6. Inclusive education and nation-specific special education professionalism

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Introduction

The full-scale implementation of inclusive education presents an ongoing challenge for education systems and the professionals who work within them. It calls for a reconsideration of traditional boundaries between general and special education and raises fundamental questions about the evolving role of special education professionals. This is the point from which the chapter at hand commences. To determine the nature of the possible contribution of special educators (SEs), *we will investigate and compare three dimensions of German and Swedish SE professions – their tasks, training, and values – since these are considered key elements in the definition process of special education professionals.* These dimensions offer insight into how professional identity is constructed and re-defined in light of inclusive education reforms, particularly in a context where professionalism is increasingly understood as decoupled from formal status and institutional position (Rauh, 2016). The comparison between Germany and Sweden provides a meaningful analytical framework, as both countries share common historical foundations yet have pursued distinctly different trajectories in their development of inclusive education. While Sweden has advanced toward a more unified school system with a decreasing number of special schools, Germany maintains a highly differentiated and ability-tracked system with a strong special school sector (see Chapter 2). By examining these contrasting contexts, the chapter aims to identify both similarities and differences in how special educators understand and enact their professional roles within shifting educational landscapes.

As has been shown in Chapter 2 of this volume, due to paradigm shifts such as inclusion, new avenues of research related to tasks of SEs in inclusive education have arisen. With regard to the latter, many researchers have agreed that there is currently no consensus nationally and internationally regarding

the mission and the current future profession of SEs when it comes to school inclusion (Billingsley et al., 2009; Abbott, 2007; Cole, 2005; Hillenbrand et al., 2013; Labhart, 2019; Lingard, 2001; Magnússon & Göransson, 2018; Magnússon et al., 2019; Mastropieri, 2001; Mathews et al., 2017; Pearson, 2008; Szwed, 2007). Generally, the work of SEs varies both within and across countries (Göransson, Lindqvist & Nilholm, 2015; Göransson, Lindqvist, Möllås, Almqvist & Nilholm, 2017; Klang et al., 2017; Wermke & Beck, 2025). Despite the apparent prevalence of research in this area, there remains a clear need for more comprehensive studies that address the issue of special education professionalism in inclusive settings. Moreover, the lack of national and international comparative studies is evident, as demonstrated by the findings of the Margalit (2000) survey. The survey underscored the value of international research collaborations and the dissemination of promising practices. This perspective is shared by other scholars, including Lindmeier and Lindmeier (2018), Riegert (2012), and Wermke and Salokangas (2021), who also emphasise the need for stronger research collaboration and more international comparative studies.

Here we draw on the work of Reiser (1998), who outlines different forms or modes in which the special education profession contributes to inclusive educational settings. These have evolved historically. For Reiser (1998), special educator (SE) professionalism within its traditional form can be called *organisational-separating service/professionalism*. It entailed the teaching of children with identified special needs by means of specialised methods within the special school, which acted as a specialised learning or protected space. The delivery of this kind of service was thus justified for being predominantly structural, without considering of the child in its individuality. The second form of special education professionalism, which he called *personalised-additive service*, came into play in the wake of integration, meaning something extra is being applied in the case of a diagnosis, decoupling the activities from every day school routines. Lastly, Reiser (1998) refers to *institutionalised system-related services* with *special education* professionalism, in this context, characterised by elements such as cooperation, consulting and school development, implying a detachment from the idea of the special pupil. The third form of special education professionalism can be viewed as being a very inclusion-oriented professionalism.

Methodology

Instruments

For the work presented in this chapter, a survey was conducted using web questionnaires. In total, the questionnaire comprised 36 original open and closed questions, divided into five sections. The first section addressed employment and tasks, including questions such as '*To what extent do you work with given fields of work?*'. The second section focused on special education training/studies, with questions such as '*On what behalf did you decide to study special education? How satisfied are you with the area contents, teaching methods and the focus of inclusion in your studies?*'. It was followed by questions regarding the perspective on school problems (e.g., *What are the reasons for school difficulties?*); The role and function of the school (e.g.); and lastly in section five, which collected information about the respondents themselves. The survey is found in the appendix of this chapter.

Important to note is that the survey builds on questions similar to those ones employed in Chapter 9 (we have also developed this in Chapter 4). Building on the 2012 study by Göransson and colleagues (see Göransson et al., 2015), we conducted a follow-up study using a questionnaire similar to that used in our project. The data used in this chapter come from the pilot study based on the Swedish questionnaire and its translation into German, as conducted by our research group. In order to ensure suitability for the German context, the original questions had to be adapted slightly due to the differences in the school systems between the two national cases. For the final comparison of both countries, sections 2–4 and one question in section 1 were included, with responses given using the four-step Likert scale. The remaining sections comprised questions that were not comparable due to the existence of national differences. The chapter at hand builds on a master's thesis by Inken Beck.

Data collection and sampling

The questionnaire was constructed as an online survey utilising the Survey and Report application. The link to the survey was initially disseminated to three prominent municipalities in Sweden. Additionally, it was shared on various Facebook groups for SEs and through a local network of SEs who have studied at Stockholm University, with the objective of augmenting the

sample size. The German data were collected from the four administrative districts in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, and supplemented by the voluntary participation of members of the special education association. In total, the sample comprises 386 German and 526 Swedish SEs who responded to the questionnaires, resulting in a total of 912 responses upon which the findings were based. The data collection was conducted in 2021 and 2022.

The limitations of the sampling strategy also restrict the scope for statistical generalisation. No inferential statistical values, such as significance, will be reported. The chapter presents only descriptive statistics in the form of comparative diagrams. The objective of the comparison between the two groups is primarily to facilitate a deeper comprehension of the SE profession within the context of educational organisations. Additionally, it aims to shed light on the interconnections between this profession and various forms of inclusive education.

Results: The current state of the special education profession in Sweden and Germany

First, German and Swedish SEs' perception of certain tasks will be presented and discussed (see Figure 6.1). Hereafter, their view of their special education training in terms of perceived competence is examined. Lastly, the following section will cover their perspective on school problems and the importance of diagnosis. All answers will be provided by conducted mean analyses, which we converted into appropriate bar charts.

The tasks

We started by looking at the different areas in which the SEs worked in the two countries. Based on our data set, Swedish SEs perform certain tasks such as consulting with general teachers, cooperating with the headmaster as well as with non-pedagogical staff, working with school development and drafting special education support plans, more often than their German colleagues. Whereby the latter mission exhibited more or less the same mean value, the Germans more often worked with pupils individually, in small groups, or in joint teaching as well as with pedagogical staff like school assistants and local school supervisory authorities.
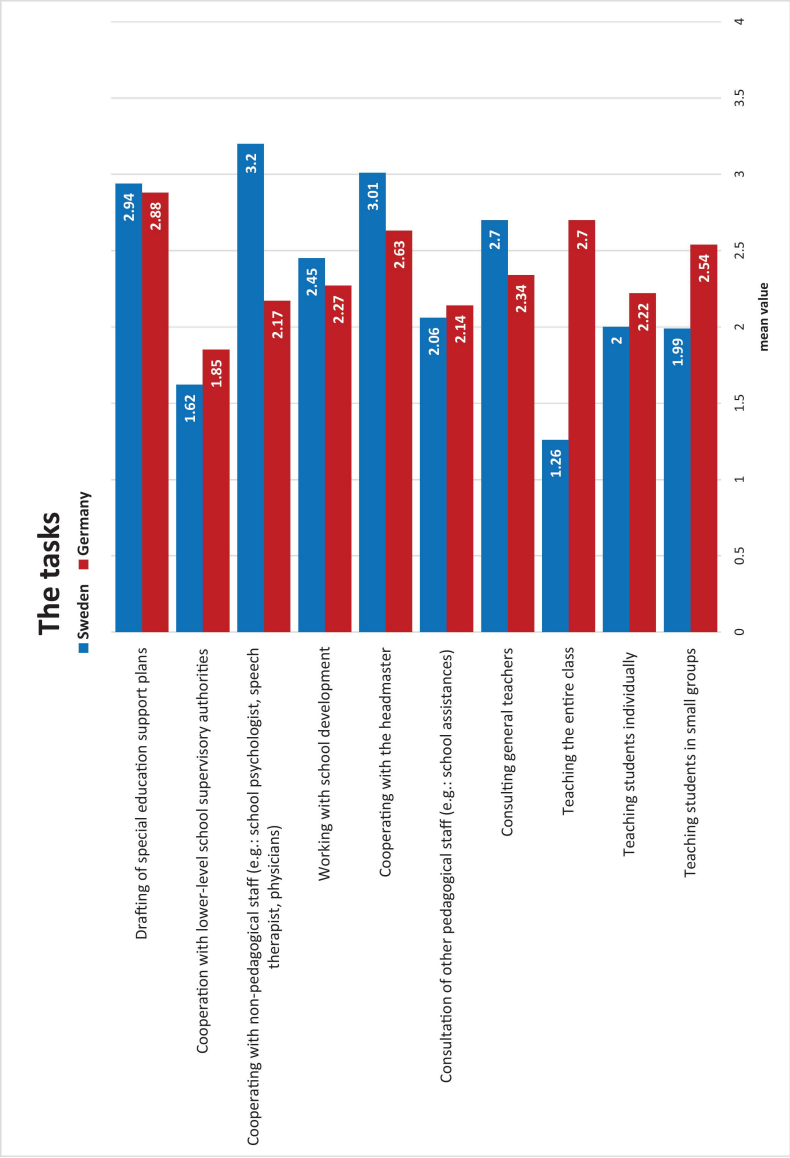
The tasks

■ Sweden ■ Germany

Drafting of special education support plans
- Sweden: 2.94
- Germany: 2.88

Cooperation with lower-level school supervisory authorities
- Sweden: 1.62
- Germany: 1.85

Cooperating with non-pedagogical staff (e.g.: school psychologist, speech therapist, physicians)
- Sweden: 3.2
- Germany: 2.17

Working with school development
- Sweden: 2.45
- Germany: 2.27

Cooperating with the headmaster
- Sweden: 3.01
- Germany: 2.63

Consultation of other pedagogical staff (e.g.: school assistances)
- Sweden: 2.06
- Germany: 2.14

Consulting general teachers
- Sweden: 2.7
- Germany: 2.34

Teaching the entire class
- Sweden: 1.26
- Germany: 2.7

Teaching students individually
- Sweden: 2
- Germany: 2.22

Teaching students in small groups
- Sweden: 1.99
- Germany: 2.54

mean value

Figure 6.1: Tasks of German and Swedish SEs

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A notable difference between the two countries regarding cooperation was that Swedish SEs frequently collaborated with non-pedagogical staff with a mean value of 3.2. Not only does this mission have the highest manifestation among the SEs in Sweden, it was also completed by them to a large if not very large extent. However, this finding is not very surprising, since SEs in Sweden are encouraged, if not obligated, to work hand-in-hand with this so-called 'pupil welfare team' consisting of non-pedagogical staff as well as the school's headmaster. Furthermore, a task that was particularly common among German SEs, and rather uncommon for Swedish SEs, was teaching full classes within mainstream education, resulting in a mean value of 2.54. However, it should be noted that, as indicated in our previous study, they primarily function as a helper or coach, focusing on individual students during such lessons, rather than as a class teacher for the entire class (Wermke & Beck, 2025 and Chapter 8). Swedish SEs, however, preferred small-group or one-on-one instruction, viewing full-class inclusion cautiously if it impacted student well-being (ibid.).

A mission both groups of SEs worked in frequently was drafting special education support plans for their students. Another such mission is the collaboration with general teachers, whereby German SEs worked more often with non-teaching staff compared to their Swedish colleagues, though not by a large margin. Additionally, school development tasks were common in both countries, with Swedish SEs engaging slightly more frequently with this task (mean value 2.45). On the other hand, contacting and cooperating with the local school supervisory authorities was a mission both groups rarely engaged in.

Overall, German SEs demonstrated a consistent performance across a wide range of tasks, with none scoring below a mean of 2 or exceeding 3. This finding aligns with the conclusions of a prior comparative study presented in Chapter 8. An explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the following argument. With regard to the history of the German special education profession (see Chapter 2), it can be assumed that because its professional identity was primarily developed institutionally, a more task-based professional orientation in inclusive settings is likely to present a new challenge (Loeken, 2000; Stein, 2004). Another explanation is provided by Wermke & Beck (2023), who show that in Germany and Sweden, inclusion currently takes place at different levels. German SEs working in inclusion

tend to discuss their areas of responsibility more at the classroom level, leading to variation in its application after a process of negotiation with the child's class teacher. Such an approach has developed because German special education professionalism is often not used as a resource for heterogenous classes overall, but most of the time is closely bound to either the special school (organisational-separating professionalism) or inclusive settings for special clientele (personalised-additive professionalism). As a result, many of the tasks appear inconsistent within German special education professionalism and are reflective of the inclusive practice within which they operate.

Although Swedish SEs were also involved in a range of tasks, their responses were more pronounced, indicating that their responsibilities may be less diverse than those of their German counterparts. Less variation appeared to occur, not in terms of a complete absence of certain tasks, but rather in their more distinctive frequency of occurrence. One potential explanation for this observation is that since the re-introduction of the special education teacher [speciallärare[1]] as a professional group with an explicit student focus (see Chapters 2 and 7), there has been a notable increase in the number of studies aimed at differentiating between the two types of SEs ([speciallärare] and [specialpedagoger[2]]) in Sweden (Magnússon & Göransson, 2018; Magnússon et al., 2019). It is also noteworthy that SEs in Sweden operate at the school level (Wermke & Beck, 2025). This implies that the responsibilities assigned to Swedish SEs are determined at the school level, typically by the headmaster or even by the state, rather than by each class teacher individually (ibid.). In consideration of the aforementioned factors, the SEs, who have been subjected to diverse forms of training and have acquired a multitude of competencies suited to addressing an array of tasks, can be recognised as a pivotal contributing element in the continued existence of diversity in tasks pertaining to Swedish data.

Self-perceived competence

We continued our investigation by looking at results regarding the SEs self-perceived competence. In doing so it became obvious that perceptions of competence varied significantly, as shown in Figure 6.2. Overall, Swedish

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[1]   The term 'speciallärare' in Swedish, translates to 'special education teacher'.
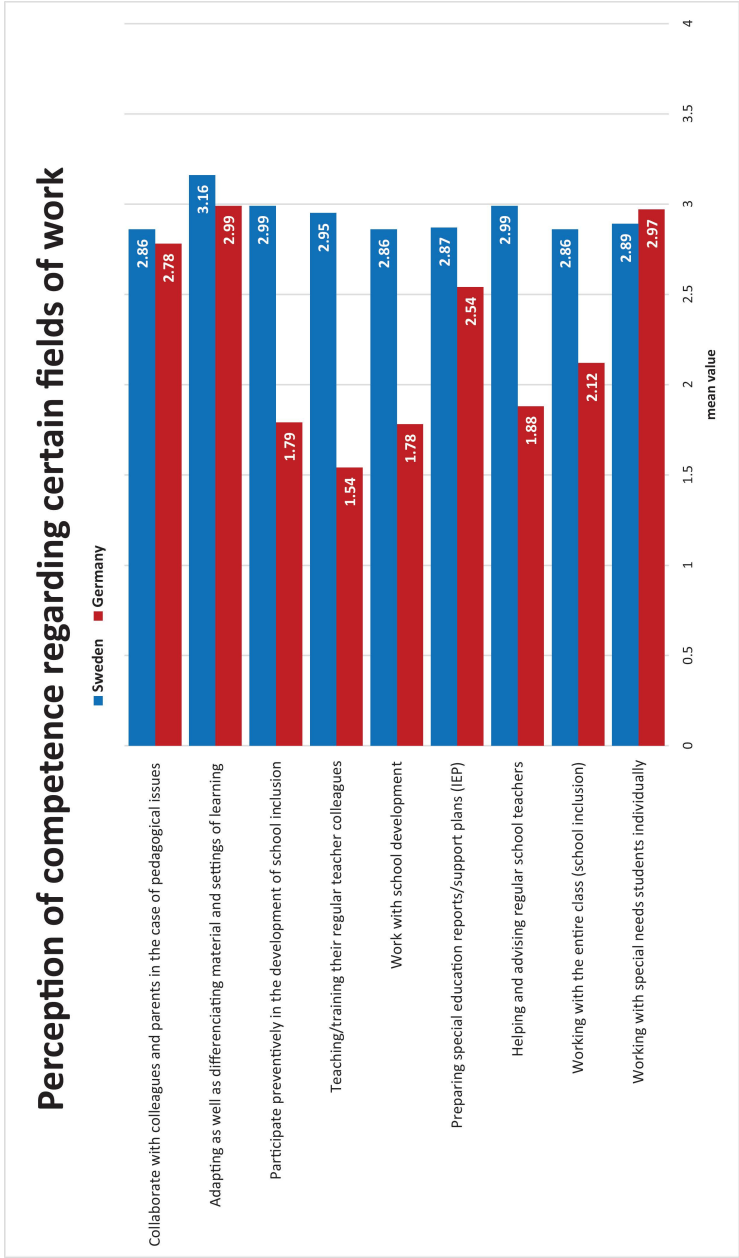[2]   The term 'specialpedagoger' in Swedish, translates to 'special education pedagogue'.

Perception of competence regarding certain fields of work

■ Sweden ■ Germany

Collaborate with colleagues and parents in the case of pedagogical issues — Sweden 2.86, Germany 2.78

Adapting as well as differenciating material and settings of learning — Sweden 3.16, Germany 2.99

Participate preventively in the development of school inclusion — Sweden 2.99, Germany 1.79

Teaching/training their regular teacher colleagues — Sweden 2.95, Germany 1.54

Work with school development — Sweden 2.86, Germany 1.78

Preparing special education reports/support plans (IEP) — Sweden 2.87, Germany 2.54

Helping and advising regular school teachers — Sweden 2.99, Germany 1.88

Working with the entire class (school inclusion) — Sweden 2.86, Germany 2.12

Working with special needs students individually — Sweden 2.89, Germany 2.97

mean value

Figure 6.2: Perception of competence of German and Swedish SEs

SEs felt more proficient across all task areas. When evaluating all fields of activity, they achieved an average score of 2.94, indicating that they felt well prepared by their education. In contrast, German SEs reported a mean score of 2.26, primarily reflecting their perceived competence in only three specific areas: working individually with special needs students (mean value 2.97), collaborating with parents and colleagues (mean value 2.78), and adapting or differentiating materials (mean value 2.99). In general, German SEs felt somewhat less prepared.

This disparity in perceived competence among Swedish SEs can largely be attributed to five specific tasks that are critical for inclusive education. For instance, Swedish SEs felt adequately prepared for tasks such as working with school inclusion and school development, as their studies equipped them to handle these responsibilities. Additionally, they found consulting and training regular teacher colleagues manageable, and they felt ready to engage in preventive measures for school inclusion. Despite these differences, there were also similarities between Swedish and German SEs in tasks traditionally associated with special education. Both Swedish and German study programmes prepared SEs to collaborate with colleagues and students' parents on pedagogical matters. Furthermore, both groups felt competent in adapting and differentiating materials, working one-on-one with students, and creating Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs) or other special education documentation.

The values

Lastly, we examined the SEs perspectives on school difficulties (see Figure 6.3). This part exhibits similarities with regard to the degree of importance.

In the German data, both the relational and medical-biological perspectives on disability were equally evident as German SEs primarily attributed school issues to student-specific factors and their home and school environments. The *medical-biological perspective* from which special education originally emerged understands disability as an attributable characteristic or individual deficit of a person. For this reason, the treatment of this group of children has long been located outside the pedagogical domain and within that of doctors and psychologists. With the *relational perspective*, disability is no longer located in the child because it originates instead from social obstacles and barriers that make social participation difficult or even impossible
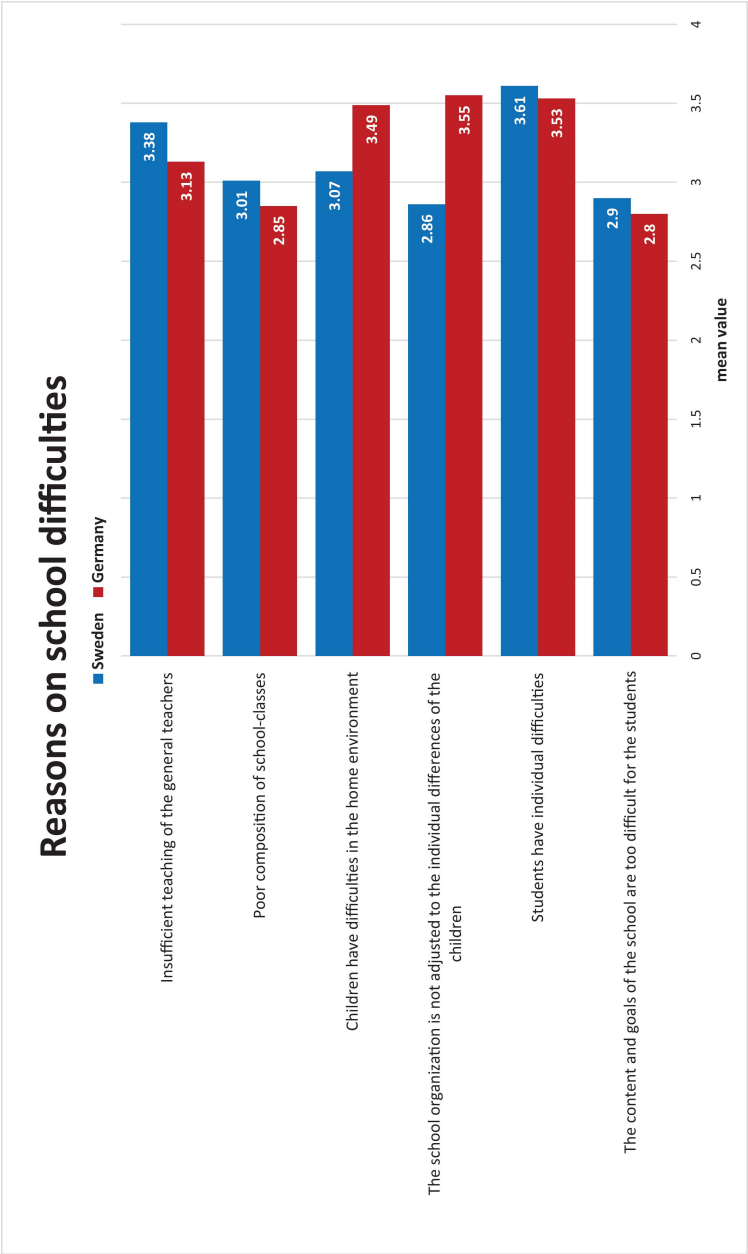
Reasons on school difficulties

■ Sweden ■ Germany

	Sweden	Germany
Insufficient teaching of the general teachers	3.38	3.13
Poor composition of school-classes	3.01	2.85
Children have difficulties in the home environment	3.07	3.49
The school organization is not adjusted to the individual differences of the children	2.86	3.55
Students have individual difficulties	3.61	3.53
The content and goals of the school are too difficult for the students	2.9	2.8

mean value

Figure 6.3: Reasons for students' difficulties at school

for those affected. From this point of view, there is no longer any need for special treatment or diagnosis. Accordingly, the three most prominent causes of school problems for the Germans were students' personal issues, with a mean value of 3.53, and their home and school environments. The schools' content and goals were also seen as challenging, with a mean value of 2.8, as well as the deficiency in the composition of classes, with a mean value of 2.85, but these were among the least cited as sources of problems. Interestingly, Swedish SEs also saw individual student issues as significant contributors to school problems, perhaps even more so than their German counterparts, assigning it a mean value of 3.61. However, the relational perspective was present in Sweden, too, with reasons like deficient teaching and environmental factors listed as having key influences on school issues.

By reviewing the Swedish special education system (see Chapter 2), it becomes clear that within the Swedish profession, a regressive trend towards the medical-biological perspective on disability has already been triggered a few times during history. Accordingly, to counteract such tendencies, special education teacher training was at one point even discontinued. However, it was reinstated again after some years at the request of the SEs themselves. With regard to the least significant reasons mentioned above, there is agreement between the two countries. Overall, nearly all reasons listed receive the value label 'important' as an explanation for school problems.

The responses to the last question in this section showed more divergent opinions when both groups of SEs were asked to rate the importance of an official diagnosis in order to develop appropriate support for dealing with the child. Almost all Germans agreed that a diagnosis should be conducted while the Swedish side remained rather restrained about this, as can be seen in Figure 6.4. One way of interpreting this difference is that Sweden follows an anti-classification approach. Therefore, only very few children are classified as having special needs since an official diagnosis is not a prerequisite for the provision of resources or special support (Biermann & Powell, 2014). Instead, individual support is provided in every Swedish school regardless of diagnosis. Thus, the mere recognition of a child as 'different from others' without any formal diagnosis could be sufficient to secure additional resources and provide equal opportunities. However, in Germany those two key words (categorisation and differentiation) are still very current and significantly influence school practice. Firstly, since the exclusion rate in Germany remains
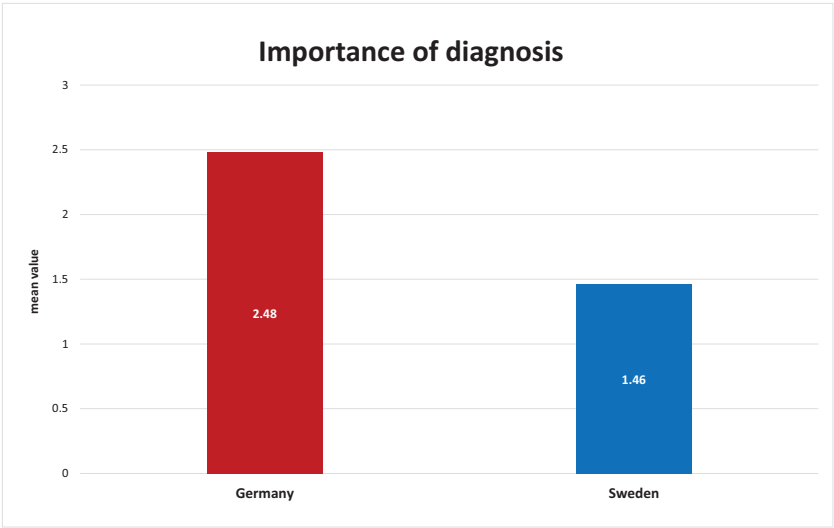
Figure 6.4: Importance of diagnosis for special support

stable, and secondly, because special education professionalism is still very much connected to a 'special/diagnosed' clientele and still exists in mainstream schools. Therefore, many SEs in Germany still view a diagnosis to be important and necessary. Quite logically, this can be traced back to the fact that the schooling in Germany is not yet properly adapted to meet the needs of students for whom, without a diagnosis, not much can be done for the individual with identified special needs.

Overall, the findings represent both the medical-biological and the relational perspectives when it comes to working with student difficulties. However, while the relational perspective from which students are seen seems to be in trouble rather than the trouble itself, it is still advocated in Sweden; overall, the medical-biological approach has gained quite a following in recent years. The previously identified tasks of Swedish SEs, such as individual and small group work (Wermke & Beck, 2025), and the findings of this study regarding their latest perception on school difficulties, highlight this trend. The special education profession in Germany, in contrast to Sweden, is still more permeated by the medical-biological perspective. Thus, a diagnosis is still considered very important by the majority of SEs. This trend regarding

the medical-biological perspective is also evident at levels of contextual factors of school inclusion as the findings of a recent study revealed (ibid.). The necessity of a diagnosis for the reception of special education assistance, the pupil-based funding, as well as the pupil-based deployment of the special education professionalism, are apt examples of this (ibid.). Nevertheless, it seems as if the relational perspective has gained in importance over the last few years. Accordingly, while in Sweden a rather regressive trend towards the medical-biological perspective can be observed, Germany tended to adapt a more relational perspective.

Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the German and Swedish special professions with regard to the frequency of certain responses within three central elements of professionalism – tasks, training, view of school problems – with the goal to revise the current state of special education professionalism.

Our findings have shown that, due to the diverse and complex tasks of action and perceived competences in special education, it is currently not possible to assume a single professionalism of special education across different countries (Graf, Proyer, Kremsner & Zahnd, 2015). Because where there is no standardised knowledge base, no standardised mission, there can also be no standardised professionalism (Grummt, 2019; Jossi, 2013). Consequently, it can be assumed that different national contexts produce different special education professionals, who respond to inclusive education's challenges in different ways. We will discuss this in further detail below.

In terms of tasks, both groups of SEs indicated working with a range of tasks that either fell within the scope of their traditional professional identity (special institution, client reference) and aligned with Reiser's (1998) first form of special education professionalism, or alternatively, with his second or third form (inclusion-oriented). Additionally, some tasks exhibited characteristics of a combination of these forms. As illustrated in Figure 6.5, German SEs demonstrated frequent engagement with all three forms of inclusive education, with varying degrees of involvement. The degree of involvement is indicated through colour (greater coloration indicates greater emphasis on pronunciation), whereas the most frequently addressed tasks can be attributed to the personalised-additive professionalism, as conceptualised by Reiser
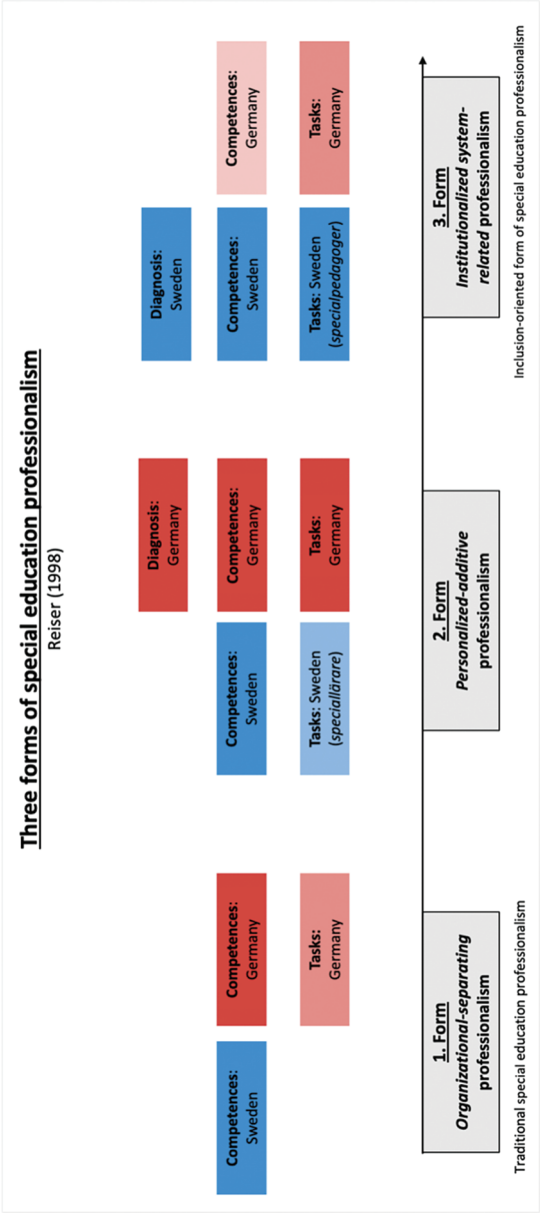
Figure 6.5: Forms of special education professionalism (Blue, positive gradual prerequisites for the professionalism; Red, negative gradual prerequisites for the professionalism)

(1998). In contrast to the German system, Swedish SEs are employed in either the second (special education teacher) or third form (special education pedagogue). The third form, which is oriented towards inclusion, as described by Reiser (1998), is the most prevalent in Sweden. This form of service operates on a systemic level and is not contingent on the specific system in place. It is primarily perceived as a service for the regular schoolteacher or general school, rather than as a system-related service.

These findings reflect the absence of a unified special education profession in both countries, as evidenced by other studies (Grummt, 2019; Labhart, 2019; Magnússon et al., 2019). However, when compared to each other, there is a greater discrepancy on the German side. This is a crucial point, as the existence of more distinct fields of work can facilitate the development of a more uniform professionalism, which in turn can contribute to the establishment of more consistent school inclusion (Wermke & Beck, 2025). Moreover, the aforementioned diversity of tasks can be perceived as a potential challenge for SEs practising inclusion, potentially testing their capacity. Nevertheless, although greater clarity regarding tasks may be beneficial for professionalism, as previously stated, overly defined roles may limit flexibility and responsiveness to individual school needs (Magnússon & Göransson, 2018). Consequently, authors such as Cole (2005) and Grummt (2019) express uncertainty about whether a more centralised mandate would benefit inclusive SEs. While institutional stability may be achieved, the individualised pedagogical focus may be diminished.

With regard to the preparation of students for professional practice, the special education training in Germany appears to equip students with a greater proficiency in the traditional, 'disability-related' professionalism (Rauh, 2016, p. 264) and a lesser degree of expertise in the domains of action and competencies associated with an inclusion-oriented professionalism (third form). Nevertheless, as Lindmeier (2016) observes, this emphasis on conventional responsibilities is not entirely misplaced, as inclusion-oriented special education continues to facilitate the development of specialised competencies. However, tasks identified by Reiser (1998) as comprising an inclusion-focused special education professionalism (institutional system-related service) did not resonate significantly with the German participants, as illustrated in Figure 6.5. It can thus be concluded that the German special education studies still prepare their future SEs in accordance with the

traditional self-image of special education professionalism, which is closely linked to special schools and their clientele. This results in a neglect of the integration of the required areas of inclusion. Even though some traditional special education courses of study are undergoing restructuring, the regular special education training programme continues to prepare its student body to become SEs at special schools. This approach appears to have omitted certain crucial areas that have become of paramount importance with the advent of school inclusion in mainstream schools.

Swedish SEs, on the other hand, felt well prepared across all tasks. Among them were those linked to either the traditional, personalised-additive service/professionalism of SEs, which Grummt (2019) identified as 'additional intervention methods' for school inclusion or those to the institutional-system-related service/professionalism of SEs like school development, consultation and training of general teachers. This is the case because, as already mentioned above, Sweden currently trains personnel for two different special education professions. The special education teacher represents the self-concept of the traditional/old special education, while the special education pedagogue works according to the self-concept of an inclusion-oriented special education profession. Consequently, it was to be assumed that by questioning both groups of Swedish SEs (special education teacher and special education pedagogue) it was to be expected that more, if not all, tasks would be covered since the two SE competencies have different qualifications.

In sum, it is evident that given the constrained special education resources in an increasingly inclusive school system, a significant expansion of additive support measures – such as resources for regular forms of team teaching in the form of an assistant teacher – is unlikely in the long term (Lütje-Klose & Neumann, 2018). Moreover, this approach would not be conducive to the development of inclusive school systems in and of itself (ibid.). However, as Lindmeier (2016) notes and the Swedish experience illustrates, while the focus on traditional tasks (working 'with' the child) is not entirely misplaced, as inclusion-centred special education still supports specialised skills, they should not represent the sole special education competence in school inclusion. Rather, areas such as consultation, school development, collaboration, the training of regular schoolteachers, and diagnostics, should be brought to the fore. This is exemplified by Wocken's (1996) assertion that the contemporary SE is more akin to an educational consultant, and at times, may not even

be considered a teacher (Lütje-Klose & Miller, 2016). Thus, Lütje-Klose's and Miller's (2016) understanding of the special education profession corresponds to Reiser's (1998) third and very inclusion-oriented form of special education professionalism, which assumes a more external advisory and supportive role of SEs in relation to the general teachers.

Reviewing our data, Swedish SEs seem to have undergone a transition from their previous role as advocates and teachers for specific children to a more multiparty approach, with an increasing focus on working 'for' the children, which becomes noticeable when reviewing their tasks but mainly their perceived competences. This withdrawal is significant according to several researchers, as it allows for the establishment of a new, supplementary role for the special education profession (Rauh, 2016; Grummt, 2019; Schildmann, 2015). Consequently, a novel approach to special education professionalism has emerged in Sweden, bearing clear resemblance to Reiser's (1998) third inclusion-oriented perspective on professionalism in special education while still upholding some tasks or competences regarding the more traditional special education professionalism. Consequently, the Sweden's current state of their special education profession can contribute to a possible redefinition of the special education profession more in line of a more inclusion-oriented special education professionalism.

Both types of Swedish SEs seem to be situated within the framework of inclusive education, more so as a supportive system assisting general pedagogy in addressing and overcoming crises within the system, given their placement within the general school and the absence of an independent subsystem (Rauh, 2016). This seems to be a crucial point, since issues related to inclusion are systemic in nature, they can only be resolved from within the same system. Consequently, SEs become active when crises – beyond the scope of everyday difficulties – arise. So, while specific interventions with the child retain their utility when facilitating the fulfilment of the needs of all learners (Hillenbrand et al., 2013), the findings of the study indicated that in Sweden there is a notable shift in emphasis towards tasks that focused on the prevention of exclusion for all children, school development, cooperation and consultation, and the provision of further training for regular schoolteachers (Hillenbrand et al., 2013; Lindmeier, 2016).

It may therefore be concluded that a systemic and subsidiary approach to special education, involving the recruitment of experts to provide specific

support for identified needs, will prove beneficial in ensuring the quality and enriching the outcomes of an inclusive education. Furthermore, it can be concluded that a minimum level of special educational knowledge or expertise must be retained, even with inclusion-oriented professionalism (Lindmeier, 2016).

Rauh (2016) identifies this as being based on the following observation: mainstream schools are not yet equipped to meet the demands of inclusion on their own, nor have their teachers attained the requisite level of professionalisation to do so (Rauh, 2016). Nevertheless, the Swedish approach is not without its flaws, as will become evident in subsequent chapters. While the theoretical position of the Swedish SEs is a systemic approach to addressing inclusion that aligns with Reiser's (1998) concept of advanced professionalism, in practice, inclusion practices are frequently constrained by hierarchical structures on the basis of the SEs. This prompts the question of whether, in the context of real-life inclusion, one profession should be subordinated to another. If the answer is no, what would contribute to an even more 'inclusion-oriented' professionalism?

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Appendix
Descriptive statistics

Table 1

Item	Sweden			Germany		
	N	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*	*N*	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*
Teaching students in small groups	469	1.99	.979	352	2.54	.918
Teaching students individually	468	2.00	.823	352	2.22	.896
Teaching the entire class	439	1.26	.585	352	2.70	1.093
Consulting general teachers	486	2.70	.821	352	2.34	.869
Consultation of other pedagogical staff (e.g., school assistances)	467	2.06	.861	352	2.14	.872
Cooperating with the headmaster	480	3.01	.819	352	2.63	.871
Working with school development	472	2.45	.918	352	2.27	.907
Cooperating with non-pedagogical staff (e.g., school psychologist, speech therapist)	479	3.20	.869	352	2.17	.751
Cooperation with lower-level school supervisory authorities	470	1.62	.808	352	1.85	.841
Drafting of special education support plans	481	2.94	0.935	352	2.88	.804

Table 2

Item	Sweden			Germany		
	N	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*	*N*	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*
Work with special needs students individually	505	2.89	.873	385	2.97	.765
Working with the entire class (school inclusion)	505	2.86	.882	385	2.12	.934
Helping and advising regular schoolteachers	514	2.99	.697	383	1.88	.857

(Continued)

Table 2 (*Continued*)

Item		Sweden			Germany	
Preparing special educational reports/support plans (IEP)	514	2.87	.815	383	2.54	.951
Work with school development	509	2.86	.799	381	1.78	.851
Teaching/training their regular teacher colleagues	514	2.95	.761	382	1.54	.798
Participate preventively in the development of school inclusion	512	2.99	.745	372	1.79	.848
Adapting as well as differentiating material and settings of learning	513	3.16	.693	379	2.99	.832
Collaborate with colleagues and parents in the case of pedagogical issues	510	2.86	.776	382	2.78	.848

Table 3

Item		Sweden			Germany	
	N	Mean (0–4)	SD	N	Mean (0–4)	SD
The content and goals of the school are too difficult for the students	505	2.90	.921	386	2.80	.749
Students have individual difficulties	515	3.61	.583	386	3.53	.525
The school organisation is not adjusted to the individual differences of the children	510	2.86	.742	386	3.55	.606
Children have difficulties in the home environment	513	3.07	.715	386	3.49	.536
Poor composition of school classes	511	3.01	.850	384	2.85	.784
Insufficient teaching of the general teachers	508	3.38	.702	385	3.13	.711

Table 4

Item	Sweden			Germany		
	N	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*	*N*	*Mean (0–4)*	*SD*
Importance diagnosis	519	1.46	.641	384	2.48	.621

Survey

This survey has (in certain adaptations) been employed in the studies, which are presented in Chapters 9 and 10. As described, among other places, in Chapter 4, it builds on a questionnaire developed by Kerstin Göransson's research group within the project *'speciella yrken'* (special professions) (Göransson et al., 2015). Gunnlaugur Magnússon has also been involved in this project and in the project presented in this volume.

The questionnaire has been adjusted to varying contextual particularities in time and space. Below, we present a somewhat generic English version.

Questions about employment

1. In which organisation have you been employed as of October 2021?
   - A special school
   - A primary school
   - A lower secondary school
   - An upper secondary school
   - A comprehensive school
   - Other

2. For how long have you worked as a SE?
   - Less than 1 year
   - Between 1–5 years
   - More than 6 years

3. Are you working in an inclusive school setting?
   - Yes, in a mainstream school
   - Yes, in cooperative organisational forms
   - No

4. If you don't work full-time in the field of school inclusion, where do you work?
   - In special education services
   - At a special school

5. To what extent do you work with given fields of work?
   Not at all – to some extent – to a large extent – to a very large part
   - Teaching students in small groups
   - Teaching students individually
   - Teaching the entire class
   - Consulting general teachers
   - Consultation of other pedagogical staff (e.g., school assistants)
   - Cooperating with the principal
   - Working with school development
   - Cooperating with non-pedagogical staff (e.g., school psychologist, speech therapist)
   - Cooperation with lower-level school supervisory authorities
   - Drafting of special education support plans

Questions on the special education training

6. Before your training …
   - I had already completed another pedagogical training (like teaching)
   - I had already completed a non-pedagogical training
   - I had already completed my school education
   - None of the above

7. How old were you when you started your special education training?
   - Between 18 and 25 years
   - Between 26 and 40 years
   - Older than 40 years

8. In which year did you finish your special education training?
   - Prior to 2000

- Between 2001 and 2015
- After 2015

9. How important have your fellow students been for your role as SE?
   - Not important
   - Not very important
   - Important
   - Very important

10. How important have your fellow students been for your special education competence?
    - Not important
    - Not very important
    - Important
    - Very important

11. After completing my studies, I felt well prepared to…
    Not true at all – A bit true – True – Very much true – I don't know/I can't remember
    - Work with special needs students individually
    - Work with the entire class (school inclusion)
    - Help and advise regular schoolteachers
    - Prepare special educational reports/support plans (IEPs)
    - Work with school development
    - Help with teaching/training regular teacher colleagues
    - Participate preventively in the development of school inclusion
    - Adapt as well as differentiate material and settings of learning
    - Collaborate with colleagues and parents in the case of pedagogical issues

12. To what extent did your training …
    Not at all – to a fairly low degree – to a fairly high degree – to a very high degree – I don't know/I can't remember
    - provide you with a scientific basis for your future tasks?
    - provide knowledge about the heterogeneity of learning groups?

13. To what extent did your studies prepare you for working with the following impairments?
    Not at all – to a fairly low degree – to a fairly high degree – to a very high degree – I don't know/I can't remember
    - Neuro-psychiatric conditions (e.g., ADHD, ADS, Autism)
    - Language impairments
    - Learning impairments
    - Concentration difficulties
    - Social and emotional impairments
    - Complicated living situation
    - Reading and spelling impairments (e.g., Dyslexia)
    - Mathematical impairments (e.g., Dyscalculia)
    - Other different individual difficulties

14. To what extent did your studies prepare you for working with the following tasks?
    Not at all – to a fairly low degree – to a fairly high degree – to a very high degree – I don't know/I can't remember
    - Working with special needs students individually
    - Working with the entire class (school inclusion)
    - Helping and advising regular schoolteachers
    - Preparing special educational reports/support plans (IEP)
    - Working with school development
    - Teaching/training regular teacher colleagues
    - Participating preventively in the development of school inclusion
    - Adapting as well as differentiating material and settings of learning
    - Collaborating with colleagues and parents in the case of pedagogical issues

15. In summary, how satisfied are you with the …
    Not at all – to a fairly low degree – to a fairly high degree – to a very high degree – I don't know/I can't remember
    - Content of the studies
    - Teaching methods of the studies
    - Focus on inclusion in the studies

Reasons for choosing to become a SE

16. How important were the following reasons for you when choosing to start a special education degree?
    Not important at all – unimportant – important – very important – I don't know/I can't remember
    - Interdisciplinary cooperating and consultation
    - Working with students in need individually
    - Working with small groups
    - Working with school development
    - Preventing school difficulties
    - Working with different and particular special needs students (e.g., ADHD; Autism)
    - Working in a team with other pedagogical staff
    - Wanting to help students in precarious situations
    - Teaching different and particular special needs students
    - Enhancing the social participation of students with special needs
    - I was inspired by other SEs
    - I suffered (school) difficulties myself
    - Someone in my personal background has experienced difficulties
    - I have a diagnosis myself
    - I thought it would be easy to find a job in this field of work
    - I wanted to further educate myself

How school problems arise

17. Before starting your studies, how serious did you think the following problems were for children/young people at school?
    Not important at all – unimportant – important – very important – I don't know/I can't remember
    - The content and goals of the school are too difficult for the students
    - Students have individual difficulties
    - The school organisation is not adjusted to the individual differences of the children
    - Children have difficulties in the home environment

- Poor composition of school classes
- Insufficient teaching of the general teachers

18. Having finished your studies, how serious do you think the following problems are for the children/young people at school?
Not important at all – unimportant – important – very important – I don't know/I can't remember
    - The content and goals of the school are too difficult for the students
    - Students have individual difficulties
    - The school organisation is not adjusted to the individual differences of the children
    - Children have difficulties in the home environment
    - Poor composition of school classes
    - Insufficient teaching of the general teachers

19. How important or unimportant is it for children to be diagnosed in order to get support?
    - Unimportant
    - Important
    - Very important

20. How would you rate your abilities in influencing teachers' views on children and young people's impairments and difficulties?
    - Very little
    - Little
    - Big
    - Very big

The role and function of schools in society

21. How important is school for achieving the following societal goals? School should …
Not important at all – unimportant – important – very important
    - Contribute to an equal society
    - Contribute to a higher level of education in society

- Contribute to the continuity and development of a cultural community of values
- Emphasise the freedom and responsibility of the individual

22. In your opinion, how important is it for schools to contribute to the following aspects?
Not important at all – unimportant – important – very important
   - The personal development of students
   - The development of students' knowledge
   - Taking responsibility for one's own learning
   - To foster the feeling of belonging to a group, safety and protection among students

23. I am …
   - Female
   - Male
   - Diverse
   - Not specified

24. What year were you born?

25. Would you like to emphasise anything else about special education and its relevance to your professional life, or do you have any other comments? Please comment below.