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The Work of Programme Managers in State-Funded Employer-Driven Swedish Higher VET

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Abstract

Context: Swedish Higher Vocational Education (HVE) is organised as state-funded programmes provisioned by both public and private education providers in close relation to employers. In HVE programme managers have responsibilities like those that often are vested in vocational teachers. They are responsible both for the day-to-day work of provision and the continuous development of the programme and its syllabi. This article presents a study investigating the work of programme managers, focusing on their work with creating and updating syllabi and on their work organising the students' training.

Methods: Five programme managers responsible for five diverse HVE programmes have been interviewed and the syllabi of these programmes have been examined. The analysis is based on a Bernsteinian theoretical perspective focusing on recontextualisation of knowledge for pedagogic discourse by different stakeholders as agents who have different basis for their actions. The study first establishes what knowledge make up the programmes to inform the understanding of what training the programme managers are tasked with organising, then examines how the programme managers take part in selecting knowledge for course syllabi, and how they organise the teaching of these syllabi in in their programmes.

Findings: The knowledge that has been recontextualised for pedagogic discourse in the studied programmes is most often vocationally specific or context bound in relation to a particular occupational field. The syllabi are related to clearly defined jobs. The findings highlight how practice thus in several ways may be difficult for programme managers without work

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experience in the relevant occupational field or knowledge in relation to it. Not only in the work of forming and updating curricula, but also as they must be able to navigate the relevant sector of business and industry to engage appropriate employers for collaborations and to hire teaching staff.

Conclusion: The findings presented in this article show that local autonomy allows for major differences regarding knowledge in syllabi and the organisation of learning between programmes within the same nationally organised VET system. This is salient even with a small number of programmes having been studied. This strongly support the importance of examining what happens in autonomous local contexts of VET provision and asking who has influence over publicly funded education in this sort of contexts, and on what these stakeholders base their actions.

Keywords: VET, Vocational Education and Training, Continuing Vocational Education and Training, Planning of Education and Training, Vocational Teachers, Education Industry Relationship

1 Introduction

The prevailing trend in contemporary VET policy and VET system reformation is strong market orientation and governments shaping systems with significant roles for employers (Avis, 2012). Also, there are more vocational pathways in higher education; two-year short-cycle higher education provisioned by universities, applied baccalaureates at community colleges, higher level and degree apprenticeships, or hybrid programmes combining vocational and academic education (e.g., Bathmaker, 2017; Bathmaker et al., 2018). International comparative analyses show that the trend is the same in higher VET as in VET in general (Bathmaker et al., 2018).

One extreme example of market orientation in higher VET is the Swedish system known as Higher Vocational Education (HVE) (Köpsén, 2020a, 2020b). HVE was implemented in 2009 and is organised as state-funded programmes provisioned by both public and private education providers in close relation to employers. In collaboration these actors conceptualise programmes and create local course syllabi. There is also no national regulation for qualifications of personnel in HVE. Common curricula and formal requirements of qualifications for teachers can offer insights into how training is realised in different educational systems. However, what make up syllabi and who works in the programmes are factors unknown in HVE, as it is not nationally regulated, and the previous research is very limited. Thus, we know little of the practices in provision of these state-funded employer-driven programmes.

However, in every HVE programme, one person according to national regulations (SFS 2009:130) has responsibilities like those that often are vested in vocational teachers. This person is responsible for the day-to-day work of programme provision with tasks such as planning and organising teaching, interacting with and supporting students, and collaborating with employers. They are also responsible for the continuous development of the programme and its syllabi. Thus, they are key figures in HVE. These persons are usually called programme manager. Their duties, and whether their positions as programme managers are full-time or part-time, however differ depending on the education provider they work for. There is also no regulation on the qualifications required of a programme manager, neither pedagogical nor vocational, leaving it up to the different education providers to judge what they deem as important competencies to carry these responsibilities.

This study investigates the work of programme managers, focusing on their work with creating and updating syllabi, and organising the students' training. In the study, programme managers have been interviewed and course syllabi of their programmes have been analysed. Three distinct research questions are posed; (1) What knowledge make up course syllabi for the HVE programmes? (2) How do the programme managers take part in selecting knowledge for course syllabi? and (3) How do the programme managers organise the realisation of course syllabi in their programmes?

The first question is posed as its answer guides the understanding of what the training in the studied programmes entail. To establish this is of significance because what make up VET syllabi is of importance to what the assignments of VET educators are. Whether the training in a VET programme is more general and aimed at a field of work or if its syllabi is specific for a certain and clearly defined job, or whether a programme is introductory or aim to give the students a complete training making them independently proficient in their trade, make for different tasks for the involved teachers and trainers (Grollmann, 2008). Policy have defined what knowledge is desirable in the Swedish system for higher VET – knowledge generated in the production of goods and services that is selected for syllabi by employers (Köpsén, 2020a) – but policy has also given the local contexts of programme provision great autonomy with much of the power allocated to the involved employers (Köpsén, 2020b). Thus, we do not know what knowledge make up the local syllabi of HVE programmes since there are no previous studies of this, and thus also not what training the programme managers in HVE are tasked with organising. Knowing this is central for the analysis of and discussion on their work and their roles in relation to other stakeholders. Hence the first research question of this study aims to establish an understanding of the knowledge in syllabi for the studied programmes.

2 Swedish Higher Vocational Education

HVE is strongly influenced by ideas of market relevance and employer influence (Köpsén, 2020a, 2020b). It is separate from academic and professional higher education and the creation of programmes are to be initiated locally by employers to meet their needs. Both public and private organisations provide HVE programmes, and they compete for the public funding. The limited number of programmes that receive funding are those where the provider demonstrates the highest level of hiring needs pledged by employers and the highest level of co-funding by locally involved businesses and industry (Köpsén, 2020b). Education providers are only granted funding for and permission to enrol the number of students that the pledged hiring needs indicate are necessary. This leads to a fast turnover in the programmes that are offered and short-term conditions for education providers to arrange provision of their programmes. The programmes vary in length from one semester to three years. They may be offered full-time or part-time, in a school or as distance learning and may include work-based learning in placements. Employers offer placements and supervisors for work-based learning and contribute through financial donations or by reducing the consulting fees charged by representatives of working life who take part in the programme as educators. The programmes offered in HVE are at levels 5 and 6 in the European Qualifications Framework. Programmes at level 6 must be at least two years and include at least 25% work-based learning. Around 70% of students finish their education and receive diplomas. A year after, over 90% of the graduating students are employed, circa 50% with an organisation where they undertook work-based learning as part of their programme.

A management board directs every HVE programme, and the education providers run their programmes according to instructions from the board. By regulation, employer representatives must constitute the majority on these boards (SFS 2009:130) and the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education advocates that the chair of the board is an employer representative (National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, 2011). Other members of the board are the programme manager, student representatives, a representative from the public school system and, where the programme provides an advanced diploma, a representative from a university.

The unique course syllabi defining the content and learning outcomes of each programme are initially conceptualised and outlined by locally involved employers and each education provider, and, if funding is granted, they are completed and established by the management board. The established syllabi are only submitted to the responsible national agency in the event of an audit, and they may be altered during the provision of a programme if the management board wish, and the student representatives approve.

3 Vocational Teachers and Vocational Knowledge

In HVE, the programme managers are the only personnel defined in legislation. The way regulation defines their role, they carry responsibilities like those of many vocational teachers in organising the day-to-day work in programme provision, collaborating with employers regarding for instance work-based learning but also by having responsibility for the continuous development of the programme and keeping its syllabi up to date and relevant to employers.

Vocational teacher training and requirements of vocational teachers are internationally divergent and differ between national systems (e.g., Misra, 2011; Papier, 2010). The differences may depend on the educational context or level, and they may be aligned with the type of responsibilities placed on the teachers (Grollmann, 2008; Tapani & Salonen, 2019; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2012). But also, discursive ideas of the teacher role play into how requirements are defined and regulated. The prevailing discourse on the role of vocational teachers in different contexts may have a determining influence (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2010). For instance, if it is believed that useful vocational learning can only happen in an authentic workplace, the role of teachers in school is different than if it is thought that vocational learning is also possible in an educational setting. And in the cases where integration of (theoretical) subjects into authentic practical work is a way of ensuring curriculum relevance (Hiim, 2017) didactical teaching competencies that focus on job-related education also in school-based training become important (Sylte, 2020). Not all VET is based on the same idea of what vocational knowledge is or of what is important to include in VET curricula. Systems may focus on practical skills of specific occupations or support a more holistic, knowledge-based idea of what vocational knowledge is (Brockmann et al., 2008).

However, there is broad consensus that what is specific about VET and thus the work of vocational teachers, in contrast to general or academic subjects and their teachers, is the relationship with work (e.g., Andersson et al., 2018; Fejes & Köpsén, 2014; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2010; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2012). This significant aspect of VET suggests that vocational teachers need up-to-date knowledge of practices in the field and that teachers and others involved in VET provision need networks with employers to facilitate training with high relevance to work. In a context where teachers had autonomy to create and realise work-related programmes, the teachers' selection of knowledge, and choices of teaching practices were found to vary relative to their own experience in the occupational field (Farnsworth & Higham, 2012). The selection of knowledge and organisation of training were aligned closely with work by those teachers who had previous experience. This was explained as them having accountability to a vocational community of practice to which they belonged. Research on vocational teachers in the Swedish context, in initial VET, describes their work as practices of boundary-work and the fostering of sociocultural identities for entry into vocational communities of practice (Andersson et al., 2018; Berner, 2010; Fejes & Köpsén, 2014; Köpsén, 2014). This is expressed as teachers translating the demands of occupations into

the training and aligning school and work practices by situating the school-based training within an imagined workplace and its social context (Berner, 2010), and as teachers conveying norms and traditions from a community of practice to students by figuratively bringing the world of work into school by telling stories and providing examples (Köpsén, 2014). The teachers' positions in relation to the field of work and their possibilities to exert agency have been put forward as significant specifically for work with curricular formation (Farnsworth & Higham, 2012; Priestley et al., 2012). It has also been argued that vocational teachers with responsibilities for curricular adaptation and development, like the responsibilities of HVE programme managers, need more holistic teacher training if they are to be well-equipped stakeholders in such processes (Grollmann, 2008; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2012).

Regarding HVE there is little research and the programme managers have not been its object. However, from a longitudinal study focusing on a group of Swedish higher VET students training for, and entering, emerging occupations in digital work it is possible to acquire a picture of how learning is organised in the programme that the students attend (Ye, 2018). Here, the school has made "efforts to move away from teacher-centric, test-based education" (p. 82) and the programme is realised in the form of real-life projects and the school organises "interactive sessions and workshops" (p. 82).

4 Theoretical and Analytical Concepts

The *what* and *how* of education are in the Bernsteinian theoretical framework defined as pedagogic discourses (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). The baseline of this study is that Swedish HVE is considered as a pedagogic device in which knowledge is recontextualised by agents into pedagogic discourse. The usefulness of this theoretical conceptualisation of education has been argued for both in general (e.g., Singh, 2002; Singh et al., 2013) and specifically related to VET (Wheelahan, 2005, 2015). Pedagogic discourses are defined by recontextualising agents in what are known as recontextualising fields of a pedagogic device (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). There are two types of fields where this occurs, i.e., where knowledge for curricula is selected by stakeholders. One is the official recontextualising field, which is regulated by the state through legislation and policy. But there are also pedagogic recontextualising fields, which are found in proximity to the provision of education. In the local pedagogic recontextualising fields of HVE programmes, the members of the management boards, including the programme managers, may be understood as recontextualising agents (Köpsén, 2020a). Recontextualising agents act based on their social positions, power, interests, traditions and history as well as on the basis of their knowledge (Bernstein, 2000). Considering programme managers as agents, this concept thus enables the analysis of programme managers basis for actions in recontextualisation and their position in relation to other stakeholders acting as agents in the pedagogic recontextualising fields of HVE. Rules of the pedagogic device, which

are ideological and reflect social order, regulate the processes of recontextualisation and the relationships of power and control in and between recontextualising fields, for instance the autonomy of pedagogic recontextualising fields but also the struggles over knowledge selection between agents in these fields. This theoretical framework, viewing HVE as a pedagogic device, enables the programme managers work focused on in this study to be understood as a specific part of a bigger picture. The model of the device positions the local dimension of work in programme provision in an analytical relation to the greater struggles of power in the official recontextualising fields in national policy.

To investigate the first research question of this study, i.e., what knowledge is selected for pedagogic discourse in pedagogic recontextualising fields of the investigated HVE programmes, the conceptualisation of knowledge realised as either horizontal or vertical discourse was used (Bernstein, 2000). These concepts enable interpretations of the knowledge in VET curricula as shown in previous studies of both initial and higher VET (e.g., Gamble, 2014, 2016; Nylund & Rosvall, 2016). Knowledge realised in horizontal discourse is segmented and context bound. It can be described as contextually specific sets of strategies or as a segmented repertoire of competences for different contexts and their practices. Vertical discourse, however, is characterised by its systemic organisation of coherent structures of symbolic meaning or by its specialised languages. It is the discourse of science and disciplines in which knowledge is organised as meanings that are hierarchically linked to one another. The meanings are neither segmented nor context-dependent, and this indirect relationship between meaning and the material base creates a (discursive) gap. This gap is what enables alternative relationships between the immaterial and the material, and it enables the potential of the unthinkable or the "yet to be thought" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 30). In contrast, the meanings of context-bound horizontal discourse are directly related to the material base and "have no reference outside that context" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 30).

A Bernsteinian analysis of the curriculum for Swedish initial VET shows that it is made up by knowledge that is segmented and strongly context bound with a focus on practical skills (Nylund & Rosvall, 2016). In the case of Australian VET, Wheelahan (2007, 2009) found the mandated model of curriculum – competency-based training – to result in "an impoverished education that disenfranchises students from access to the knowledge they need to participate in 'society's conversation' and in debates within their occupational field of practice" (2009, p. 227). In the South African case of TVET, Gamble (2014, 2016) use the framework to question "pedagogic presuppositions that directionality from sensory experience to abstraction posits the everyday life of the student as the foundation for the acquisition of complex, systematic knowledge" (2014, p. 56).

5 Method

In this study, five programme managers each responsible for one HVE programme were interviewed and course syllabi documents from these five programmes were examined. The data was analysed in a theoretical thematic analysis guided by the concepts presented in the previous section.

5.1 Data Selection

In total, 70 course syllabi have been studied. The syllabi cover both school-based and work-based learning and are established by the respective management board for each of the five programmes. The documents are all one or two pages each and formatted into sections of lists stating the main course content, learning outcomes, and grading criteria. The programme managers were interviewed in qualitative semi-structured interviews based on a thematically organised interview guide (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The interviews varied in length from 40 to 75 minutes. They were audio-recorded and pertinent parts transcribed. As mentioned, programme managers have significant positions in the practice of HVE programmes and can make meaningful contributions as they run the day-to-day work of the programme. All interviewees have been given written information and have been informed verbally of the purpose of the interview and of the voluntariness of their participation. All have given written consent.

The selection of programmes was done purposively to find programmes that could provide broad input through breadth in the range of studied contexts. In line with a multisite qualitative research approach these five programmes vary in key characteristics, described below. These characteristics are relevant to the theoretical framework but are also significant attributes of educational contexts in a broader sense. The selection of breadth in the range of studied contexts and the theoretical relevance of selection criteria aimed to enable both analytical extrapolation and recognition of patterns for readers, scientists as well as practitioners within (higher) VET provision (Firestone, 1993; Larsson, 2009).

One characteristic of theoretical relevance that was used to create diversity is field of study. Fields of study have different traditions and norms regarding e.g., how education is carried out, how its goals are formulated and what type of knowledge outcomes make up the curricula (Bernstein, 1990, 2000; Young, 2006). The programmes are classified as health and social work, as finance, administration, and sales, and as construction – fields with different traditions for knowledge transfer/education. Another characteristic which was considered is type of education provider. What type of organisation provide a programme impacts what agents are involved and on what bases they act in the pedagogic recontextualising fields. A public provider situated within a politically governed municipal organisation has considerations to make that are different than those of for instance a for-profit corporation where there

are other interests at play. The five investigated programmes are provisioned by three different types of education provider. The providers may be classified either as a private education corporation, a public adult education provider, or an organisation situated within Sweden's relatively extensive system of non-formal adult education. Yet another criterion was geographical. The programmes are in different regions of Sweden, and they are found in what can be described as different types of labour market contexts dependent on the size and location of the town/city they are in. The different labour market context situates the pedagogic recontextualising fields of the programmes in relation to different types of surrounding contexts. For instance, in a rural municipality it would not be surprising if the actors involved in a programme know each other well or have cooperation outside of the programme influencing their relations in the pedagogic recontextualising field. And in a larger city the supply of employers with whom a provider may cooperate is perhaps greater which also influence the power relations between actors. Two of the programmes in this study are aimed at the same occupation but provisioned by different types of education provider and are in different parts of Sweden.

In this article the programmes are labelled A-E. They are presented in the table below. Due to all programmes in HVE being unique, giving more details such as their names, the occupations they train for or the number of students, would disclose what programmes and programme managers are included in the study.

Table 1: The Programmes

	Field of Study	Length of Programme	Diploma Offered to Graduates	Work-based Learning	Type of Provider	Labour Market Context
A	Civil engineering and construction	400 credits 2 years	Advanced diploma	100 credits 20 weeks	Public adult education provider	Medium-sized town - at least 50 000 inhabitants
B	Finance, administration, and sales	400 credits 2 years	Advanced diploma	100 credits 20 weeks	Public adult education provider	Medium-sized town - at least 50 000 inhabitants
C	Finance, administration, and sales	400 credits 2 years	Diploma	120 credits 24 weeks	Private education corporation	Large city - at least 200 000 inhabitants
D	Healthcare and social work	400 credits 2 years	Advanced diploma/ Diploma*	115 credits 23 weeks	Public adult education provider	Medium-sized town - at least 50 000 inhabitants
E	Healthcare and social work	400 credits 2 years	Advanced diploma	120 credits 24 weeks	Non-formal adult education organisation	Rural municipality - less than 15 000 inhabitants

*Curriculum for one of two enrolled cohorts gives the students an Advanced Diploma whilst curriculum for the other cohort gives the students the lower-level degree, a Diploma in Higher Vocational Education

5.2 Data Analysis

Transcripts of the interviews with the programme managers and the course syllabi documents of their five HVE programmes were analysed in a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) guided by the concepts of the applied theoretical framework.

In a first analysis, analysis A, aiming to answer the first research question about what knowledge make up the programmes, initial coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of course syllabi and articulations in the interviews regarding knowledge were categorised according to the types of outcome to which the knowledge was linked. This resulted in codes called; have knowledge about, have theoretical understanding of, and be able to. While keeping the tags of their initial codes, the excerpts were then also even more explicitly thematically coded in relation to the conceptualisation of knowledge realised as either horizontal or vertical discourse. This resulted in four themes that were given the names; knowledge as abilities to 'do' and 'act', vocationally-specific factual knowledge, disciplinary and academic knowledge, and reflection and analytical thinking.

In a second analysis, analysis B, aiming to answer the two latter research questions the transcripts of the interviews were also coded to categorise the programme managers' relationships to the knowledge in their programmes. These codes were called; I can stand for them and ways of compensating. Themes were then created to recognise these codes theoretically as programme managers' positions and basis for action as agents in a pedagogic recontextualising field. These themes were named; acting on one owns experience and lacking experience but solving the task.

6 Findings

In the following I will first report on analysis A by presenting what knowledge have been selected for the programmes, i.e., what knowledge the interviewed programme managers are tasked with making sure their students will learn in their programmes. I will then present findings from analysis B. This will be done firstly in a presentation of programme managers work with the creation of course syllabi and secondly by a description of how the programme managers organise the realisation of syllabi in the school-based parts of the programmes.

6.1 Knowledge in the Programmes

The programmes include a broad variety of knowledge of how to 'do' and 'act' in specific occupational contexts, vocationally-specific factual knowledge, academic disciplinary knowledge and knowledge to analyse and reflect. Though, overall, the knowledge that has been recontextualised for pedagogic discourse is most often vocationally specific or context bound

in relation to a particular occupational field. Overall, the syllabi of the studied HVE programmes are specific and related to clearly defined jobs and not general in the sense of preparing students for work through generic or transferable skills. Thus, the task of programme managers is to organise training for these specific jobs by realising syllabi that are mostly vocationally specific and context bound.

6.1.1 Knowledge as Abilities to 'Do' and 'Act'

Learning outcomes are commonly stated as knowledge of how to 'do' and 'act' in specific practices and under given circumstances:

Be able to do transmission calculations for different types of building structures such as windows, walls and ceilings with different U-values. (Syllabus, programme A)

Encode main diagnoses and possible side diagnoses correctly from journal text. (Syllabus, programme B)

Form written and oral information from a clear message with a client focus for co-workers, bosses and the organisation. (Syllabus, programme C)

The above examples from course syllabi are clear instances of knowledge realised as horizontal discourse. These learning outcomes are contextually bound strategies or competences for specific contexts and their practices. This type of learning outcome does not infer knowledge that the students are meant to transfer from one task to another or into another occupational field. The outcomes are formulated in relation to specific tasks in the line of work that the students are training for. This type of knowledge is part of the knowledge in all the programmes examined, although to differing extents.

6.1.2 Vocationally-Specific Factual Knowledge

In all the programmes examined, there is also vocationally-specific factual knowledge. Course content and learning outcomes intended to build the students' knowledge of the context they are to work within and of the products or services they are to work with:

Know about the organisation of health care and how decisions are made and implemented,

has a general knowledge of the current pharmaceutical legislation and drug classification, and prescription management (Syllabus, programme B)

know of the various social actors/institutions involved around people with neuropsychiatric disabilities (Syllabus, programme D)

One part of the vocationally-specific factual knowledge, which is included in all of the programmes examined, is legislation and regulations in the occupational field. Knowledge of how to 'do' and 'act' and vocationally-specific factual knowledge make up the core of three of the five programmes examined. These programmes are in the fields of finance, administration and sales, and construction.

6.1.3 Disciplinary and Academic Knowledge

In two of the programmes investigated, the core is distinctly academic knowledge from different scientific disciplines. These are the two programmes that are targeted at the same occupation in the field of health and social work.

Much of the knowledge in these two programmes is knowledge that is not bound to a specific context or practice:

Sociology and social psychology are revisited, the more knowledge they have gained previously, the more there is to build on. (Programme manager E)

The excerpt above is a clear example of what can be characterised as vertical discourse. It is a clear example, not only because the programme manager uses the names of disciplines in social science, but also because they describe the knowledge as meanings that are hierarchically linked to one another, where students' acquisition builds on their previous knowledge and learning.

These two programmes, and one of the other programmes that also includes elements of disciplinary knowledge, have fewer stated learning outcomes relating to how to 'do' and 'act' than the other programmes examined. However, all programmes include disciplinary knowledge organised as vertical discourse to some extent, indicating that agents in the pedagogic recontextualising fields of all programmes investigated value this type of knowledge and deem it important to the vocational practices in their fields. Examples of this are courses named just like subjects in academic higher education, with titles such as Behavioural Science or Business Studies and learning outcomes formulated as knowledge and understanding of disciplinary frameworks and concepts:

After completing the course, the student must have knowledge of: Business studies concepts and its context. (Syllabus, programme C)

Vertical discourse of disciplinary knowledge such as an understanding of economic structures and theory enables students to question positions in their occupational field as it enables new perspectives and positions, the yet to be thought. In one case, the course syllabi even include declarations that the vertical discourse/disciplinary knowledge is intended to empower the students in their forthcoming work:

The aim of the course is to provide an understanding of the financial demands that is increasingly affecting [the occupational field], but also to give the power to change things through access to the language of economics. (Syllabus, programme B)

6.1.4 Reflection and Analytical Thinking

The programme managers of the two programmes with disciplinary knowledge as their core both emphasise that abilities such as analysing, reflecting, and drawing your own conclusions are important learning outcomes. In the other programmes, however, this type of knowledge is included only as grading criteria for the higher of the two passing grades. Having grading criteria for two passing grades is mandatory in HVE course syllabi and, students do not need to achieve learning outcomes in grading criteria for the higher grade to pass a course and receive their diploma at the end of the programme. This suggests that agents in the pedagogic recontextualising fields do not consider analysing, reflecting, and drawing your own conclusions to be necessary for practicing the occupation for which the training prepares.

However, reflective abilities may be interpreted as forming part of some learning outcomes formulated in terms of knowledge of how to 'do' and 'act', indicating that they are in fact necessary but are not articulated. In several instances in courses in all the programmes investigated, abilities to 'do' and 'act' indicate that the students would need to be able to make independent judgments. Many examples of these unarticulated abilities are related to selecting materials or methodologies in practice.

6.2 Programme Managers and the Creation of Course Syllabi

Creating and updating course syllabi is a task that all interviewed programme managers talk about as part of their professional role. However, how they describe their roles in this, indicate that it may be problematised how programme managers act in the processes of creating and updating course syllabi in HVE programmes. In the programmes examined, this study has shown that their actions in these processes differ in relation to their own experience in, and knowledge of, the occupational field. That is, their positions as agents in recontextualising processes differ depending on the knowledge relevant to their programme that they themselves have or do not have.

One of the interviewees has professional qualifications for the occupation that their programme prepares students for, over 30 years of experience in the field, and was involved in the creation of course syllabi for the programme they now manage. This programme manager articulates a conviction in the course syllabi as they harmonise with the programme manager's own practice-based ideas of what the students need to learn:

Yes, I feel I can stand for them [the syllabi]. If there's anything I question, I only have myself to blame. [programme manager laughs] In such a case it's just to get the management board to agree to a change. [...] But it is just that, that I, [...] that my programme is what I know. It makes me feel that I can argue my case from pretty firm foundations. Not many people say – "No you're wrong there!". I can argue my corner. (Programme manager D)

However, when someone does not have work experience from the field of practice, or knowledge relating to it, their part in creating course syllabi may not be based directly on such knowledge. Their work cannot be based on their own recognition of what is important in practice:

I can tell you, it was worse when I was going to start up [another programme] and write those course syllabi [...] I didn't know the field so I remember using Google. If there was a topic, I googled course literature with titles including that topic. And then I sat and I looked at the table of contents, "Okay, this stuff should probably be part of the course", but I really had no idea. I wrote it in the syllabus, I made it up, cut and pasted. (Programme manager B)

In this case, the programme manager is describing their part in the creation of course syllabi, for a new programme about to start shortly thereafter, as based on an ad hoc method. Not having relevant knowledge and experience as a basis for their actions, as in this case, does not relieve the programme managers of their roles as agents in recontextualisation. However, they base their actions on something different than the programme managers who have relevant knowledge and experience. In this case the programme manager acted on the basis of a focus on solving the task at hand. They continue:

And I had the management board. They had to adopt a course each; "Mike, this is your subject now! Here you go!" [programme manager showing how they handed out papers to several people] and they sort of said "What do we do now?". They had to help me to articulate it so that it looked a little bit better. (Programme manager B)

This process shows one way in which the members of a management board may be given great power and control over the formation of syllabi, i.e., over recontextualisation of knowledge for pedagogic discourse. In this case, the members are given great power in recontextualisation because of their own knowledge and the programme manager's lack thereof.

Another example that highlights an imbalance in power between the programme manager and members of the management board as agents in a recontextualising field is when one programme manager tells of an instance when a Europass Diploma Supplement document is to be created. This is a document written in English (a foreign language) based on the course syllabi of the programme and it describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees. In this case, the programme manager had to involve the management board in preparing the document as the manager himself lacked sufficient

understanding of the knowledge in the programme to be able to extract information from syllabi to put such a document together:

For instance, we are going to work on the Europass at the management board meeting. I find it really hard to know what's relevant. (Programme manager A)

Work experience in, and knowledge of, the occupational field and its practices differ, and thus the bases on which the programme managers act as agents in the recontextualisation of knowledge in their programmes differ. Lack of prior experience in the field may be viewed as problematic regarding the power relations between stakeholders in recontextualisation, i.e., when creating syllabi, or when organising for teaching as will be presented in the next section. A programme manager's basis for acting is limited if they have no practical experience and connection to the field thus giving other stakeholders than the providers greater relative power in the context of HVE programmes.

6.3 Programme Managers' Strategies in Realising the Course Syllabi

All interviewees explicitly describe their role as being responsible for delivering training in accordance with the course syllabi established by the management boards of their programmes. However, the way in which they organise the school-based parts of their programmes to achieve this differs. The programme managers use one of two main strategies; they either hire others to work as teachers and take responsibility for the courses, or they themselves teach and are responsible for some courses while also hiring others as teachers and experts to give lectures.

Everyone who have work experience in the field of practice to which their programme relates uses the latter strategy and teach on their programmes. One of them expressed that their background in the same sector of business and industry that the training prepared students to work in was a crucial element in the realisation of the programme:

I run around and know a little bit of everything, and I join it all up, and I tie up all the loose ends. But for the cutting-edge courses we have really competent teachers! [...] The more I work on the courses, the more I can understand and interpret. (Programme manager B)

This excerpt highlights how the programme manager uses their own knowledge and experience for teaching on the programme alongside others working as teachers and expert lecturers. The programme manager is organising a cohesive programme, i.e., recontextualising knowledge for pedagogic discourse, using their own possibilities to teach. The programme manager's own work experience in the occupational field enables them to be the one who, through their organising and teaching, make the contributions of for instance expert lecturers' part of a cohesive course and programme. Expert lecturers are often people coming direct

from the field of practice working for an organisation that is represented on the management board.

Another programme manager with experience also emphasises the cohesiveness – they articulate this, for instance, regarding the development of students as professionals:

"Who am I as a professional in this occupation?" - That's what I'm trying to keep an eye on. I try to make sure that they get to know... that they get to work to develop themselves in a reasonable way [...] and that they can use it in their future work, that's my job to make sure. (Programme manager D)

This programme manager views it as their job to develop the students as professionals throughout the training. And in that, the programme manager articulates, they are very much reliant on their own vast experience from practice. They however also emphasise their responsibility to hire others to teach:

[...] to make sure that we get people to come here who can offer them growth and development in this respect. That's my job. (Programme manager D)

In this, the two strategies overlap. All interviewees hire or contract others to teach in their programmes to some extent, and as there are no regulations stipulating who is qualified to teach in HVE, the programme managers' own ideas of the right background and qualifications for a teacher on their programme may determine who they choose to hire:

When I started this job, I thought: "I'm going to have the best experts on everything, the sharpest in each profession", none of these, you know, professors who have no connection to reality. [...] But it didn't always turn out very well. (Programme manager C)

This programme manager favoured teachers coming directly from production in business and industry but had come to recognise the difficulty for these teachers of adapting their teaching and training to the level of knowledge of the students.

7 Discussion

This study has investigated the work of programme managers, focusing on their work with creating and updating syllabi and on their work organising the students' training. Syllabi for the studied programmes entail knowledge that is vocationally specific, and context bound thus giving programme managers the task to organise training for specific jobs. In line with the idea in policy (Köpsén, 2020b), the studied HVE programmes aim at providing a complete training making students independently proficient in their trade. The findings from this study highlight how practice in several ways may be difficult for programme managers without work experience in the relevant occupational field or knowledge in relation to it. Not

only in the work of forming and updating curricula, but also as they must be able to navigate the relevant sector of business and industry to engage appropriate employers for collaborations and to hire teaching staff. With no institutional regulations on teacher qualifications to fall back on, responsibility for evaluating what knowledge is needed to be hired as a teacher and assessing teachers' competences instead falls within the responsibilities of these programme managers.

In the contexts of HVE provision, teachers are considered legitimate if coming directly from the context of work. None of the programme managers talk about formal teaching qualifications as important if it's even mentioned. This conception of teachers in HVE could likely be explained as a discourse on HVE teachers formed in relation to policy defining knowledge for HVE as being legitimate only if coming directly from the production of goods and services (Köpsén, 2020a) and not requiring teachers to have teaching qualifications. However, ranking other aspects higher than teaching qualifications is not unique to the context of this study. Relevant and up to date vocational skills or role modelling are commonly valued (Fejes & Köpsén, 2014; Grollmann, 2008; Köpsén, 2014; Misra, 2011). Relevant vocational knowledge and relationships with the field are significant in teaching vocationally-specific knowledge, as in the case of HVE. And teaching qualifications are also important as they may strengthen the quality of training (Andersson et al., 2018; Fejes & Köpsén, 2014; Grollmann, 2008; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2010; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2012). Both vocational knowledge and teaching competencies in HVE programme managers and teaching staff would benefit HVE students' learning. Not only the learning of knowledge specifically stated in syllabi but also their overall development of vocational identities (Köpsén, 2014). Teachers with double competences as both workers and teachers can teach up-to-date practices, guide students in relation to normative roles in the occupational fields and serve as role models (Andersson et al., 2018; Fejes & Köpsén, 2014). Programme managers with these profiles would support HVE as cohesive programmes that achieve their purpose – to provide employers with work-ready students (Köpsén, 2020b). In HVE neither of these competences are guaranteed. Also, programme managers and teaching staff having teaching competencies and vocational knowledge could safeguard the presence, and relative power, of recontextualising agents in HVE with different vantage points than the employers. Having a multitude of stakeholders with power in recontextualisation could give space for a more pluralistic view on the purpose of education.

Looking at the Swedish system of vocational higher education as an example of the many internationally emerging VET systems with strong employer influence, and lesser public or national control, one important observation in this study is that the choice of teachers and the type of knowledge that is recontextualised for pedagogic discourse differ greatly between the locally conceptualised and managed programmes. Also, Ye's (2018) study set within an HVE context indicates yet another way of organising teaching. The differences

between programmes are important as they show that the pedagogic recontextualising fields of Swedish HVE enjoy great autonomy from the official recontextualising field. In the official recontextualising field, the knowledge to be selected for curricula in HVE programmes has been defined as knowledge generated in the production of goods and services (Köpsén, 2020a), yet the programmes studied show instances of knowledge varying between both production-based knowledge and disciplinary academic knowledge. Within the variations, the autonomous pedagogic recontextualising fields are thus both parallel and in opposition with the official recontextualising field (Bernstein, 2000). They are parallel when selecting knowledge for the programmes that has been generated in the production of goods and services – context-dependent knowledge in horizontal discourse – and in opposition when selecting knowledge based on science and research – vertical discourse of disciplines. In line with the trend of market relevance and employer influence in VET the local contexts of HVE programmes were given autonomy to ensure that the Swedish higher VET system delivers what employers need to be competitive (Köpsén, 2020a, 2020b). As shown by the findings presented in this article, the local autonomy of skill formation systems based on this logic, allows for major differences regarding knowledge in syllabi and the organisation of learning between programmes within the same national higher VET system. This is salient even with a small number of programmes having been studied. I suggest that these differences strongly support the importance of examining what happens in more autonomous local contexts of VET provision, especially those which are state funded. Who has influence over publicly funded education in these contexts, and on what do these stakeholders base their actions? This is crucial as stakeholders' actions and relative power have great significance on the training of students and the outcomes of taking part in a VET programme, both the vocational proficiency or employability outcomes and those outcomes which are more of societal positioning aspects linked to education.

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