2010; Jordhus-Lier, 2018). This challenges the opportunity to build the ‘kulturskole teacher identity’ (Aglen, 2018, p. 13).

In this chapter, I, as a researcher and a kulturskole dance teacher, explore some of these challenges and discuss the possibilities of building a more solid, integrated, and holistic kulturskole community. I ask the question: *How do three teachers from one kulturskole describe their professional identity as kulturskole teachers, and how does this integrate in building the kulturskole as a community of practice?*

The kulturskole’s building blocks: Teachers and community

One of the two central themes explored in this research is the kulturskole teacher’s professional identity, and I have sought to explore how teachers from different art subjects describe their identity. Professional identity theory is a widely considered in kulturskole related research (Aglen, 2018; Angelo, 2014; Jordhus-Lier, 2018). Heggen (2008) points out that identity is essential in relation to professions, essentially shaping who you perceive yourself to be and belong with.

Kulturskole teachers in are part of an arts education profession which includes people from diverse fields, involved in the training and knowledge transfer of arts practices. Each art subject has its own diverse

field of expertise and knowledge, and therefore diverse knowledge bases, subject-specific techniques, practices and methods make up who and what an arts educator might be (Angelo, 2014). Although the term 'arts educator' can embrace breadth of practice and experience, titles such as musician, artist, music teacher or dance educator are often perceived as more descriptive of individual arts educators. Though kulturskole teachers are a part of the arts education profession, there is currently no Norwegian education that directly addresses the practice of becoming a kulturskole teacher. There are tertiary programmes educating teachers in dance, visual arts, music, and theater, but not to become kulturskole teachers specifically. It can also be noted that many of these tertiary study programmes combine a pedagogical and performance focus, where students learn to be both performers and teachers. This dual focus extends into the professional life for many arts educators, where combined educational and performing activities are common (Berge et al., 2019).

The term 'artist teacher' is used to describe those who find themselves balancing the professional roles of teacher and artist (Hatfield et al., 2006). With these dual professional roles, the artist teacher not only seeks meaningful feedback on his/her role as a teacher, but also recognition as an artist. This duality could also include a form of internal or external conflict when balancing the two professional roles. Valsdóttir (2019) discusses how artist teachers describe challenges when their roles as teachers leads to a devaluation as artists, especially from members within the arts field. While there are tertiary qualifications in arts education in Norway, there is no formal accreditation required for art educators working in kulturskoles (Angelo, 2014). The field is characterized by many informal rules, traditions and spaces for personal nuances; therefore, leaving space for the 'artist teachers' to shape their own work.

The second central theme in this research connects to ideas of community in the kulturskole. The notion of community connects to the management of the kulturskole and the teachers' descriptions of leadership and management challenges. Previous research about the Nordic kulturskole and leadership shows the complexity of leading a multidisciplinary organization, both in regards of meeting the expectations in the curriculum, the kulturskole's collaborators, the municipality as a school

owner and the society the kulturskole is a part of (Emstad & Angelo, 2018; Jeppsson, 2020; Tillborg, 2017; Waagen, 2015). In this research I explore the possibilities of kulturskole teachers forming a ‘community of practice’ through their shared passion of both executing and educating arts subjects.

Wenger (2011) defines the concept ‘community of practice’ in the following way: “communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). A community of practice refers to a social learning partnership between those who are defined as members. Wenger (2011) describes how the community of practice should be based on three elements: the domain, the community and the practice. I question: Could these three elements be defined in the kulturskole, creating a basis for a community of practice that integrates different art subjects, a place for discussion, development and sharing of experience?

A methodological approach to explore the experiences of three kulturskole teachers

This research takes a qualitative approach to explore the research query: *How do three teachers from one kulturskole describe their professional identity as kulturskole teachers, and how does this integrate in building the kulturskole as a community of practice?* To gather empirical material for the study I invited three teachers from the same kulturskole to participate in this research.

The kulturskole chosen for this study can be characterized as medium sized, with approximately 1000 pupils and 25 teachers. A large number of the teachers at this kulturskole have part-time positions at the institution, which is typical for the kulturskole field. The subjects offered at this kulturskole are dance, drama, visual arts and music, with music serving as the largest subject. The kulturskole has most of its activity located in the same physical location – a centre for cultural activity. In addition, some of the kulturskole’s activities are also held at local schools and kindergartens.

The three teachers serving as research participants represent different subject areas within this specific kulturskole: dance, visual arts and

music. The participants are anonymous and referred to as: *the dance teacher*, *the visual arts teacher*, and *the music teacher*. Prior to the study commencing, the research participants were presented with an informed consent form, which communicated the purpose of the study, the themes for the reflection letter they were asked to offer, and how the material they shared would be used in this research. The participants could at any time choose to withdraw from the study.

Data from the three participants was generated through a reflection letter. The participants completed the reflection letter individually. The reflection letter asked questions that considered three themes: their work situation, their professional identity, and their views on autonomy and leadership. Using such an approach, I sought to obtain nuanced descriptions of the participants' thoughts and experiences in line with a phenomenological approach. I then interpreted the participants' answers using theory and my preunderstandings, which can be viewed to be in line with a hermeneutical approach.

In the interpretation process I created meaning between my own theoretical and practical understanding, and the participants' responses in their reflection letters. I sought patterns consistent with my theoretical foundation, while at the same time remaining open to new questions that emerged. As these new directions emerged, I moved between interpreting individual parts of the data and interpretation of the material as a whole, as guided by the framework of a hermeneutic circle (Jacobsen, 2015). Johannessen et al. (2011) describe the hermeneutic circle as a process where interpretation consists of ongoing movement between the material interpreted, the context of interpretation and the researcher's own preconceptions. Based on this, I would describe this study as a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, in the sense that I consider reality and knowledge as something socially created, negotiated and thus to a certain extent negotiable. I do not approach this research as an essentialist, seeking some 'inner core' of what the participants describe. Instead, I am focused on how the participants construct and articulate their experiences and perspectives.

The reflections from the three participants were analysed using a narrative multi-step approach. The first step involved reading the participants' responses and identifying key words and concepts to try to capture the

essence of what was being described. The resulting key concepts included: professional affiliation, competence, autonomy, and community. In continuation, I linked the participants' responses to themes and configured narratives based on these themes, guided by the key concepts. Based on these narratives, I have drawn out themes to discuss within this chapter.

It is important to note that my background as a kulturskole teacher has informed this study, with the direction of the research being influenced by my own pre-existing beliefs, knowledge, and expectations. The theoretical foundation of the study therefore sits between empirical and theoretical, and with this has an abductive, reflexive approach.

I have taken a reflexive approach to research design, recognizing my roles as both a researcher and kulturskole teacher, and how I may have influenced all aspects of data generation and interpretation. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2008) point out that in reflexive research, the researcher must consider how they work with the data, and how their own frame of reference and preconception might open up insights while at the same time potentially overshadowing other findings.

In my view, research on the kulturskole field should be guided by an in-depth knowledge of the unique nature of the kulturskole. I believe that my knowledge of the kulturskole's structures, culture, language and history is an asset in this type of research, while the reflexive methodology helps to acknowledge the related. It has been important to be conscious of the challenges my position might bring, in the sense that I have a personal connection to the research context. Although my personal background as a kulturskole teacher has been beneficial for gaining an in-depth knowledge on this topic, it can also be viewed as a limitation to the study. It is also significant to note a further limitation where this research only focuses on one specific kulturskole. This means the findings in this research might not be transferable to all the Norwegian kulturskoles – especially given how kulturskoles can vary in size, scope and organization.

The stories of three kulturskole teachers

The following sections of this chapter shares three narratives from the three teachers' written reflections. First the dance teacher's narrative is

offered. This is then followed by the narrative from the visual arts teacher. Lastly, the narrative from the music teacher is presented.

The dance teacher

The dance teacher describes how a ‘good’ kulturskole teacher creates inquisitive, critical-thinking and exploratory students who work well alone and in collaboration with others, and provides the tools needed to develop in their subject. The dance teacher said, “My main task is to provide meaningful education for children and young people”.

‘Dance educator’, ‘dance artist’ and ‘team player’ are terms the dance teacher used to describe herself. She noted:

Before the day starts, several hours have already been spent in the dance studio to prepare and plan the day’s teaching. It is important for me to give the students a solid introduction to the subject through a comprehensive and well thought out teaching programme.

The dance teacher talked about how during one week she teaches over 200 students, in different dance genres, age groups, levels of skill and motivations to participate. She shared: “The fast shifts and big contrasts require a lot of effort as an educator. When I say goodbye to the 16-year-olds after their jazz class, the 3-year-olds are ready and excited at the door”.

The dance teacher went on to explain: “I feel that I am academically strong in my field and with experience gained good competence in what students should learn at different times based on age, level and genre”. The dance teacher describes how the teaching work she engages with is largely autonomous, but that she collaborates a lot with a dance teacher colleague in the same kulturskole. She notes: “Fortunately, we are two dance teachers in this kulturskole. This collaboration is very valuable, both in terms of professional discussion and exchange, but also for job satisfaction. Having someone to play ball with I think makes everyone better”.

The dance teacher shared how she would like the principal to be involved in educational work, for them to acquire an understanding of the subject. She said:

The principal does not need (and perhaps should not either) take part in taking decisions about the educational work, as it is the teachers who have the main competence here, but I think the principal should be included to develop a good knowledge of what is going on in the dance studio.

She points out how kulturskole subjects are largely different, and that it can be a challenge for the principal to have a sufficient knowledge of everyone. The dance teacher notes: “Kulturskole principals have an important task in representing the different subjects with equal value”. The dance teacher describes how the kulturskole should be a multidisciplinary community with a common mission, and with a framework plan as a common management document. The dance teacher said: “It is important that the principal takes good care of the teachers and is aware of the workload required by us in various subjects.”

The visual arts teacher

‘Educator’, ‘artist’, ‘art coordinator’ and ‘art coach’ are all terms the visual arts teacher used to describe herself. The visual arts teacher explained how she is keen to have a good dialogue with her students, saying: “In order to strengthen the students’ skills, connection and safety must be in place [...] High academic competence, didactic and methodical variety are important aspects in my work”.

When describing her subject, the visual arts teacher makes it clear that her connection to the subject is of great value to her. She describes how in a kulturskole context, visual arts are a small subject, and she yearns for increased understanding of visual arts and equality between all subjects in the kulturskole. The visual arts teacher has an important connection to a community with visual arts teachers from other schools through online sharing. Although several visual arts teachers are employed at this one kulturskole, collaboration and common meeting places are difficult due to them being employed in small positions and therefore having several workplaces during the week. The visual arts teacher said: “Meeting with other colleagues in the kulturskole is more just a benefit for the psychosocial environment”, when responding to questions about their community connection.

The visual arts teacher reflected on the question of what makes a ‘good’ kulturskole teacher, and expressed qualities of curiosity, the ability to listen, being adaptable and willing to learn. She said: “As a kulturskole teacher we do not have the pressure of giving our students grades or having to measure their abilities, like in elementary school. We can direct our teaching per the needs and development of the students”. On questions about describing her teaching she expressed that: “I often let the students take part in shaping the teaching, by letting them come up with wishes”.

The visual arts teacher says that there is limited disciplinary breadth in the kulturskole’s administration, where all administrators have backgrounds from music education. Her opinion is that the administration does not have full knowledge of and insight to the different art subjects. She says this might be problematic. The visual arts teacher shared a wish to be autonomous in designing content for her teaching, but elaborated that finances and available resources govern how the classes can be designed, explaining: “So much more could be done, but unfortunately we do not have sufficient time and finances available”.

The music teacher

According to the music teacher: “The kulturskole teacher should, with his professional competence, develop awareness, understanding and skills in his students, in a broader cultural perspective than only technical skills in an aesthetic subject”. He goes on to explain that “A good kulturskole teacher gives a lot of himself in his work, but never needs to assert himself professionally or personally in meeting with the students”. The music teacher explains how he emphasizes being professionally strong and confident in his own skills, both as an educator and as a practitioner, noting: “The great kulturskole teacher is a role model who shares from his own competence, experience and personality without losing focus on the fact that it is the student’s learning and development that is central”. The music teacher describes himself as ‘committed’, ‘musician’, ‘creative’, ‘tired teacher, and ‘social’. He says, “I have a great interest in my art subject and am keen to convey this to my students”.

During his week, the music teacher meets students of different ages and skill levels and teaches students individually and in small or large groups. He experiences several changes in teaching premises, saying, “the rapid shifts and large variations are challenging”. He is concerned about creating good meetings with the students, both related to the art subject itself, but also connecting to the student’s personality, sharing that “it can sometimes be tiring to always be the one who must drive the content of these meetings”.

The music teacher sees it as a strength that this kulturskole has several teachers in the same subject. Though he points out the potential to utilize this better by taking advantage of the individual teacher’s specific competence and coordinating this in a subject curriculum. He describes parts of the kulturskole organization as an important community for him, both for professional development, but also for valuable social relations with colleagues. He works closely with several colleagues during his work week and finds this a good change to individual work.

The music teacher reflects on the principal’s role in the kulturskole, saying:

The principal’s job has many aspects to relate to, this can lead to the follow-up of us teachers being sporadic and thus a little superficial. I want the principal to be a clear leader of the kulturskole, who can clarify questions, challenges and situations we may encounter with many teachers, students, parents and other actors.

The music teacher describes his work as largely autonomous and points out challenges within this: “I find it challenging to create quality teaching arrangements over a long period and could have benefited from more guidelines on didactic and methodological choices in the teaching”. The music teacher wants the principal, in collaboration with the teachers, to develop a clear vision and content for the kulturskole as one collective unit, which in turn could help set guidelines and frameworks for the teachers’ autonomous work. He said: “Having said that, I think that the principal’s more direct involvement must be in proportion to the principal’s level of knowledge about the topic or subject in question”.

Analyzing and discussing ideas of identity and community

In the following sections I identify key discoveries in the empirical material drawn from the analysis of the written reflections offered by the three teachers. The discoveries are identified under two themes: Discoveries related to the kulturskole teachers' professional identity; and discoveries related to the kulturskole as a community of practice.

I then offer a discussion exploring the friction between the teachers' professional identity as artist teachers, with a strong connection to their art subjects, confidence in their competence and an expectation of autonomy, and at the same time a desire for a unified kulturskole community. Through the discoveries from the participants' experiences, I discuss how it may be possible to create a balance so that the kulturskole becomes a unified multidisciplinary organization, which both safeguards the teachers as autonomous subject specialists and provides the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive, educational community.

Discoveries related to the kulturskole teachers' professional identity

This research reveals that the three kulturskole teachers describe a professional identity emphasizing a strong connection to their artform. Their education and way into the profession seems to have had an impact on the formation of their professional identity and they refer to themselves using terms such as 'dancer', 'artist' and 'musician', in addition to 'dance educator', 'art teacher' and 'music teacher', often combining dual roles.

All three kulturskole teachers emphasized their professional competence and the explicit knowledge that underlies their professional practice. In the context of being confident in their own competence, all three teachers describe an expectation of being autonomous in their work. When asked if they want the principal to be involved in the design of teaching programmes, all three teachers responded that they did not want a high degree of direct involvement from the principal. It is suggested that the principal could be included in forming guidelines for the

pedagogical work, but that the teachers should maintain their autonomy in shaping and delivering this based on their specialist competence. The teachers regard the principal responsible for the kulturskole on a more administrative level.

The teachers cite subject-specific challenges in their work life related to issues such as available resources for the visual arts teacher, or rapid shifts between teaching locations, genres and the students' level and age for the dance teacher and music teacher. Even though the teachers seem most concerned about the specifics relating to their subject, they also describe aspects that can be seen as 'universal' for all subjects at the kulturskole. They emphasize being committed to taking care of their students in the best possible way, both academically and socially. They describe values that should be safeguarded through arts education in the kulturskole, where students should be given tools to develop their curiosity and exploration in the subject. Within this it seems that the teachers have a desire to educate the 'whole person'. These discoveries show that the teachers' professional identities are connected to their specific art subject, both as artists and teachers, but are also connected to being an arts educator more generally. These aspects could help to build the professional identity as 'kulturskole teachers' without being subject specific.

Discoveries related to the kulturskole as a community of practice

Discoveries related to the theme of the kulturskole as a community of practice show that this is described in different ways by the three teachers. They all describe a need for a stronger kulturskole community that connects the teachers together across subjects. Their most important collegial community is mentioned to be other teachers in their specific art subjects. The kulturskole community is described as almost 'random', based on which colleagues one might happen to meet during any given day. The teachers expressed a desire for a more distinct kulturskole community, and a common educational foundation with inclusion criteria across disciplines – a community where colleagues meet not just for social benefits, but also for learning and sharing.

The kulturskole teachers seem to enjoy the great degree of self-management in their work, but also describe challenges with this. They express a desire for clearer guidelines, which could strengthen the opportunities for collegial cooperation, community feeling and ensuring that the teachers' expertise is utilized in the best possible way. The responses show that the three teachers seem to agree on a desired process where the principal, in collaboration with the rest of the faculty, articulates a common vision for the kulturskole that would create direction and goals for the entire school based on the total competence that the kulturskole holds.

Historically, kulturskoles were predominantly music schools (Berge et al., 2019), and in this particular kulturskole where the research is situated, music is the largest subject. A discovery made during the research is how the two informants from dance and visual arts cite the balance between the school's different arts subjects as a central challenge for the kulturskole as a multidisciplinary community. The visual arts teacher and the dance teacher describe being concerned about balancing the different art subjects' position in the kulturskole and find it problematic that the entire kulturskole's administration has a music background.

The kulturskole teacher: An autonomous subject specialist

This research shows that the three kulturskole teachers have strong connections to their professional identity as artist teachers within their arts subjects. At the same time, it is clear that there is a gap between this dual identity and the role they have as teachers in a multidisciplinary school. In the following sections I discuss aspects that can be part of what builds a common kulturskole teacher identity to establish a base for a kulturskole community where all teachers may fully participate.

A key finding to emerge from the three teachers' experience is that they emphasize their professional competence. This can be seen to be similar across the various arts subjects that the three teachers represent, and therefore could be seen as a unifying focus for the teachers. This particular specialist competency is central in the kulturskole teachers' opinions about autonomy and is in line with professional theory (Molander

& Smeby, 2013) and discussions of artist-teacher identity (Hatfield et al., 2006). Based on this explicit expertise, the kulturskole teachers seemed to have a desire to be autonomous in their work and have a sense of artistic freedom without direct involvement of the principal of the kulturskole. The research participants describe that the principal sets a general framework for the teachers' work, but that the teachers themselves plan and organize large parts of their workday. This notion resonates with findings in existing research pertaining to artist teacher theory, where the management of the school has more of a general responsibility to determine the teachers' duties within the school, without interfering with what goes on in the classroom (Hatfield et al., 2006).

At the same time as the teachers express their expectation of autonomy, they appear to share a desire for clearer pedagogical guidelines, based on the *teacher* aspect of the dual roles they hold as artist teachers. In the reflection letter shared by the music teacher he talks about the challenges of making long-term teaching plans, and a desire for guidelines for pedagogical choices. This involves leadership of the kulturskole, where the principal as a leader could work to balance between complete autonomy for the teachers on one hand, and a desire for clearer guidelines on the other. Again, this might be related to the reoccurring dilemma between autonomy and community, where overall pedagogical guidelines could be part of what builds the community of a school. In a community of practice context, Wenger (2010) suggests a process to illuminate the domain of collective competence in the community, which then works as a connecting factor in the practice of all members, even though they might be working autonomously on different tasks.

Although the teachers' descriptions of the kulturskole teacher profession seems to be primarily related to their art subject, there are several other aspects that could be seen to be valid across subjects for creating a basis for a kulturskole teacher's identity. The dance teacher described the importance of dance education in such a way that it could be considered across all arts subjects. She said: "A good kulturskole-teacher creates inquisitive, critical-thinking and exploratory students who work well individually and in collaboration, and provide the tools needed for students to develop in their subject". All three participants mentioned

values that they viewed could be shared across subjects. The visual arts teacher talked about the value of *seeing* the students. The music teacher talked about creating valuable meetings and relations with the students. The teachers' professional identity that initially and most visibly relates to their art subjects seems to contain pedagogical values that could be perceived as common and transferable across the diverse arts practices. From the participants' narratives it seems that these common values have not yet been clearly defined within the kulturskole. By allowing common pedagogical values to be made visible, highlighted and refined, there is the potential to create common content or crossovers between practices that could anchor a 'we' feeling for kulturskole teachers in a multidisciplinary kulturskole. In turn, this might provide room for autonomy *and* a sense of being part of a developed community of practice.

A need for a unifying kulturskole community

According to Wenger (2018) a community of practice should be based on three elements: the domain, the community, and the practice. With Wenger's view in mind, I ask: Can these elements be defined in the kulturskole? First, there needs to be defined a domain to base the community of practice. The kulturskole as an organization could be viewed as the 'domain'. The teachers are all part of the kulturskole regardless of their subject, position percentage, or location for their actual teaching. Therefore, it could be understood that the kulturskole could be what ties the teachers together in the same network – the domain for the community of practice. Next, a community needs to be identified in the domain, with a common interest for all members to engage with. In order for this to be a genuine community, and not just a group of people who share a job title or place of work, there needs to be some sort of interaction and joint learning between the members of the community. The findings from the three participants experiences highlight how they mention the kulturskole as a community, but indirectly note that this community is hazily defined and operating at random. The visual arts teacher describes feeling lonely at work, wanting a stronger kulturskole community to connect to. Both the music teacher and the dance teacher describe a community

based on the relationship with teachers from solely the same subject. The teachers mention no form of collective interaction between all the kulturskole teachers, or opportunities for sharing and learning from each other's practice. The teachers state that they are confident in their own competence, but in some way they all mention a longing for a stronger community to connect to for professional development. When discussing the idea of a community of practice, the element of community seems to be where the kulturskole needs to develop a strategy, particularly around how to formalize the actual sharing, learning and interaction between teachers, to come forward as a *community* of practice, and not just a domain of practice. This aspect links professional identity together with community, where the teacher's identity determines whether they perceive themselves as a participant of the community, and how they express their competence within the community (Farnsworth et al., 2016).

All three teachers sought to maintain a high degree of self-management in their work. Here is a possible contradiction between self and community, leading me to ask: Can one have both individual, subject-specific autonomy and a community of practice at the same time? I think such a superstructure, with both aspects coexisting, can happen by giving the community a professional education that everyone sees the benefit and have ownership in. Thus, the organization of a kulturskole could be a further developed as a community, and not just an organization focused on coming together for the social aspects of engaging with others. It is important to note that a community of practice differentiates from a group, network or team by highlighting the learning and development process, not being driven solely by a task, project or a social structure (Wenger, 2010).

Such concerns offered by the three teachers show the importance of having a broad arts competency in the management of the kulturskole, in order to manage and understand teachers from all arts disciplines. For artist teachers with a strong professional identity, the management's limited of knowledge about the range of arts subjects might lead to them having negative perception of their managers, based on the lack of recognition they feel (Hatfield et al., 2006). Encompassing a broad arts competence could be taken care of either by the management possessing it

themselves through the composition of a multi-disciplinary management group, or perhaps by adding processes where the special competencies that the teachers possess are utilized within the management process.

The informants' statements can be read as arguing for a unified balance between structuring the content of the subjects and the teaching, and the teachers' room for autonomy or self-management. I would argue that precisely this type of development work should be led by the principal and done through a synthesis of subjects, pedagogical principles, organizational and financial resources, internal priorities, political guidelines and possible opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholders. Of course, it would be crucial that all teachers within a kulturskole participate in this process to secure the foundational values contained in the teachers' professional identity and the core values that should be the kulturskole's common understanding. This is described by the music teacher as: "The academic plans must be developed in collaboration with the teachers so that both parties take ownership of the educational and didactic choices made".

By shaping and clarifying the kulturskole's values, vision and content and anchoring this in educational guidelines, there is the potential to foster a multidisciplinary community of practice that all kulturskole teachers feel connected to. Such a process may give teachers opportunities to make visible and anchor their subject area in a common foundation of values. Wenger (2010) refers to such a process as a 'realignment' between the community's regime of competence and the members' experiences of practice, with the means to secure the members' identification to the community. It can also be beneficial in an artist teacher context to create links between management and teacher competence (Hatfield et al., 2006).

So, how do you become a kulturskole teacher?

A discovery in the responses from the kulturskole teachers involved in this study is how education seems to have an impact on the way the teachers describe their professional identity and their connection to being an 'artist teacher'. The teachers describe a strong connection to their art

and are self-employed artists in addition to being teachers. They all have an education with both performance and education foci, which seems to serve a big part of building their artist teacher identity. Simultaneously, this particular kulturskole also has teachers with an education that is solely educational, educating for example music *teachers* and not focusing on developing the students as professional artists. An interesting question to explore could be how these differences might lead to mismatches between the kulturskole teacher's professional identities, and if this can challenge the kulturskole community?

The tertiary education programmes for arts educators have different profiles and a wide variety of content. Several of the institutions that educate arts educators in Norway also have a performance focus. As mentioned in the opening of the chapter, there is no Norwegian education that directly addresses becoming a kulturskole teacher. The title of 'kulturskole teacher' therefore only becomes a profession because you 'by chance' are hired to teach in the kulturskole context. This is in line with findings made in previous research on the profession. For example, Jordhus-Lier (2018) who worked with 16 music teachers in the kulturskole and discovered that only one primarily identified with the title of 'kulturskole teacher'. Based on such findings it could be argued that the profession of being a kulturskole teacher should be an integrated aspect in education, where the theme 'being a kulturskole teacher' becomes part of all education qualifying for the profession. Hopefully this could help offer a more solid grounding to the profession, including both those who identify as artist teachers and teachers. Together this might give kulturskole teachers a common point of reference into the profession, without necessarily being subject specific, and in turn this could serve as an important tool to build a strong community of practice in the kulturskole.

Closing considerations

This chapter has revealed that the kulturskole as a community of practice is undefined, where the teachers find themselves in an interface between a strong connection to their subject competence and thus an expectation of autonomy, and a need for a unifying community. The teachers want

their independence, but not loneliness. This discovery relates both to the professional identity of the kulturskole teachers, the kulturskole organization, and the mandate of kulturskoles. Thus, there seems to be a need for a process that sets out what the domain of the community can be built on, where the principal has overall responsibility for taking care of the kulturskole, but the teachers take care of the subject-specific aspects. I suggest that there is a need to form a visible superstructure between the arts that creates a community around being employed in a kulturskole, a community of practice that both holds teachers' subject-specific expertise and gives autonomy, while having a common educational value foundation, and a more unified kulturskole, which agrees on its intentions and direction. This will not only have organizational ramifications but could also shape social and political perspectives of the role kulturskoles have in Norway. If municipalities as kulturskole 'owners' are to allocate further resources to kulturskoles, it is important that those with municipal political decision-making authority also see the importance of having well-functioning kulturskoles with a wide range of services. The discoveries made in this research show that the teachers in kulturskoles should not work in a vacuum without contact with colleagues, and kulturskoles must also connect with the local communities and contexts they seek to serve.

In the process of this project, I became acquainted with previous research in the field and became aware that much of the prior research focused on music, or music education. In turn, this research has relied heavily on this body of scholarship that has a music emphasis. Although much of the research is transferable to other arts subjects in the kulturskole, the differences and similarities of arts subjects, that make the kulturskole field so complex, must be acknowledged. In a leadership context I see it is crucial for management of the kulturskole to be aware of this uniqueness and take into account the factors that make the organization special.

Throughout this chapter I have sought to show how the kulturskole as a concept is unique in its form. It is not a general school system, it is not nonformal education, nor is it a private arts education context. The kulturskole can be seen a hybrid of all these, and this uniqueness creates unique challenges and exciting potential. In light of this research, I believe

that the multidisciplinary community of the kulturskole, and within this the professional identity of kulturskole teachers, can be made more visible, developed, and integrated. I close this chapter with a reflection that I had as a kulturskole teacher:

I lay out my plans for the following week of teaching. One of the music teachers shared a creative co-operation exercise for young students with me, and I plan on using it in ballet class tomorrow. Wednesday is a meeting with a team of teachers from all disciplines, to plan a performance with some of higher-level students aiming for professional careers as artists. I am choreographing a modern piece for my groups of graduating dancers, accompanied by live music from a few of the music teachers' students – something different from our usual Spotify playlist. Next week, I'll have some time in the staff meeting to tell the other teachers about how I managed to build the confidence of a teenager who struggled with her self-esteem and motivation by giving her some simple tools. I am certain the other teachers have students with the same problems – I feel eager to share my experience. This reminds me that as kulturskole teachers we are not just teaching students how point their feet or hold a steady rhythm, we are educating them to explore their minds, their creativity, to socially interact and express themselves with emotional intelligence. I get ready for the upcoming week with feeling proud – proud to be part of the kulturskole and proud of our contribution to the children in our community.

Acknowledgements

I wish to sincerely thank professor Rose Martin for her great contribution as a mentor in the work with this chapter. I would also like to acknowledge the three kulturskole teachers who contributed to the research, thank you for sharing your thoughts and insights.

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