5. Theoretical perspectives

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In this chapter, we will describe the overarching theoretical framework for our project and this book. As this book summarises the results from several different sub-studies (see the Raspberry model in Chapter 4 on the research project methodology), the theoretical tools used within the project are multi-dimensional; all unite the interest in the interaction and dynamics between educational professions in educational organisations. Chapter 5 will sketch a theoretical toolbox seeking inspiration from organisation theory and profession theory. Finally, we detail how an interactionist perspective informs the research as an ontological point of departure. In the book volume, this chapter is supposed to provide a perspective to understand our various empirical findings, as presented in Chapters 6–11. In Chapter 12, the volume's discussion section, we will, starting from this perspective, further theorise on the relation of professions and organisations and how this relation is conditioned by contextual factors in time – that is, as part of historical developments – and space – as being embedded in nation-specific particularities.

A profession-theoretical starting point

The theoretical perspective that we use to understand and explain the formation of the group of special educators (SEs) and their interaction with contextual particularities is embedded in the field of professionalism and professionalisation theories. This field is wide ranging, with a plethora of approaches and understandings of what constitutes a profession and the relationship between different groups in social organisations. It is, therefore, quite confusing (e.g., Abbott, 1988; Allsop et al., 2009; Evetts, 2013; Parkin, 1979; Sarfatti Larson, 1977/2013). However, it also provides several analytical tools to help understand 'doing' special education in compulsory school systems from a comparative and historical point of view. The starting point for theories on professions, their emergence, formation, and actions, is as follows: Occupational groups that provide services of importance to society have the opportunity to become professions. The services in question can often not

be automatised or become the object of technological services, but rather are made under some kind of pressure and resource scarcity (such as time). The societal significance of the professions relates to the society's most important functions, such as health, law, science, defence and security, religion and also education. It is often expected that professions should be altruistic in their mindset, that is, have a non-profit orientation (Pfadenhauer, 2003).

Professions are a necessary part of modern societies since they fulfil the integrative social function of realising the values of society and controlling its norms, resulting in the control of deviant behaviour (Pfadenhauer, 2003). In order to fulfil this task efficiently, members of the professions are subject to separate institutional conditions. Thus, they enjoy a particularly high degree of freedom in in case of their professional practice, while on the other hand, this institutional framework also obliges professions to show a high degree of self-control, striving towards the common good of society. In return for their above-mentioned self-restraint, professionals receive special rewards, mostly in the form of prestige, respect, and recognition (Evetts, 2003, 2013; Pfadenhauer, 2003). Professions must act in complex and uncertain face-to-face interactions which cannot guarantee the achievement of positive values, namely health, rights, and education. Nevertheless, there is no other possibility for securing and guaranteeing these highly desirable outcomes than through this professional-client interaction, which remains risky and precarious. It is this comparatively high probability of failure during this process and the resulting demands on professionals for things like intuition, judgement, risk-taking and acceptance of responsibility that leads to the social privileges and esteem towards professions (Pfadenhauer & Sander, 2010).

In relation to professions as such, research on professions has emerged. Early profession research was, in one sense, essentialist and sought to define professions as separate and different from other occupational groups. Later on, weaker definitions appeared that would open up for several more occupations to be classified as professions (Selander, 1989). This categorical type of research was criticised for hiding more than what it revealed in terms of power struggles both within and between professional groups. For instance, Sarfatti Larson (1977/2013) demonstrated the emergence of professions over time in relation to societal changes, such as due to interdependence between professions and the development of state bureaucracies. Whereas Sarfatti Larson showed societal pressure and competition to be important in shaping

and defining professions, Parkin (1979) used the terms *closure* and *usurpation* to show how professions (or social groups in general) defined their area of expertise. With a different approach to professions, which viewed them as existing in a social system of organisations, Abbott (1988) illustrated the question in terms of jurisdiction, something that was important for the professions to uphold and maintain but which could change when new professions entered the system. Hence, according to Abbott (1988), the roles and tasks of professional groups were objects for negotiation, prioritisation, and, in some cases, cooperation, as well as the construction of legitimacy inside and outside of the organisation.

Evetts (2013) argues along similar lines that professional research will hardly move much further than what has been achieved in prior generations of professional research, at least not when creating strict boundaries between occupational groups and professions as defined according to Anglo-Saxon ideals of medicine and law. A different approach of categorisation would be 'to see them as the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for work associated with the uncertainties of modern lives in risk society' (Evetts, 2013, p. 135). Thus, the study would open up for occupations within the service sector that are knowledge-based and require a particular education. Events also shed light upon the relationship between the state and its professions. In contrast, it has been maintained that the professions grab hold of the state and thus strengthen their power; hence, the question becomes why the state would create professions and allow them to flourish? The answer regards controlling the work, and the workers (Evetts, 2011), as state policy will inevitably reflect state interest (Allsop et al., 2009). When it comes to the topic of this particular study on SEs, a relation to the professionalisation of teachers can be an illuminating exercise. Both teachers and SEs can be seen as 'state-professions', that is, professions that are constructed and protected by the state as they are given particular objectives or jurisdictions within the welfare state – they are of service to the state and/or the public and have roles relating to reproduction, distribution or maintenance (Wermke & Salokangas, 2021).

To summarise, SEs, as defined from the 1990s onwards, can be seen as occupational groups belonging to the state, created by the authorities to implement government policy, in this case following a rationale or ideology that has been pushed forward from within the field of special education (and

in fact education) for a long time, namely that of inclusion. However, these occupational groups exist in a complex world where several occupational groups and professions are working towards different ends, each with their place within a hierarchy and different jurisdictions in terms of power and control (Magnússon, 2015, Wermke & Höstfält, 2014).

As described earlier, the professions are rewarded with (often) high status, social security and autonomy in the decision-making processes in certain areas as they are connoted with an acknowledgement of the profession's expertise (Vanderstraeten, 2007). These latter two dimensions, autonomy and expertise, are connected to the risky nature of the important functions the professions execute. For example, when dealing with people's health under resource scarcity, you better have some degree of freedom regarding possible failures (Wermke & Salokangas, 2021). The professional individual is still assumed to be the best possible person to solve the health problems at hand and is assumed to act to the best of his/her knowledge. This assumption is granted since his/her expertise comes from long, high-stakes (including examination procedures) academic and practical training. While the professions themselves historically often coordinated both the training and the examinations (and thus entrance into the professions), formal training has more recently been institutionalised and is, in many cases, provided at universities. Therefore, many professions have become academic. The academic training is conse-quently institutionalised, and ideally, the knowledge transferred builds on scientific evidence and experiential best practices (Pfadenhauer, 2003).

The structuring of organisations and professions

Another starting point in this volume is that education professions today are impossible without a large-scale organisation of many schools within a mass education system (Hopmann, 1988; Luhmann, 2002; Vanderstraeten, 2007). We argue, therefore, that professionalism in education must be understood in relation to a compulsory school system built on common standards, cer-tification systems coupled to particular life chances, and a legal statement of the individual pupil's right to receive education. All this must happen at scale, for hundreds and thousands of students at the same time, in an equi-table way, despite the existing individual differences among the students (Vanderstraeten, 2007).

This premise is important to state professionals who were originally depicted as independent acting practitioners. This description may have been unapplicable from the beginning, and still is nowadays, where most professionals can be allocated within large-scale organisations, especially professionals in the field of education, who are mostly found in school organisations (Harries-Jenkins, 1970/2010; Vanderstraeten, 2007). School organisations can be seen as monopolistic organisations for teachers and special needs educators as this is their major workplace. As collectively stated in the monopolistic school organisation, the profession of special needs educators and the school organisation intermingle to a very high degree. Due to this fusion, the profession and the organisation become fairly indivisible, which in turn leads to the fact that the profession and the organisation cannot be considered dichotomies (Harries-Jenkins, 1970/2010). The special needs educator as a professional can, therefore, be seen as a member of two institutions simultaneously: the profession and the organisation. The profession appears in a more horizontal structure, while the school as a bureaucratic organisation has a more vertical structure due to its inner bureaucratic hierarchy. The structure represents the principles of the organisation and the profession.

Both institutions try to control the activities of the professionals in line with their principles. This means that the school and the profession try to control the activities of each special needs educator. But as the structure and the principals of those two institutions are not identical, the tensions between the profession and the organisation can cause conflict between the special needs educators as professionals and the schools as their employers (Harries-Jenkins, 1970/2010). If a profession and an organisation are as strongly intermingled as the profession of SEs and its corresponding school, the professionals can be titled ascriptive professionals. An ascriptive professional can be defined as:

> […] a practitioner, whose task commitment is performed in a monopolistic organization which determines his [sic] status, evaluates his [sic] ability according to organizational requirements, and delineates, through a process of selection and designation, the precise area within which he [sic] will carry out his [sic] activities. (Harries-Jenkins, 1970, p. 55)

However, for most professions, including those in medicine and law, the reality is employment at a public institution or large institutional organisation such as a hospital, court, firm, university, etc. This requires us not to

view organisations and professions as opposing entities, but to focus on the interaction between the two in our analyses. Additionally, since education professions cannot exist without an organisation, we follow the suggestion of Vanderstraeten (2007, in reference to Harries-Jenkins, 1979/2014), to view professions in education as ascribed to the organisation of *the* school. This means that the organisational ends and means must be seen as superior to the professions' aims and ambitions (Harries-Jenkins, 1979/2014). This does not mean that the professions are a powerless group in this configuration, but it illustrates the sensitivity of educators to changes in their workplace.

Moreover, a school is not a 'normal' organisation. Rather, it is an organisation of high societal interest and importance – literally preparing the future citizens of society for both work and democratic participation. That is also why many different stakeholders have a vested interest in education and schooling. Power negotiations and allocation and distribution of resources between social groups are essential to it, making education inherently political (Apple, 2004).

Starting from the argument of the need for an organisational framework that allows modern professions to conduct their practice, we will in this volume also apply an organisational theoretical perspective, which also conceptualises the existence of professionals in organisations and their communication with other stakeholders. Here, we suggest the classic work of Henry Mintzberg (1979) on the structuring, structures, and contingencies of organisations. Mintzberg proposes various organisational configurations of how various stakeholders build power relations and communicate, always concerning the organisational function and goals. Both configurations and goals are indeed dynamic.

Regarding the organisation theorist Henry Mintzberg (here we draw on his initial work of 1979), every organisation consists of six major components. In the terminology of Mintzberg (1979), at the top, there is the 'strategic apex', meaning the head of the organisation or the top leadership level. At the bottom is the 'operating core' of the organisation. In this area, the actual (ground) work production is exercised. Between these two is the 'middle line', which consists of various tiers in the organisation with different capacities for decision-making and functioning as hinges between the top level and the operating core. This main structure is accompanied by the units

of 'support staff', for example, people responsible for IT infrastructure and human resource management. Finally, Mintzberg introduced the so-called 'techno-structure'. This part of his model is very peculiar. According to him, planning and standardising are situated in this sector. Here, large-scale evaluations are also supposed to happen to handle friction in the organisation or increase its efficiency. Due to its particular form, Mintzberg's (1979) generic model has been called 'the fly' (see Figure 5.1).
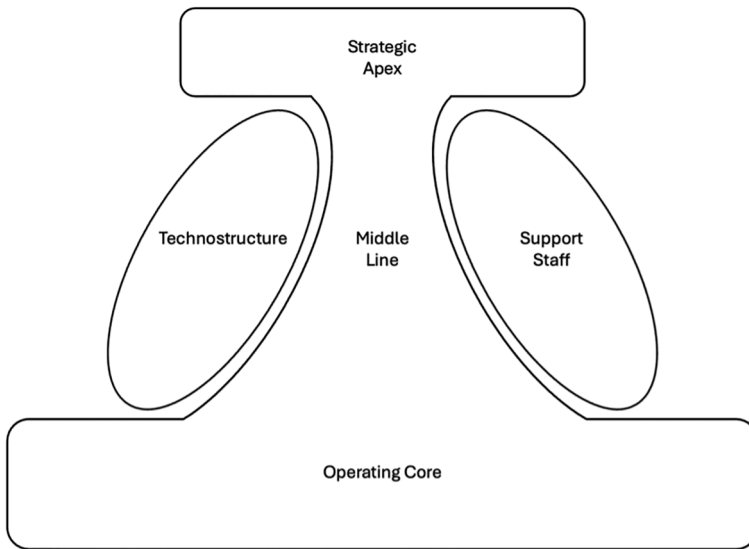

Figure 5.1: The five basic parts of organisations (Mintzberg 1979, p. 20).

The intriguing aspect of Mintzberg's model is that it can explain different kinds of organisations, which situate the persons active in the organisation as well as decision-making and control structure in various ways. His approach is fertile for explaining the relationship between organisational and professional dynamics. There are several types, but in the following, we focus on three prototypes of organisations that have the potential to explain the positions of education professionals in the world of school organisations: the 'machine bureaucracy' type, the 'professional bureaucracy' type and the

'adhocracy'. Below, we will briefly present these prototypes and how they relate to one another.[1]

The Machine bureaucracy

Of Mintzberg's structural configurations, the *machine bureaucracy* most strongly emphasises division of labour and organisational differentiation, in many different forms: vertical, horizontal, line/staff, functional, hierarchical, or by status. This type draws heavily on top-down control mechanisms. First, attempts are made to eliminate all possible uncertainty so that the bureaucratic machine can run smoothly. The operating core must be sealed off from external influence so that the standard outputs can be pumped off the assembly lines without disruption; hence, there is a need for rules from top to bottom. Overall, major strategies in such an organisation are clearly claimed by the top level, where the perspective is broad and the power is focused. The strategy-making process is a top-down affair, with emphasis on action planning. Many government agencies are bureaucratic not just because their operating work is routine but also because they are accountable to the public for their actions. Everything they do must seem fair and equitable, notably their treatment of clients. Thus, they proliferate regulations. According to Skrtic (1991), this type describes the desired functioning of school organisations and, with this, a significant part of its character. Following an egg-crate model of schooling (Lortie, 1975), in various units in a school, students are supposed to learn similar things and are to be assessed equitably in their learning. This is because another function of schools is the task of selection, that is, the allocation of life chances based on education performance, which is embedded in bureaucratic structures (see even Luhmann, 2002). However, for mass education and its complexities, machine bureaucracy types are not flexible enough (Skrtic, 1991). This leads us to the next configuration.

The professional bureaucracy

The *professional bureaucracy* relies on coordination in the standardisation of training and socialisation of professions. It hires duly trained and socialised

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[1]   The section below paraphrases the 450 pages long work: Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The structuring of organisations. A synthesis of the research*. Prentice Hall: Michigan University. When citations are not provided, we will not report single page numbers.

professionals for the operating core, that is, the executive level, and then gives them considerable control over their work. For example, teacher autonomy is reflected in the structure of school systems, resulting in what has been called loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976). The teacher works alone within the classroom, relatively hidden from colleagues and superiors, so they have a broad discretionary jurisdiction within the classroom (compared with *autonomy-parity-rationale*, Lortie 1975). Most of the necessary coordination between the operating professionals is then handled by the standardisation of skills and knowledge, in effect by what they have learned to expect from their colleagues. The flexibility of professionals sharing a certain body of knowledge or eventually solving problems in similar ways (see, e.g. Bromme, 2014) can therefore be granted a particular autonomy in the egg-crates of the school building, which makes professional bureaucracies, according to Skrtic (1991), another significant dimension of the school's nature. There are still standards, formal and informal, but the main rationale of this type is the assumption that professionals have the capability to solve complex problems by themselves. We argue that the organisation of schools, by their buildings, resource allocations, curricula, and education acts, are machine bureaucracies. The classrooms in the schools are run by professional bureaucracies, comprised of highly academically trained educators.

To understand how professionals in professional bureaucracy function, Mintzberg (1979) suggests the existence of a repertoire of standard programmes, the set of skills the professionals stand ready to use – and apply to predetermined situations. As Weick (1976) notes here, 'schools are in the business of building and maintaining categories' (p. 8). Regarding Mintzberg (1979), the professional has two basic tasks: (1) to categorise the client's need in terms of a case, which indicates which standard programme to use, a task known as diagnosis, and (2) to execute that programme. Pre-existing categories simplify matters because it would take significant resources to treat every case as unique, requiring thorough analysis (Mintzberg, 1979).

According to Mintzberg (1979), organisations and professions interact with each other through committee work, where the members often are elected. Therefore, professional bureaucracies are also called 'collegial' organisations and described as inverse pyramids, with the professional operators at the top and the administrators down below to serve them. Leaders in professional organisations are in charge of secondary activities; they administer

means to the major activity carried out by experts. The important decision is, functionally speaking, in the hands of various professionals and their decision-making bodies. What frequently emerges in the professional bureaucracy are parallel administrative hierarchies, one democratic and bottom-up for the professionals and a second machine bureaucratic and top-down for the administrative support staff. Consequently, administrators and the professionals must frequently interact and negotiate on organisational decisions and their operationalisations. Here, conflicts can emerge. In this description, we see the important connection between machine bureaucratic structures and professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979).

In this nexus, even conflicts can emerge. Too much external control of the professional work itself leads to centralisation and formalisation of the structure, consequently driving the professional bureaucracy to a total machine bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979). The decision-making power flows from the professionals to the administrators and on to techno-structure, which is in charge of the formulation of standards. In school systems, for example, the government looks top-down at its administrators to implement its standards, while the professionals look bottom-up at them to resist them (Mintzberg, 1979).

The Adhocracy

As a third organisation type, presented in the volume at hand, Mintzberg (1979) suggests the 'adhocracy'. As the name suggests, the adhocracy must be flexible and self-renewing. It often builds on interdisciplinary professional teams. According to Mintzberg (1979), frequent mutual adjustments are necessary for this type of adjustment. There is little possibility of control by conventional measures, and leaders in adhocracies do not manage in a usual sense, that is, by giving orders by direct supervision in leader and resource allocator roles. Rather, they negotiate roles and coordinate teams. With its reliance on highly trained experts, the adhocracy – like the professional bureaucracy – is decentralised. However, in contrast to the latter, the ends are defined, whereas the means are not (Mintzberg 1979). Here, the leaders of the organisation come in. They are supposed to manage uncertainties and negotiate contingency.

The backside of adhocracies is insecurity and confusion. The knowledge that the work upon which their jobs depend is getting close to its eventual

phase-out causes anxieties and feelings of frustration on the part of the organisation's members (Mintzberg, 1979). The members of the organisation do not know exactly which superior they should try to please or impress. According to Mintzberg (1979), confusion and ambiguity are common conditions because the jobs in the organisation are not defined, and lines of communication are loose and unorganised. The work environment of adhocracies can be characterised by intense competition with other organisations and professions for resources, recognition, and the right to jurisdiction. The result is often conflict or conflict-avoiding behaviour between the various experts involved. For Mintzberg (1979), adhocracies cannot work at scale in large-scale organisations such as school systems; they can only be implemented in subunits of such organisations, for example, where multi-professional cooperation is necessary, or in crises, where innovative power is needed (Mintzberg 1979).

Professional knowledge's nature and dynamics

As we can see, particularly in the description of professional bureaucracies, the way professionals organise their knowledge and practices are of significance because decisions made and practices developed draw on how professionals perceive a problem. In this project, we have followed Thomas Skrtic's (1991) argument that professionalism is contextualised in theoretical paradigms and presuppositions historically situated in a professional culture: the profession's knowledge traditions, theories, practices and discourses (Skrtic, 1991). Skrtic (1991) thus defines particular professional cultures as analogous to scientific paradigms (Kuhn, 1962). With further reference to Kuhn, Skrtic adapts the idea of paradigm shifts to both organisational and professional developments in his analyses. Making an analogy between professional culture and Kuhn's scientific culture, Skrtic (1991) argues that a profession is dependent upon a theoretical paradigm to organise a complex and ambiguous world (ibid.). Things taken as given and natural aspects of the profession are often not mentioned, yet professional discourse is only possible because of them. That happens among educators, resulting from choices that are not value- or interest-neutral.

Paradigms do not evolve or develop without regular crises, as nothing would otherwise compel people to question their practices or knowledge traditions (Cherryholmes, 1988). A crisis, therefore, has a positive potential and a

traumatic effect. Similarly, major changes to an educational organisation can be understood as paradigm shifts. Skrtic reminds us that organisations are social actors that have considerable power. Their power is not only defined by what they do for society but also, and often more subtly, by what they do to society. Organisations not only administer and carry out functions for society. They also influence society's image of those functions, and consequently the social structure, by shaping the goals society uses organisations to achieve (Skrtic, 1991, 1995). We will develop this argument further below, in reference to the work of Pfadenhauer (2003).

As discussed above, Skrtic views change as analogous to paradigm shifts, defining paradigm as 'a general guide for perception, a conceptual map for viewing the world' (Skrtic, 1995 p. 206). Professions are thus analogous to paradigms in the sense that they affect our way of viewing the world, and organisations explain cause-effect relationships as well as standards of practice and behaviour (Skrtic, 1995) and the thoughts and discourses of their members (Skrtic, 1991). As paradigms, professions change only when forced to do so in the light of the increasing occurrence of anomalies that the organisations cannot explain or handle within their scope. Paradigmatic shifts of this kind are difficult, even traumatic, not least because paradigms tend to distort information/examples of anomalies and either incorporate or refute them in some manner. In the end, when sufficient pressure forces a change, a new paradigm emerges, and practice continues under the new regime.

For instance, societal values and preferences change, and, as a new social theory emerges that is inconsistent with the prevailing profession, the older paradigm falls. Also, anomalies can be introduced through the availability of information that the paradigm in question is not working. This can happen through confrontations with individuals or groups who reject fundamental assumptions of the paradigm, or when corrective measures taken to correct a recognised flaw in the system expose other flaws, which then accumulate until a re-conceptualisation of the system becomes necessary (Skrtic, 1987, 1995). This theoretical starting point of paradigm shifts and its relation to professional dynamics is a fertile analytical instrument for the further explanation of special education professions between the global trends of inclusive education and education measurement penetration of all areas of schooling.

However, in order to analyse the dynamics of our professions in even more detail, Michaela Pfadenhauer (2003) provides us with an understanding of how professional knowledge is organised and interacts with contextual particularities and organisational frames. Pfadenhauer (2003) explains, for example, how professions' knowledge bases develop and what nature they have. In other words, Pfadenhauer (2003) explains the paradigms (Kuhn, 1962) we have introduced through Thomas Skrtic's work above. Concerning Pfadenhauer (2003), professional knowledge must be secured economically, politically, and institutionally in order to stay relevant and sustainable. This process relates to that particular function of professions also perceived as valuable by society, the provision of (often) cognitively challenging solutions to problems that are not possible to solve in a technical/linear way, and that are of great significance for each individual and society as such (health, law, education, etc.).

Professions have also a knowledge repertoire of higher symbolic value (Pfadenhauer, 2003). This is about how cases to be solved are perceived. The re-construction of a case actually spawns the case first. Starting from the problem definition, it is determined in which direction an intervention is heading and which resources are necessary and accessible to solve the problem. If professional treatment is not always the best possible but rather contextualised and historically grown, we must consider other aspects when explaining professional knowledge. First, professional actions comprise many potential failures. That is why professionals must feel protected as long as they act as best as they possibly can. They also need support structures (e.g., an organisation). Second, due to this, it is also important not to expose the professional knowledge base in total and, by doing so, make all decisions evaluated by others. Professional knowledge is, therefore, somehow obscure. It is often legitimised by the profession's status and the licence of the state (Hopmann, 2003). Third, professional domains must also be definite. It must be clear what the profession's responsibility is and what is not. This is negotiated in interactions with clients, society and the state.

The negotiation relates to the particular relation of professions and their clients and others (Pfadenhauer, 2003). For control from outside, clients can always look at the results/products, and whether they meet their expectations. Moreover, professionals can, by state authorities, be committed to certain external standards. In such a process, professionals can be forced to make

their procedures accessible to laymen, for example, through documentation. In this way, clients at least feel empowered to judge if the professional treatment appears legitimate. Finally, professionals can also display their commitment to professional norms (e.g., an orientation to a common good). These norms must then also be accepted by society as appropriate (Pfadenhauer, 2003). Consequently, professions and professionals must spend the effort to generate role and product expectations with their clients (what can actually be expected from them by whom) (as doctors must be like this…). It must be possible to accept that there can be low-performing, selfish individual professionals who nevertheless do not jeopardise the status of the whole profession (Pfadenhauer, 2003).

This kind of expectation management comprises, according to Pfadenhauer (2003), a systematic display of its proficiency in society, namely symbolic representations and ritualised techniques of maintaining a certain image of a profession. Displaying proficiency aims to produce trust, legitimate certain behaviours, produce obedience and enforce expectations. It is about the maintenance of the social status of the one who displays proficiency. Consequently, modern professionals can be understood as 'role-players' (Pfadenhauer, 2003). This aspect is very significant. Pluralism and individualism in society have resulted in a plurality of expertise, which is a threat to 'classic' professions. Mass media and the Internet have today a catalysing role in professional practice. Through another visibility of professionals, clients have the opportunity for potential comparisons. Within a plurality of opportunities in a reflexive modernity (Beck et al., 1994), professional knowledge becomes demystified, and this has led to insecure professionals. In an increasingly complex modernity, many professional problem solutions can actually be challenged, as can the normative hegemony of professions for certain problem solutions (Pfadenhauer, 2003). That is why professionals have become more reflective, and also more positivistic, that is, they spend more time explaining and documenting what they do. This makes, by the same token, professional competencies/performances/failures even more visible to public opinion. This can generate trust or mistrust in professions. Pfadenhauer here uses the term 'postmodern professionals', who must spend more effort on the dramaturgy of their competencies in order to generate trust in clients and society, which reconnects with Evetts's (2013) argument about professionalism in the postmodern era.

Conclusion

The theoretical starting point of the volume at hand is that we see SEs as professionals. These professions conduct their work in large-scale and state-governed organisations, namely schools. Therefore, special educator (SE) professions must be understood as framed by organisational and contextual particularities. SEs are school professionals, which is why we understand the profession as embedded in the bureaucratic structures of school organisations. Moreover, we argue that the professions' knowledge base has a peculiar nature. It first contains only certain, often historically grown, solutions to which problems are adjusted. The solutions draw on certain epistemological paradigms that are hard to change. Today, in a pluralist society, a traditionally state-secured status of professions is threatened by alternative knowledge providers. That is why professionals such as SEs must spend significant effort to make their function, procedures and eventual efficiency visible to society, other professionals and potential clients.

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