Exploring the Roles of Social Work Professions to Enhance Student Well-being in a Danish Formal Primary/lower Secondary School Setting

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction

School social work or social work services in schools have been a profession which has had various roles and definitions according to context and time in history (Richard and Villarreal Sosa, 2014). Though some social problems are common worldwide, there are many that are highly contextual. Development of social work services in school settings are not possible to discuss without exploring the roles of schools and education throughout history (Chui, 2013). Therefore, it is high time to re-examine the roles of education, schools and how as a social work profession, can ensure the well-being and development of children/youths (Allen-Meares, 1994).

Education does not equate to schooling because there is much more that goes on in schools other than education and there is also much of education that takes place outside of school (McCowan, 2010). As McCowan argues, "school can fulfil the right to education, but it is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for its fulfilment" (2010, 514). Germain also furthers this point by stating that schools are not able to serve equal opportunity neither to create an equitable environment on their own, as introduced by Allen-Meares (1994). However, as introduction to compulsory attendance to school emerges in various parts of the world throughout history (Allen-Meares, 1987; Chui, 2013; Huxtable, 2013; Miyanohara, 2018), and as international attention towards rights to education grows (UN, 1948; OHCRC, 1989; Lee, 2013; McCowan, 2010), schools inevitably must play a vital role in education as well as supporting the development and well-beings of the students (Allen-Meares, 1987; Huxtable, 2013; Miyanohara, 2018). Because schools hold an important role in society with the capacity and resources to influence a big population, it is crucial to reflect on the benefits as well as the negative assets of schooling such as domination, oppression, indoctrination (Freire, 2000; McCowan, 2010) and "mere qualification learning" (Dore, 1976, xi).

The world now faces an educational crisis (UNICEF, 2021). As one of the major stakeholders in providing education and ensuring the well-being of children/youths, contemporary formal primary/lower secondary schools across the world are trying to

respond to these diverse and complexly intertwined social problems (Allen-Meares, 1987, Chui, 2013; Huxtable, 2013). School social work (SSW) or social work services in school settings have developed in response to these social problems and the children/youths' needs, where many started as "attendance officers" (Huxtable, 2013, 6) whose major role was to check and work towards increasing student attendance (Chui, 2013; Huxtable, 2013; Allen-Meares, 1987; 1994; Kumar, 2017; Miyanohara, 2018). Extensive research around the world has proven that social work services in schools promote well-being of students as well as teachers, families and communities surrounding the school (Allen-Meares, 1987; 1994, Chui, 2013, Huxtable, 2013, Kumar, 2017).

Children and youths' experience on schooling is influenced by multi-layers of factors (Huxtable, 2013; Taylor, 2000) from international, "political and ideological" (Taylor, 2000, 26), school structural, familial and to personal layers (Huxtable, 2013). Some of the factors which have great impacts on a child's life are war, displacement, immigration, violence in society, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, divorce, unemployment, poverty, youth pregnancy, poor resources for children/youths with various sexual orientations, discrimination, gender inequalities, inadequate housing conditions, malnutrition, disabilities and many more (Huxtable, 2013; Kumar, 2017; Taylor, 2000; UNICEF, 2021; Villarreal Sosa, 2019).

This research will first look through the brief history of formal schooling from the perspective of roles of education and formal schooling to provide the context of this research. The next section will discuss how student well-being is defined in the existing literatures and what it means in this research. Section which follows will mention school social work practices in different parts of the world. This part will not be a comparative analysis, but rather an explorative one that investigates the emergence and development of school social work in Germany, Taiwan and Malta. Germany was chosen due to the similar tradition as in Denmark for social pedagogues in school settings and for development of school social work (Wulfers, 2002). Taiwan was chosen for its school social work development being repeatedly disrupted due to fund cuts which some Danish municipalities also face (Liu, 2013). Taiwan also developed three patterns of school social

work implementation (Liu, 2013), which helped illuminate each model's strength and weaknesses. Malta was chosen for its historical development in school social work involving many other professionals in the community and the focus towards advocacy for social change (Pace, 2002). The historical context and the current trends of school social work developed in Denmark will also be discussed shortly.

This research will focus on the roles of social work professions in a formal school setting. Although for this research, social work professions are broadly defined compared to that of a 'traditional' school social worker, data collected through the research will be used to illustrate the necessary roles in schools to enhance student well-being.

Chapter 1 Problematic

Schools hold an important role in education and child development worldwide. (Allen-Meares, 1987; 1994; Huxtable, 2013; Kumar, 2017). With the ever-changing environment of the world today, schools and students who attend schools face myriads of social challenges (Allen-Meares, 1987, 1994; Chui, 2013; Huxtable, 2013; Taylor, 2000). Social work services in schools have developed in response to these social problems and needs of the students (Huxtable, 2013; Huxtable and Blyth, 2002). Numerous previous researches show that social work services in schools are effective (Allen-Meares, 1987; 1994; Chui, 2013; Huxtable; 2013; Kelly, 2008). In Denmark, social work services in schools vary enormously according to municipalities. In Aalborg Municipality, Social workers which the schools collaborate with are working in the municipalities under the Family Group from the Department of Family and Employment, or the Special Group from the Department of Care for the Elderly and Disabled (Aalborg Kommune The Mayor's Department, 2020). When the children/youths have a disability which fits the criteria of the target group determined by the law, the school will be collaborating with social workers from the Special Group (Aalborg Kommune, 2021d; Gopeechan, 2020). Social problems not related to disabilities are taken up by the Family Group in the municipality. Therefore, as the school often mentioned during the research, the main collaborator for the school is the Family Group in the municipality. In addition to these two groups, under the Department of Education in Aalborg Municipality, there is a Pedagogical Psychological Counselling Team called the PPR (Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning) which is a multidisciplinary team consisting of "psychologists, special education consultants, social workers, speech educators, physiotherapists and occupational therapists" (Aalborg Kommune, 2021c). This team takes on cases from all the schools in the municipality which is 48 public schools and 4 special schools (Aalborg Kommune Department of Education, 2021). Schools can refer cases to this team or the social workers in the municipality for consultation, guidance, counselling services or assessment (Aalborg Kommune, 2021c). Although the school utilizes the PPR and the social work services within the municipality, the experiences of the teachers, social pedagogues and the well-being person shed light to some of the fundamental structural, political problems in the way municipal organizations are organized.

Aalborg Municipality had a trial project on implementing social workers in school and in day care facilities (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). The project started in mid 2015 and lasted until 2017. Two social workers were affiliated with day carecentres in Tornhøj, Smedegården,"Lindholm/Løvvangen" and "Nørresundby/Nr. Uttrup" (Aalborg Kommune, 2017) These two social workers belonged to Family Group North. Two other social workers were assigned to five schools: Mellervang School, Filstedvejen's School, Herningvejen's School, Seminarie School and Farstrup School (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). They belonged to Family Group East (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). It has been evaluated that social workers placed in schools and daycare services have a positive effect and that the scheme should be made permanent (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). There are several schools which already have assigned school social workers (Mellervangskolen, 2021). However, current situation shows that not all schools have school social workers in place in Aalborg Municipality yet. This brought the researcher to focus on how formal primary/lower secondary schools in Aalborg are holding up student well-being. Because social work services are not yet an integrated part of a school setting in Aalborg in general and in the field of study in particular, this research will take a stance in exploring the existing interventions and roles of the actors in school (social pedagogues and well-being persons) on enhancing student well-being. Therefore, social work professions in this research refer to those who have graduated from a university college with a social work degree (socialrådgiver), social pedagogues with a three and a half years qualification of professional bachelor's (BUPL, 2006) and those with a degree of special pedagogy (specialpædagogik) diploma (Ministry of Child and Education (MCE), 2021). In some of the European countries for example Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain, the tradition of social pedagogues has had an influence on school social work as both professions share many similarities (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002). In Germany, Poland, Latvia, and in Hungary, social pedagogy and social work has been blended over the years sharing similar trainings and courses (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002). However, Finland for example distinguishes between social workers and social pedagogues. In a Danish primary-lower secondary school context, it was more relevant to include the social pedagogues within a social work profession. It is because the definition of school social work itself is not clearly defined and the roles of school

social workers described in the previous researched overlap with the roles that the social pedagogues have in the Danish school context. In addition, the social pedagogue education entrails modules such as counselling, intervention and well-being which gives the profession a role in the field similarly described to that of a school social worker. Therefore, although in the IFSW, the trade union of social workers are included while trade unions for social pedagogues are not (IFSW, 2021a), this research will use the term social work profession including the social pedagogues. By framing these two actors as the social work professions, this paper attempts to challenge the roles and definitions of school social work.

Chapter 2 Research Question and Objectives

The overarching research question for this paper is "what are the roles of social work professions in Danish formal primary/lower secondary schools to enhance student well-being?" The research will first investigate the empirical understanding of student well-being and the influencing factors towards it. Secondly, interventions in place to enhance student well-being will be discussed. Lastly, the scope for a broader definition of school social work will be explored.

The main research question was dissected into three sub questions:

1. What are the influencing factors on student well-being?

2. What are the existing services/interventions by the social work professions to enhance student well-being?

3. What is the impact of the findings in relation to a broader definition of school social work?

The first sub question will help the research to illustrate the influencing factors on student well-being as well as the empirical definition on student well-being.

The second sub question will explore the interventions used by the social work professions to enhance student well-being.

Through the data collection, the nature of the problem in the field has become clearer that there is more to the phenomena the research originally set to search for. Therefore, a third sub question was developed through the course of the research to incorporate the findings from the data. The third sub question attempts to investigate the scope for a broader definition of school social work.

This research will explore the roles of social work professions within a field where social workers are not an integral part of the system, therefore framing the term as the 'social work professions.' The overall objective of this research is to investigate how student well-being is enhanced in a school setting where social workers are not present, in an attempt to explore the scope for a broadening definition of school social work.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section discusses about the roles of education and formal schooling. The second section illustrates the student well-being in schools and a well-being model of students in school (WBMSIS), a model used to analyse empirical data. The third section introduces the development of school social work practices in Germany, Taiwan and Malta to highlight how the roles of school social work have evolved over time and in various contexts. The last section is dedicated to the brief history of school social work practice in Denmark and its contemporary trends. This chapter intends to give a theoretical framework for the research.

3-1 Roles of Education and Formal Schooling

The right to education was declared as a human right in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the UN in 1948 (1948) and later enshrined as a right in the internationally legally-binding treaty, Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in 1989 (OHCHR, 1989). As more attention was given to the right to education through numbers of declarations, conventions, treaties, frameworks, such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)/Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) and numerous international/local, private/governmental initiatives, numerically, progress in enrolment and literacy rate among youth was achieved (McCowan, 2010; UNESCO, 2010; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). However, according to UNICEF, "an estimated 617 million children and adolescents around the world are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, even though two thirds of them are in school (2021)." As the world faces an educational crisis, it is critical to re-examine what right to education entails, meanings of education and the roles of formal schools (Lee, 2013; McCowan, 2010).

Rights come with obligations. The government's obligation to ensure the right to education is defined as the 4As "availability," "accessibility," "acceptability" and "adaptability" by Tomaševski (2009). Availability entails that students have access to free

education, sufficient resources for adequate education and learning environment (Allen-Meares and Montgomery, 2014; Mechiorre and Atkins, 2011). Accessibility refers to abolishing of any form of discrimination towards access to education including economical and physical barriers (Tomaševski, 2009). Acceptability refers to the teaching materials and methods for education to be culturally relevant and appropriate (Mechiorre and Atkins, 2011). Adaptability includes education to be revised to meet the students' needs, interests and abilities (Mechiorre and Atkins, 2011). 4as could be used as an evaluation factor for the school to ensure they are meeting the children's right to education. McCowan defines the right to education as follows:

> *The right to engage in educational processes that are both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable, and that embody respect for human rights.*
> *The right of access to educational institutions and experiences that confer positional advantage.* (2010, 521)

The phrase "right to education" has become commodified and are not often discussed in depth of what it actually entrails. Therefore, when looking at the roles of education and schools, it is inevitable to dig into what rights to education means.

Education is a hugely complex matter (Lee, 2013; McCowan, 2010). It is because education can be attained in multiple forms, for example from apprenticeship, families, volunteering, travelling, discussion with friends and so on. Secondly, education is a process as well as a tool for future endeavours. Thirdly, what students actually learn does not equate to what they have been presented with (McCowan, 2010). As Hart introduces, roles of education "are wide-ranging from social control and serving the needs of industry to knowledge transmission and human flourishing" (2014, 19). Freire introduces the purpose for education as a "practice of freedom" (2000, 81). He continues by defining liberation and what it looks like in education:

> *Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.*
> *Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information.* (Freire, 2000, 79)

According to Freire, liberation can truly come when the structure is changed and the oppressed, in a school context: students, become "beings for themselves" (2000,74). He implies that structural change is necessary in exercising true education in the current schooling system because it is now a tool for domination through the "banking approach" of education (Freire, 2000, 74).

As stated in the introduction, education does not equate to schooling (McCowan, 2010), but in the contemporary society, schools are used as the main institution to carry out this activity. Thus, schools inevitably become a complex institution carrying out these complex activities with multiple actors in place. A purpose of formal schooling in the context of primary level, is to obtain basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to gain "access to key functionings in the society" (McCowan, 2010, 514). As much as formal schooling had its benefits, the harms schooling had done to its students cannot be negated, such as oppression, abuse, infringements of cultural rights of people from indigenous and ethnic minority groups, authoritarianism and so on (Freire, 2000; McCowan, 2010) Now, current schooling system inclines towards credentialism due to global economic influences on the labour market (Dore, 1997; Lowe, 2000). Outcome-based assessment and the escalation of credentialism is now causing another upsurge on the students' well-being (Dore, 1997; Lowe, 2000; McCowan, 2010).

In order to understand the context of where social work professions work and what they are entitled to uphold complying with the social work values (IFSW, 2021), it was crucial to resurrect the discussion on what is education and what are the roles of schooling.

3-2 Student Well-being in Schools

Student well-being in schools have been a topic discussed widely and its importance has been acknowledged internationally (Ben-Arieh and Frønes, 2011; Soutter et al., 2014). However, measurements and definitions of student well-being have been an open-ended discussion. As Nevo states, introduced by Konu and Rimpelä, life in school is very complex (2002). In this complexity, student well-being in school also is influenced by multiple factors in various layers. This research will utilize the well-being model for students in school (WBMSIS) adapted from the "school well-being model" (SWBM)

introduced by Konu and Rimpelä (2002, 83) (see Appendix 2), which is rooted in Allardt's sociological theory of "welfare" which he refers to as "the state of need-satisfaction in a national population" (Allardt, 1976, 227). This WBMSIS is also inspired by Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory (1977) and Brim's "macro-structural influence" (1975, 1) when illustrating the broader influencing factors on student well-being as seen in Figure 1.
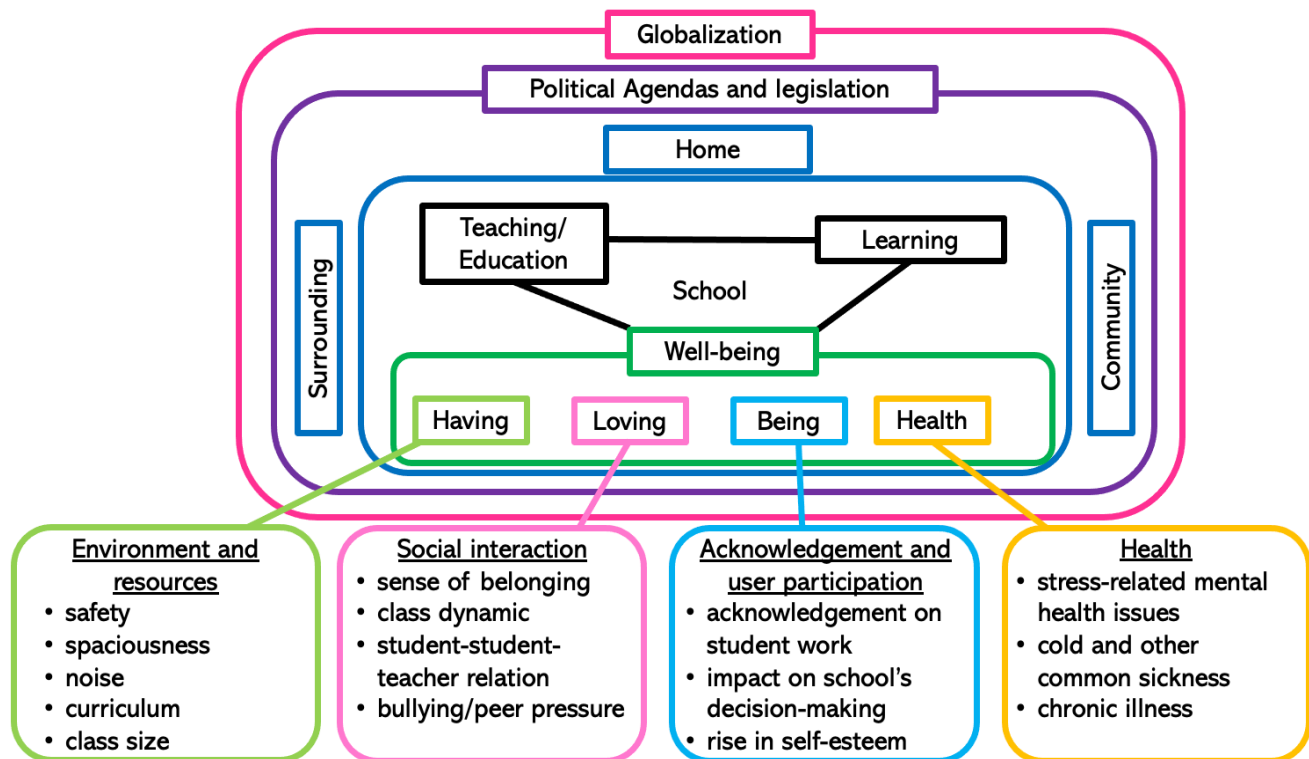
Figure 2: Well-being model of students in school (WBMSIS) adapted from "School Well-being Model" (SWBM) by Konu and Rimpelä (2002, 83)

The SWBM is made from a student perspective (Konu and Rimpelä, 2002). Its key aspect is that both teaching/education and learning have influence over all the elements of well-being (Konu and Rimpelä, 2002). As schools are an important institution for education, how students are taught and what they learn have a huge impact on their well-being. The surrounding community, home and the surroundings also affect the school and the students' life in it (Konu and Rimpelä, 2002). The original SWBM ends here, but because the political agendas and the influence of globalization cannot be ignored in this research,

the model was adapted to incorporate these two macro-perspectives. The political agendas and legislation were added because the data from the field informed the researcher how the practices in the field are governed by the political agendas and legislation. The global agenda becomes critical because globalisation of the economy and the country's development in the global context have had a huge impact on the relation between employment and education (Dore, 1997; Lowe, 2000). The elements described under the categories of "having," "loving," "being" and "health" have also been adapted to fit with the context of this research.

Environment and resources

Environment and resources are the "having" element by Allardt (1976). It includes physical structures of the school as well as the learning/teaching structures within the school. Physical structure refers to safety of the environment, spaciousness of the school grounds, noise and so on (Konu and Rimpelä, 2002). Learning/teaching structure refers to the class size, learning materials and so forth.

Social interaction

Social interaction refers to the "loving" component defined by Allardt (1976). It enshrines interactions experienced by the student within school which includes peer to peer interaction, student-teacher interaction, student-social work profession interaction and others. It also embraces the class dynamics and the friendship groups within the classes. The key aspect of this component is that it always involves interaction between persons (Allardt, 1976).

Acknowledgement and user participation

Allardt defined the third element as the "being" (1976). It implies the non-substitutability of an individual (Allardt, 1976). Therefore, important factors in this category are on how the students' values are acknowledged, the impact the student is making on school's decision-making, for example, curriculum and rise in self-esteem.

Health

According to Allardt, this last element of health is nested under the first category of "having" (1976). However, because health is a state of an individual (Konu and Rimpelä, 2002) affected by the other elements of well-being and other external resources, this category was separately placed within well-being. It includes mental health issues caused from stress, chronic illnesses and other symptoms both physical and mental.

Within the community, social work services in the municipality will be included.

Another important factor for this framework is that when discussing about the four needs/elements of "having," "loving," "being" and "health," it equates to discussing about "equality-inequality" (Allardt, 1976, 231). Therefore, it is inevitable to include the macro-structural systems into this well-being model because the global and societal inequalities have a huge impact on the well-beings of an individual.

3-3: School Social Work Around the World

School social work (SSW) is considered as a specialized field within the social work profession (Villarreal Sosa et al., 2017; Kelly, 2008). According to Huxtable, there are SSWers in nearly 50 countries (2013). The development of the profession and the roles of SSWers in each country and region vary significantly (Chui, 2013; Huxtable and Blyth, 2002; Kelly, 2008). Chui states that it is actually very difficult to have a unified definition on what is school social work (2013). It is also a question whether it is necessary or even meaningful to have a unified definition of school social work. To answer this question is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is an important question to consider when challenging the roles of school social workers.

Since the development and history of school social work differs significantly according to countries, this section introduces the school social work development of four countries: Germany, Taiwan and Malta.

Germany

School social work in Germany has its roots from the 1970s when "social-pedagogical measures" were integrated into the secondary education institutions (Wulfers, 2002, 124). With strong tradition of social pedagogy already in place before social work came into school settings, school social work is regarded as an "extension of the work of social pedagogues in schools, adding elements of social work to provide a more complete service" (Wulfers, 2002, 124).

In German states, like Denmark, have a relatively high autonomy on education related affairs. Therefore, implementation, definition and role of school social workers varies from state to state (Wulfers, 2002). With definition and roles not clearly defined, there are occasions when there's a conflict between the teachers and the school social workers. For example, in cases where social workers were considered to be the crisis managers, critic towards the teachers and so forth (Wulfers, 2002). School social workers in Germany focus on involving public youth welfare services and organisations to respond in a holistic approach to enhancing children's well-being (Wulfers, 2002). Wulfers identifies the five main focuses of a school social worker in Germany which are:

- Prevention of behavioural issues in school
- Empowerment of children/youth in target groups
- Collaboration between youth welfare organisations
- Prioritisation of social work intervention together with school administration
- Sharing information on available communal resources with students and families (2002)

In Germany there is a successful example of school social work implementation in Wiesbaden introduced by Wulfers (2002). He addressed the key success criteria as guidelines being already set before the implementation. The six guidelines introduced were the following:

1. *Teachers and school social workers would work closely together on a daily basis.*

2. *School social workers were assigned to work with students in specific classes or age levels.*
3. *Students would participate on a voluntary basis.*
4. *School social workers would participate in developing programs for the entire school, such as all-day services and community use of the school building.*
5. *School social workers would link up with a network of social services for youth in the city.*
6. *School social workers would provide assistance for students with basic needs such as food, clothing, and emotional support* (Wulfers, 2002, 129).

Having a guideline has an advantage that the roles are transparent for all the actors in the community making multidisciplinary collaborations easier. Also, for the citizens and students in the municipality, it would be clearer what they can expect from a school social worker. The negative aspect of a guideline is that it limits the potential of that profession. It becomes a difficult balance to keep the transparency of the roles and the flexibility of them to adapt to the emerging social problems and needs. However, this project in Wiesbaden had succeeded in broadening the social pedagogical approaches by involving the community and embracing a more holistic aspect of children's lives (Wulfers, 2002). Wulfers also identifies that strengthening of the collaboration between child/youth welfare and school will enhance the well-being of children by opening the doors for alternative forms of education which would prevent the negative influences of the current model of schooling (2002).

Taiwan

School social work has been officially implemented in Taiwan in 1976 (Liu, 2013). It developed in response to help students adjust to schooling life since education is compulsory for students younger than sixteen (Liu, 2013). The two main focuses on intervention were on dropouts from high school and assistance for pupils with learning difficulties (Liu, 2013). Due to strict hiring policies for education institutions in Taiwan, social workers had been excluded from the education settings for a long time (Liu, 2013).

School social workers have suffered conflicts between traditional authoritarian ways of discipline in schools and upholding social work values, financial difficulties and recognition of the profession as an "add on" to the education system (Liu, 2013, 43). Since it is the local government's decision to implement school social work, not many cities have school social workers (Liu, 2013).

There are three major models of school social work implementation categorised by Wang and Lin, introduced by Liu (2013). Each model has slightly different focuses, strengths and setbacks. The first model is when a school social worker is employed by the individual schools and are an integral part of the school staff. The main roles for the school social worker in this model are helping students with learning or other social/ personal challenges, consultation services towards teachers, parents, and administration staff, counselling services, influencing school decision making and connecting to other social services (Wang and Lin, 2004).

The second model is when the school social workers are employed in the non-governmental organizations in contract with the government. School social workers are affiliated to several communities and the schools within the same geographic area (Wang and Lin, 2004). Since the financial cuts in 2002, schools refer to these school social workers in the 'outside' agencies (Wang and Lin, 2004). The main areas of focus are child protection cases, poverty and emotional support (Liu, 2013). From the school administration and teachers' perspective, this pattern causes less friction, but from the school social worker and student well-being point of view, this pattern limits the individualistic interventions, not being able to influence the school systems which could be the cause of the problem (Liu, 2013).

The third model is social workers employed by "alternative schools" (Liu, 2013, 44). Alternative schools are programs implemented by the private social service organisations in the local community. These schools receive economic support from the local government. Alternative school programs are available for pupils who have learning difficulties, have been involved with sex work or juvenile delinquency and so on (Wang

and Lin, 2004). The main role for the school social worker in this model to create assessment for at-risk students, work collaboratively with the teacher to create vocational-oriented curriculums and provide holistic interventions (Liu, 2013).

Due to the unclear professional identity of school social workers, they are in constant risk of financial cutbacks, dismantling the services and the professionalisation of school social workers (Liu, 2013).

Malta

When compulsory education was enforced in 1946 on children aged between 6-14 years old in Malta during the time of British colonisation, the role of an attendance officer was created (Pace, 2002). In 1974, with the introduction of the Education Act No. XXXIX, the role of an attendance officer developed into an "education welfare officer" which now is gradually evolving into the roles as school social workers (Pace, 2002, 164). Education welfare officers were given the name of social workers in 1993 when the government and the representatives of the union of social workers signed an official agreement (Pace, 2002). This was an important development for school social work and social work in general in Malta to raise awareness towards the profession (Pace, 2002). Since school absence is now considered to be a consequence of other issues, school social workers are proactively engaged in bringing changes to the ecological environment of the children: families, schools, communities and so on (Pace, 2002). Therefore, school social workers in Malta engage with a wide range of actors: the judicial authorities, police, "Employment and Training corporation," "Medical Association of Malta," community councils and so on (Pace, 2002, 166). Some of the roles that school social workers carry are home visits to students and families, assessment of the situation, consulting and guidance towards teachers, mediating between various professions, advocating for the students' and families' needs, to attend various board meetings within the Education Division, for example the "anti-bullying program," and many more (Pace, 2002, 169). One of the key factors is that school social workers in Malta have a focus on not only on the individuals but on the communities/society in their vision to bring social justice and social changes (Pace, 2002).

3-4: Emergence and Development of Social Work Professions in Schools in Denmark

In Denmark, school social work came into being in the 1960s (Andersson et al., 2002). Andersson et al. in the chapter of the book refers to the social workers in the municipal system who also had the responsibility of school social work (2002). Each municipality in Denmark is highly autonomous. Many of the municipalities have developed its own systems of school social work or social work services related to primary/lower secondary school. Possibly due to this reason, there is very few literature on the linear history and development of school social work in Denmark. Although all the school social workers (skolesocialrådgivere) are employed by the municipality (Andersson et al., 2002), in some municipalities, they are placed in schools, whereas in others, they are placed in the municipal systems (Aalborg Kommune, undated; Nielsen, 2019; Vejle, 2017).

School social workers in Denmark now have different names according to the municipality. Some are called as the advanced social workers (fremskudt socialrådgiver), social work counselors (socialfaglige rådgivere), preventive social worker (forebyggende socialrådgiver) and school social workers (skolesocialrådgiver) (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002; Nielsen, 2019; Ramlow, 2021; Vejle, 2017). Recently, there seems to be more emphasis towards prevention and early intervention in the social work services in Denmark in the recent years (Nielsen, 2019; Ramlow, 2021; Vejle,2017). For example, since school year 2020, Rudersdal Municipality has assigned preventive social workers and family therapists to all the schools and day care centres in the municipality. (Ramlow, 2021). Preventive function of a social worker is clearly stated in the law of social work education as follows:

> *The purpose of the Bachelor's Degree Programme in Social Work is to qualify the educated to perform tasks within social work. The educated must independently and across professions and sectors be able to contribute to preventing and solving social problems and to plan, coordinate, accomplish, evaluate, and develop social work efforts on the level of individuals, groups, organisations, and society within the public administration, including the areas*

of employment services, social services and […] the private area. (*Executive Order on education for a professional bachelor as a social worker*, 2011, s.1(1); Ringø et al., 2018, 164)

It could be said that it is a natural flow for the growing trend of preventive measures being implemented in many municipalities. However, there are some such as Municipality Y where the school social worker interviewed for the research is employed, due to fund cuts, from school year 2020-2021, school social workers who used to be grounded in schools and day care centres had been placed back in the municipal system. This might be due to the unclear definition of a school social worker and the different roles assigned to the school social worker in different municipalities. For example in Vejle, the social work counsellors have the main function as a consultant (Vejle, 2017). In Municipality Y, the roles of a school social worker was more therapeutic.

There is also a growing trend for interdisciplinary approached in response to the social problems (Andersson et al., 2002; Vejle, 2017). However, it is crucial to point out that the interventions are more responsive and oriented towards individualised social problems rather than working towards structural change, social justice and solidarity, which according to Ringø et al., is the influence from neoliberalism (2018).

Aalborg Municipality has a team called the PPR (Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning) under the Department of Prevention and Communities (Afdelingen for Forebyggelse & Fællesskaber) which is placed under the Department of Education described in the previous chapter. Some of the other municipalities such as Randers also have the PPR team. However, how the resources are mobilised seems to be different among municipalities. After two years of trial, Aalborg Municipality has decided to implement the school social work scheme, but it is still in the development that not all schools have school social workers placed in schools at the current moment (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). As described in this section, development, definition current intervention systems of school social work differ hugely according to municipalities.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

4-1 Overview

This research originally had been framed as a case study with the epistemology of social constructivism to explore how the dynamics of challenging behaviour, student well-being and peer support within a bounded system of a school institution are constructed and how social workers influence these dynamics (Kitaguchi, 2021). However, during the preliminary analysis of the first set of interviews, it has become evident that it was not possible to define the term challenging behaviour in this small-scale research since it involves complexly intertwined factors in multiple levels. Moreover, data informed that challenging behaviour was closely linked to intellectual disabilities in an educational setting, which showed consistency with previous findings (Emerson, 2001; Nag, 2020), informed the researcher to reframe the research question to explore the roles of social workers from multiple perspectives: social worker, social pedagogue and a well-being person (translated from a Danish word trivselsperson) in the school. Since the phenomenon of challenging behaviour and peer support which could not be separated from the context in a bounded system (Kitaguchi, 2021) no longer became the focus of the research, the research design was adapted. This research is framed as an exploratory research with an ethnographic approach under the qualitative research (Sanders et al., 2009). Exploratory research framework has been chosen for the reason that the actual "nature of the problem" was not clear at the start of this research (Sanders et al., 2009, 139). It was utilised to uncover the phenomena of how the social work professions in the school are enhancing the student well-being and bring to light a new perspective on the phenomena of study (Sanders et al., 2009).

4-2 Philosophy of Science

The research was originally taking a social constructivist approach to explore how the concept of challenging behaviour, student well-being and peer support were being constructed. However, through collection and reflection on the data sets, the research was adjusted to take a more interpretive lens. Therefore, the research takes on an ontological stand of hermeneutics. In order to explore the roles of formal schools and social work professions in a school setting, it was necessary to look into the historical and

cultural context of school settings. Since hermeneutics is a philosophy "in dialogue with its own history" (McCaffery et al., 2012, 215), it was well suited for this research. It enabled the researcher to dig deep into the complexities of the realities the informants face and to explore the roles of schools as well as the social work professions in a Danish primary/lower secondary school. As hermeneutics is often criticised for validity of the data through misinterpretation (Bauman, 2010), multiple revisions of data were conducted. In addition, triangulation of data through analysing municipal and government documents were done to secure the validity of the data.

This research uses the phenomenological epistemology to give an empirical insight into the lives within a school setting experienced by students and social work professions. It attempts to understand both students' experience on their own well-being and social work professions' experience in enhancing them. Since school is a place where education, teaching, learning, socialising, playing, eating, exercising, fighting, reuniting and so many things goes on simultaneously influencing each actors in this institution, to unfold this complexity, phenomenology was better suited to explore the lived experiences of the actors within the field.

4-3 Informants

In order to fulfil the purpose of this research in exploring what is happening in the field and the linkages between the occurrences, non-probability sampling method was chosen (Honigmann, 1982). As Honigmann states, when the focus of the research is not the quantity, a non-probability sampling method is well suited (1982). Under the non-probability sampling, the main informants for this research were chosen as "convenience sampling" inspired by theoretical sampling (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, 96-99). The informants were chosen as convenience sampling due to the limited accessibility of the data within the field. It was inspired by theoretical sampling because the whole data collection process was an ongoing process, starting from sample selection and data collection with analysis and reflection in between each data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). However, because this research was not intended to

construct a theory from the emerging data, the sampling strategy remained as a convenience sampling inspired by theoretical sampling method.

The school leader was first contacted via email. The first interview with the school leader and a teacher was conveniently chosen by the school leader. During the latter part of this interview, the researcher and the participants, school leader and a teacher, jointly discussed about the practicalities of the research methods and target age groups. The informants for the second sets of interviews were selected then. The second sets of interviews with two students were also convenience sampling chosen by the school leader. The reason for the selection was due to the students' English proficiency and their experience of absence from school. The students' English proficiency was an important factor for the researcher to be able to communicate directly with the students without any translator. Their experiences of absence form school were also vital factors to gain an insight into the actual interventions implemented to enhance student well-being when there are difficulties experienced by the students. The original target age group was11 to 12 years old students, but through joint discussion with the school leader and a teacher in the first interview, the age group was adapted to 13 to 15 years old students. It was due to the reason that their reflexivity skills on their school experiences are stronger than that of 11-12 years old students.

The third informant, school social worker (Socialfaglig rådgiver på skoler og i dagtilbud), was also selected according to convenience due to the accessibility of the data within the category of social workers with an experience of being based in schools. Since there was no one who fit the criteria in the municipality where the research took place, the informant was selected from a different municipality from where School X was situated. The informant was a municipal social worker having the experience of working as a school social worker for 2 and a half years.

The last set of informants were selected purposefully by the researcher to gain knowledge from multiple school professions who directly engage in enhancing student well-being in a school setting. Thus, a teacher, a well-being person (teacher background) and a social

pedagogue was chosen. During the interview, it has been revealed that the social pedagogue was also a well-being person. The choice for the social pedagogue was decided by the school leader. The specific choice of this social pedagogue amongst the 10 in this school was due to this person having the additional function as a well-being person in the school. The researcher chose the teacher to interview due to the relationship she already had established with the teacher through half-day observation in the field prior to the focus group interview. This teacher was chosen also for having robust experience in teaching 7-9th grade students, which was the target group for this research.

4-4 Setting

This research takes place in a primary/lower secondary school (Folkeskole) in Aalborg Municipality in Denmark. Danish primary/lower secondary school consists of a one-year pre-school class and nine years of primary and lower secondary education with an elective one-year tenth form (MCE, 2018). The Folkeskole Act provides the overall framework on the national level (MCE, 2018). In a municipal level, each city council provides the framework and the goal within which the individual school boards and the schools carry out their activities (Aalborg Kommune, 2021a; MCE, 2018). The members of the school board in the school where the research was conducted constitutes of 7 parent representatives, 2 employee representatives, 2 student representatives, 2 management representatives and an external representative (School X, 2021). The school board decides on the following tasks:

- *supervises the school's business*
- *sets out principles for the school's activities*
- *approves teaching aids*
- *lays down rules of order*
- *approve the school budget*
- *takes the initiative to prepare the school's curricula*
- *recommends the commencement of experimental and development work*
- *gives an opinion when filling leadership and teaching positions*
- *can make statements and make proposals to the municipal council on all school issues*

- *shall also deliver an opinion on all questions referred* (School X, 2021)

As seen above, each individual school has a great autonomy on how the activities are carried out on the ground level. The autonomy of the municipality and schools have been furthered by the agreement published in January 2019 (MCE, 2019). The government: The Liberal Party (Venstre), Liberal Alliance and The Conservative Party (Det Konservative Folkeparti), The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet), The Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), The Social Liberal Party (Radikale Venstre) and The Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti) (Folketinget, 2021; MCE, 2019, 1) have signed an agreement on the adjustments for the primary/ lower secondary school (MCE, 2019). A bill which incorporates the adjustments raised by the agreement has been submitted and have been confirmed (*Amending the Law on Primary-Lower Secondary School Bill*, 2019). The agreement states on giving further freedom and flexibility for the local municipalities and schools (MCE, 2019).

In 2019, Aalborg Municipality allocated 14.7% (Aalborg Kommune The Mayor's Department, 2020) of its budget for the Department of Education which has 48 primary/lower secondary schools and 4 special schools for children with special needs (Aalborg Kommune Department of Education, 2021). The budget for the Department for Education in 2021 is 2.1 billion kr. (Aalborg Kommune Department of Education, 2021). Aalborg Municipality has two main departments which shapes the practices related to enhancing student well-being in schools. One is the Department of Education, and the other is the Department of Family and Employment (Aalborg Kommune The Mayor's Department, 2020). The schools and the Family and Employment Department collaborates in solving child abuse cases and other social problems which do not fall under the criteria for Department of Care for the Elderly and Disabled (Aalborg Kommune, 2021).

As illustrated above, with Denmark having such decentralised education system in the primary/lower secondary education (OECD, 2020), it was interesting for the researcher

to explore how the well-being of the students were upheld within such environment and how social workers are contributing to their well-being.

The researcher was given two options as field of study. One is placed in the city centre and has a large proportion of students from migrant backgrounds. School X is located about 20km away from the city centre with students with diverse social/economical backgrounds.

Aalborg has an unemployment rate of 4.8% which is 1.1% higher than that of whole of Denmark (Aalborg Kommune The Mayor's Department, 2020). According to the informants, the area where School X is situated has a large population of unemployment and families with lower income due to the prices of the land being cheaper than that of the city centres of Aalborg. With this background, the informants shared that they face various social challenges such as behavioural challenges due to unstable family backgrounds, child abuse, mental health issues and so on. The focus of the research was on how social work responds to above mentioned social issues which are not related to migrant backgrounds in a school setting. Therefore, School X was chosen for the field of research.

4-5 Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews and group interviews were conducted to collect data. Group interview was chosen for its strength in obtaining "an additional phenomenological dimension" towards apprehension and understanding of the occurrences, interactions, or taken for granted knowledge in the field (Frey and Fontana, 1993, 32). In addition, having in consideration that the informants' primary language is Danish, participating in an English interview could be overwhelming for some. Therefore, a group interview where the informants could support each other was considered more adequate. On the contrary to the strength, the researcher was confronted with the skills to navigate through the dynamics being aware of the influence one makes and to be sensitive towards the already established patterned relationships, which are the challenges of choosing the group interview method (Frey and Fontana, 1993). In order for the research to be robust, the researcher therefore had practice sessions and bracketing sessions before the interview.

The first interview was conducted as a semi-structured group interview with the school leader and a teacher (well-being person). The researcher's interests and topic were informed by email to the school leader prior to the interview. The purpose of this interview was explorative which enabled the researcher to familiarize with the field and to identify which topic to further explore (Frey and Fontana, 1993). The interview took place in the school grounds in a small room where students with challenges studying in a big classroom come to study. The interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. During the last 15 minutes of the interview, the next informants (students) and practicalities of the next sets of interviews were discussed. Discussion on the practicalities with the school leader and a teacher in the first interview was necessary because the researcher did not have enough insight into the English proficiency of the students as well as the development of the children in a Danish school. Therefore, it was important to discuss together which age group will be the most appropriate and the most adequate method for data collection without doing any harm while collecting the necessary data. Some of the methods discussed were first, the researcher gives a presentation to the whole class, ask questions after that to the whole class and a teacher will translate the whole process. Second, one to one interview with and without translation according to age group. Third, a group interview, and fourth, focus group interview with and without translation according to age group. After the discussion with the school leader and the teacher, the most adequate method was decided as a semi-structured group interview and individual interviews with two students in the 9th grade.

The second sets of interviews were one semi-structured group interview and two semi-structured individual interviews with the students with the experience of absence form school. The interview took place face-to-face in the school in a small classroom where both informants come to when they attend school. One semi-structured individual interview which lasted for about 30 minutes was first conducted with Student Y. Due to Student Y's needs, a well-being teacher was present, sitting in the corner of the room during the interview. Student Y occasionally glanced at the well-being person sitting in the corner and sometimes asked for support with the language. After the individual interview, Student X was invited into the room for a semi-structured group interview which

lasted for approximately 40 minutes. This flow was first explained to the Student Y at the beginning of the interview. Student X and Student Y were sitting facing each other. The well-being person was still present sitting in the corner of the room. Student X and Student Y were both form the same grade and well acquainted since they have studied in the same class for several years. They both expressed their comfort with each other's company at the beginning of the interview which is probably one of the reasons the school leader chose these two students for the informants. After the group interview, Student Y left the room and individual interview with Student X was carried out. Student X was given a choice whether it was more comfortable for the well-being person to be in the room or not. Since Student X replied either way was okay, well-being person was also present for the interview in the corner of the room.

The third interview was a semi-structured individual online interview with a municipal social worker with experience of working as a school based social worker. The interview guideline was sent to the informant prior to the interview via email. The purpose for this interview was exploratory and supplementary for the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the field of school setting.

The fourth interview was a semi-structured group interview with a teacher, well-being person and a social pedagogue. The interview took place face-to-face in the school in the same room where the interview with the students took place. The informants were seated in a semi-circle facing the interviewer so that their facial expressions could be recorded. Since there were many topics to cover, and that the most important element was to get an in-depth phenomenological view of the occurrences happening in the field, formal field group interview was chosen over a focus group interview (Frey and Fontana, 1993).

A half day field observation was also conducted prior to the fourth interview to get a glimpse of the events and to observe possible dynamics between teachers, teacher-social pedagogue, student-teacher and between students. The researcher mainly observed the 7th grade classes and how students interacted during their breaks. During the field observation, informal discussions with several teachers took place. All of which were recorded in the field notes later used to triangulate with the data derived from the

interviews. Municipal documents and national legislative documents were also analysed to triangulate with the data.

4-6 Analytical Strategies

Data collected through interviews were first coded into charts and labelled with themes guided by the research questions, and themes which showed significance to the researcher; for example, the same theme appearing several times, the interviewee putting emphasis on specific words and so forth. Some of the themes which guided the researcher during the analysis were as follows:

- Criticism towards how the practices in school are shaped by law and policies of the municipality
- Social work professions' and the teacher's definition on well-being
- Professional ethics of a teacher and a social work profession
- Blurring boundaries of a school/family/social services "the lines to go"
- Trust in the school, trusting relationship
- Influencing factors on well-being
- Purpose of a school/ education
- Interventions taking place
- Roles of social work professions

After the preliminary coding, the elements of the data were categorised in response to the research question. The influencing factors on student well-being was analysed using the WBMSIS. As seen in figure 2. This research also drew on literatures on the development of school social workers and school social work services in Germany, Taiwan and Malta to analyse the social workers' roles to enhance student well-being in a school setting. Some of the key aspects which guided the analysis were: mediator roles, influence on school decision making, clinical support for individual students (i.e. counselling), consultation and advice towards staff in school (i.e. teachers and school administration), assessment and advocacy towards needs of students/families and for social change.
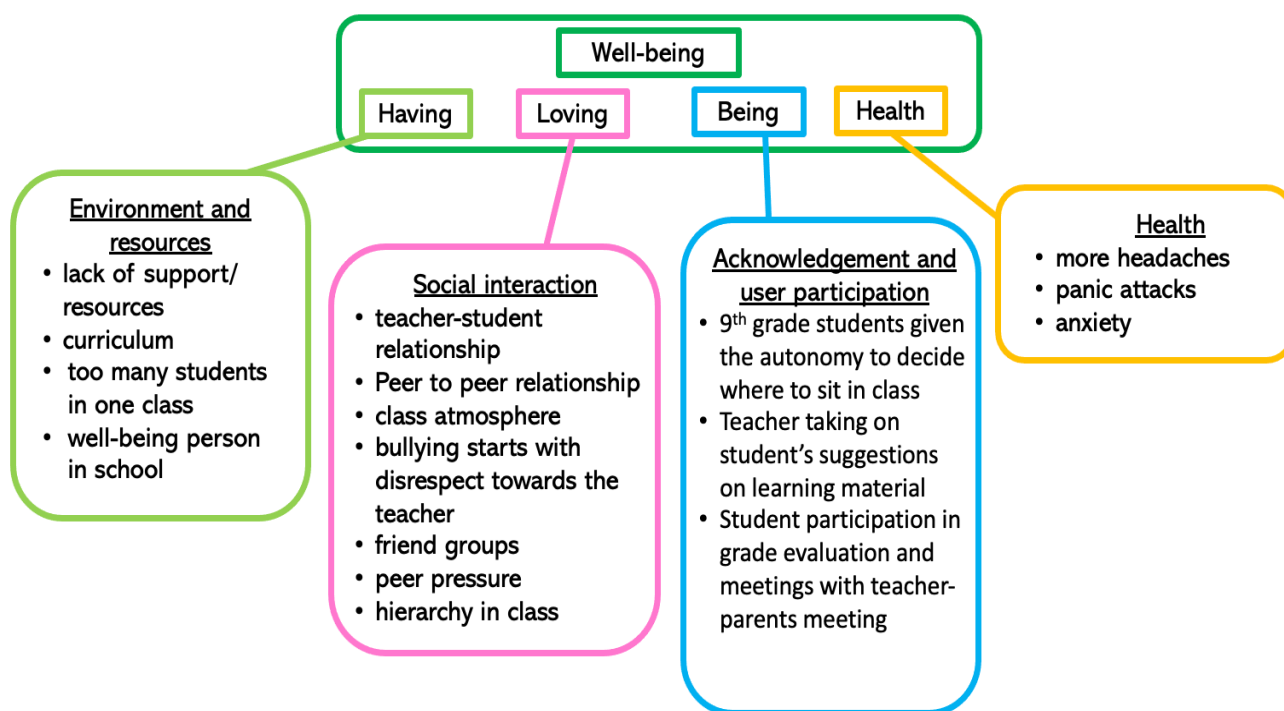
Well-being

Having | Loving | Being | Health

Environment and resources
- lack of support/ resources
- curriculum
- too many students in one class
- well-being person in school

Social interaction
- teacher-student relationship
- Peer to peer relationship
- class atmosphere
- bullying starts with disrespect towards the teacher
- friend groups
- peer pressure
- hierarchy in class

Acknowledgement and user participation
- 9th grade students given the autonomy to decide where to sit in class
- Teacher taking on student's suggestions on learning material
- Student participation in grade evaluation and meetings with teacher-parents meeting

Health
- more headaches
- panic attacks
- anxiety

Figure 2: Example of the analysis of the data using the WBSIS model in Figure 1

4-7 Limitations

The research is limited to one school in Denmark, which indicates that the findings will have a limitation on generalisability. However, social problems encountered by schools such as child abuse, bullying, mental health issues, behavioural challenges due to unstable family backgrounds and so on are seen across the world (Huxtable, 2013; Kumar, 2017; Villarreal Sosa, 2019). Therefore, by exploring how a Danish primary/lower secondary school responds to these social challenges will contribute to international knowledge of school social work.

The research could have given a deeper insight into the Danish welfare system and the social work services around the school if the focus was more on the relationship between the existing social care services such as PPR, social workers in the municipality and the school. In addition, perception on how the current system is working from the frontline workers would have given a deeper understanding of the reality in the field. Listening to

those voices and amplifying it to the policy levels are what will be necessary to influence the structure governing the practices in the school which impacts the student well-being.

4-8 Ethical Considerations

Involvement of students to this research required careful consideration on the ethics (Lewis and Lindsay eds, 2000). Prior to the interview, the parents were notified by an email, written by the researcher including the objective and the theme of the interview, sent by the school leader on behalf of the researcher. The same procedure was taken before the researcher's field visit to the class. Next, the well-being person being present for the interview with the students was discussed with the well-being person prior to the interview because an adult's presence could influence the students' responses. After the discussion, it was concluded that the student's need to have a person whom he/she trusts in order to be comfortable enough to talk, it was agreed that the well-being person will be present in the room but will stay silent. It was also important to directly address to the students that they will not be judged in any way. When the researcher addressed that "there are not right or wrong answers" at the beginning of the interview, Student Y laughed, pointing a finger towards the well-being person as though to inform that the well-being person often says the same.

Another important aspect of this research was that it takes place in a field where a social worker is not the dominant profession. It meant that the researcher had to be mindful about the use of words and to be considerate in not letting teachers, social pedagogues and other professions predominantly working in the field to feel threatened or criticised by an outsider profession: social worker.

Chapter 5: Unfolding the Influencing Factors on Student Well-being

In this chapter, the definition of student well-being from the social pedagogue, well-being person and the teacher's perspective will be introduced along with the needs for well-being identified by the students. In the following section, influencing factors on student well-being will be illustrated through analysis on using the WBMSIS introduced in chapter 3. It intends to unfold the complexity and the multi-layered structure of student well-being.

5-1 Student Well-being

The social pedagogue and the well-being person's criteria for student well-being are as follows:

- The student is happy and is glad to come to school.
- One has friends and is happily learning in a classroom.
- The students bring lunch and have appropriate clothing for the weather and for the curriculum.

The teacher's evaluating criteria on student well-being is defined by the law into 4 categories, which are academic skills, personal development, social skills and creative reflection (*Executive Order on Educational Readiness, Assessment and Procedures for choosing Youth Education 2019,* s. 2-5).

Needs identified by the students are**:**

- understanding from the teachers on social aspects, for example family issues
- non-judgemental attitude
- an adult who you can connect and form a relationship with
- respect
- environment where one can be oneself without being coerced to be something else

Utilizing Allardt's theory of welfare, in order to evaluate these criteria, both a subjective and an objective evaluation is necessary (1989).

5-2 Influencing factors on student well-being

The influencing factors on student well-being have been categorised into the four elements in the table below using the WBSIS model. This includes voices from the students, teachers, social pedagogue and well-being person.

Environment and resources	Social Interaction
• lack of support/ resources • curriculum • too many students in one class • well-being person in school	• teacher-student relationship • Peer to peer relationship • class atmosphere • bullying starts with disrespect towards the teacher • friend groups • peer pressure • hierarchy in class
Acknowledgement and user participation	Health
• 9th grade students given the autonomy to decide where to sit in class • teacher taking on student's suggestions on learning material • student participation in grade evaluation and meetings with teacher-parents meeting	• more headaches • panic attacks • anxiety

Environment and resources

Students highlighted that when there are too many students in one class and there are not enough adults to respond to the needs of the students, both the students and the teachers get frustrated resulting in compromising the students' well-being as well as their learning outcome. This is illustrated in the replies below:

It was overwhelming because of all the students and sometimes the teachers as well because there wasn't so much understanding from the teachers… like if we got frustrated with the task because we couldn't do it then, sometimes the teachers wouldn't understand and would just get frustrated with us. (Student)

There may be too many kids to teach all at the same time. // Most of the time when I really didn't understand something, or when I didn't understand it when the teacher had explained it, I took it home …so I got my parents to explain because they had the patience to do it… and not get frustrated. (Student)

I remember being frustrated when one kid kept on calling the teacher because no one else could get help. (Student)

All the times she (social pedagogue) was in class with us while there was a teacher even before we got put together, those were the best lessons when there was another teacher because there were two people who could help you. (Student)

These voices from the students illustrate that there are not enough resources for adequate learning environment for the students. Due to lack of resources, teachers get frustrated which leads to decline in student well-being and learning process. The last quote also emphasises that if there are sufficient resources for adequate learning, it affects the well-being and learning of the students.

Social interaction

This was the element with most inputs from the interviews. Relationship with the teachers, understanding and acceptance from teachers and peers were among the prominent. It highlighted that when the students had a good relationship with the teacher, well-being of the student rose which resulted in better leaning.

I felt myself raising my hand and answering more questions and I don't normally do that, so I was more active in class // with this particular teacher. (Student)

Class atmosphere was also brought up as one of the key factors for well-being factor. The students described the atmosphere to be heavy and almost like a knife when there was tension in class which affected their concentration and reception to their learning.

> *It changes the atmosphere of the class which is also what made it harder for us because we could really feel that tension in that class.* (Student)

The students also reflected on how it was different when the class atmosphere was more positive.

> *The lessons wasn't easy but it felt easier because you just didn't feel like this entire atmosphere was so kind of like a knife but because it was more fun but we still learned a lot of stuff.* (Student)

When the researcher asked about when the students felt safe and comfortable in class, this was the response form one of the respondents:

> *It was like we were all equal.* (Student)

All respondents from the interview brought to light about the hierarchy in class which is connected to the friend groups. The researcher also observed this dynamic through a half day field visit which signifies how obvious it is to see. These friend groups seemed to affect the students' mental health through peer pressure, bullying, feeling of exclusion and so on. Both students and a school social worker from a different municipality suggested that there should be a bigger focus on stimulating understanding and acceptance towards each other to counter act this hierarchy.

> *I think if a teacher has this kind of attention to making sure that the classmates are feeling trusting to watch each other so that they share. If there's something really bad going on and that they don't feel excluded from the community. Like to make sure that they are decent towards each other. And like have I think it's really important that they have focus on and how the students feel about each other and going to school isn't only about learning stuff like learning how to spell and how to do math, but it's also learning how to be human and to be tolerant towards each other* (School Social worker)

The teacher should do a bit more about that to teach the kids that it's okay to be different and that we can all get along and all that. (Student)

Maybe a bigger focus on maybe trying to get each other to understand each other. Maybe I think because I didn't understand what was going on in anyone other than my friends' lives, so when I had to go into group project with them, I didn't know what to talk to them about. (Student)

It illustrates that social interactions in schools are a major part of school life and they have a big impact on student well-being.

Acknowledgement and user participation

The student valued the fact that a teacher took on a student's suggestion as a learning material.

I think it's because Kahoot it was the students who suggested it and…it helps when the teacher actually takes our suggestions. I think that makes more fun for all of us to learn. (Student)

From a teacher's point of view, it was about giving the students authority to decide the seats for themselves and also to include them in meetings with the parents.
From the well-being person's perspective, it was about acknowledging the person as they are, where they are. This is illustrated by the quote below:

//, but if he was a social or nurse. The nurse the school nurse then she's like what is he eating? Is it healthy or how many hours does he sleep? OK, yeah, it's important, I know, but it's not the first thing in my on my mind. But it's the first thing on their mind and the social worker would be hmmmm something in that law?
And that's not the first thing on my mind is to give a hug. And say hey I see you. (Well-being person)

As illustrated above, different professions have different focus which can both result in a holistic approach but also can lead to misunderstanding and frustration when working in an interdisciplinary team.

<u>Health</u>

The students' responses were on fear towards bullying, headaches, stress and so on. Increased headaches is linked to inadequate resources.

> *I found myself getting a lot more headaches in the 40 (students) class because there was more noise. And people who normally talked just between the breaks could now talk in the classes. And so they did that. And although the teachers tried to stop it, didn't work most of the time there was a lot of noise.* (Student)

In a school setting, the four elements of environment and resources (having), social interaction (loving), acknowledgement and user participation (being) and health are closely interlinked, as can be seen with the example of class environment influencing the health element with increased headaches or per to peer relationships affecting the students' mental health.

5-3 The Wavering Roles of Schools

Just as the law defines the criteria for student well-being in the above section, much of the practices and values in school are governed by the political agendas and the legislations. This became evident by many of the responses from the group interview with the teacher, social pedagogue and well-being person highlighting these aspects. Below are some of the elements mentioned by the informants which are connected to the political agendas and legislation which affect the well-being of the students.

- School curriculum, long hours in school
- Purpose of school as getting good grades and passing a test for further education
- Evaluation system
- collaboration between different departments in the municipality

As the Ministry of Children and Education states below, 'education' is compulsory and not the act of 'schooling' itself as stated below:

> *Education is compulsory in Denmark for everyone between the ages of 6-7 and 16. Whether the education is received in a publicly provided school, in a private school or at home is a matter of individual choice, as long as accepted standards are met. It is education itself that is compulsory, not school (2018).*

Controversially, there is a strong focus on attendance in schools in Aalborg Municipality which is illustrated in the Aalborg Municipality's "Action Guide on Children and Young People's School Absence" (Handlevejledning Børn og unges skolefravær) (Aalborg Kommune, 2021b). Although in 2014 there has been a reform towards longer hours of schooling, in 2019, the bill included reducing the total schooling hours to 1,100 hours from 1,200 hours (*Amending the Law on Primary-Lower Secondary School Bill*, 2019; Ministry of Children and Education, 2013). This illustrates how in a span of 5 years, the framework of schooling can easily change.

Section one in primary/lower secondary school law states the purpose of the school as follows:

> *§ 1 The primary/lower secondary school must, in collaboration with the parents, provide the pupils with knowledge and abilities that: prepare them for further education and make them want to learn more, make them familiar with Danish culture and history, give them an understanding of other countries and cultures, contribute to their understanding of human interaction with nature and promote the individual student's versatile development.* (*The Public School Act (Amendment) 2020*, s.1(1))

This policy is echoed by a student's remark in the interview when the researcher asked the question on which part of the school system that the student thinks is not working well:

Like long hours at school and the amount of homework we have that we have to do that isn't even that important. Like it's all about passing a test. It's not really about learning and becoming like a good person, educated person anymore. (Student)

The same student identifies the purpose for current schooling as below:

It gets you to the next stage of life. Get you friends. It's all about getting us educated for university. It's just all about passing a test and getting good grades. (Student)

It is visible in the law how Denmark puts emphasis in education to prepare youth for the labour market when so much of the evaluation criteria are closely linked to it (*Executive Order on Educational Readiness, Assessment and Procedures for choosing Youth Education 2019*). Qualifications and credentials are easy sorting mechanisms for the labour market. This process shows how school practices and the well-beings of the people in schools are heavily influenced by the policies and legislation. The well-being person quotes how the evaluation criteria enforced by law is affecting the well-being of the students:

I hear the students voice and the students could think 7th grade. Oh I'm OK. I'm not good at math. But it's OK. I'm a good friend. I mean I know what to do, yeah. And then // at the 8th grade. You're not ready, something's wrong with me. And then in the 9th you can't have this education because your grades are not well then they're being demoted (demotivated). // It's just so we don't want to say and we can't say it in English, but this is actually the meaning of you don't have a life in Danish you you're not ready for an education and there's just // I'm not ready for the life because the education is one part of the adult life. So it's just like can't be an adult now, what to do? I can't stay at school so the mindset and students and I would say that is not helping with the well being of the kids because they are like evaluated In this way. (Well-being person)

McCowan argues that there should be more focus on "educational processes" rather than "educational outcomes" (2010, 519) However, he also mentions the difficulty in doing so since educational processes vary among individuals and there comes into discussion which process is the most important to monitor (McCowan, 2010). Therefore, it becomes crucial for the school and the school professions to discuss what is education, what is learning and what is the purpose of a school?

The student describes the purpose of learning as follows:

Learning about the whole world I would say. And of course having technology like math and all that stuff like academic things but also learning a bit more about the issues of the world and teachers... what difference we can make.

A student also quoted that:

I don't think the school is like the best with how the system is and all that. I have learned a lot just from the internet. Which I would never learn in school.

This informal learning by the student at home through the internet does not grant "success in the formal system" (McCowan, 2010, 521) which leads to limited opportunities for employment and other aspects of life. As Dore suggests, an alternative process in entering the labour market becomes important to discuss in order to overcome the credentialism trend and the enlargement of inequality within the society (1976).

At the same time, for some students, schools are functioning as a "safe space," a place where trust lies, a place where the students and parents could call when they need help and don't know where else to go. This is illustrated by the conversation below:

Teacher*: We are the main source that we are the. The inner circle and then we have*

Well-being person*: and then we point the direction to other things //*

Teacher*: because they come here and this is their safe place. This is what they know and this is where we they don't know where to go for help. That's their safe place. And then we have to because there's things we can do in the*

school we have to make contact to some of the other and this is often when process this delete delayed.

This statement by the teacher leads to the next and the last element which influences student well-being related to policy and legislation. It is identified as the collaboration between different departments in the municipality. As introduced in the problematic, schools in Aalborg collaborate with social workers mainly from the Family Group in the municipality. The empirical data points out that collaboration between different departments in this case the Department for Education and social workers from the Department of Family and Employment or specialists from the PPR team are not working as intended to be. This is illustrated in the quote below by the well-being person.

> *I'm the only one she (referring to a particular student) can call. I'm almost dying here I don't want to live I want to commit suicide what to do but I'm just I'm not a psychology I'm not a doctor I'm not anything I'm a teacher but I'm the one I don't think that's not the well-being because I'm not the right person to make her feel good again because I can help you with the education. //*
> *// that's the political problems because it's money. It's expensive to help such a girl, and it's much easier to go to [referring to herself] at the school because it's free. But they have to pay. They have to pay. // I think that's a very bad thing for the well-being also.* (Well-being person)

The sequence below also brings to light the struggles of the social work professions in school when collaborating with municipal social services and the constraints from the different laws governing each department.

> Well-being person*: Two laws and that the one we know. So this is that floor and this is the school law.*
> Researche*r: And somewhere in between it's easy easily that like the girl today could fall.*
> Well-being person*: Totally, Nothing, nothing at all. So so now we are discussing. We are like arguing in the kommunes, not with the parents. So now we are. You have to know you have to so we have to have a meeting with the*

leaders today who has to decide which one is going to act. In this specific case.
It's because I'm old and I know how to say no more. This is I'm not gonna stop.
I'm going to the next one. I'm taking the lead, yeah. But if I was insecure and
you want and you want nothing to do, you have to press, press press and know
what to say and which words to use and the law and everything//

This sequence of quotes articulates that while the departments in the municipality are deciding who takes the responsibility and which resources to use, the students and the families' well-beings are being compromised. It also illustrates how the current government and the municipality divides education and familial support makes a gap in between where the service users, in this case students and the families, are falling. This particular school where the research took place was keen on actively engaging in these cases and advocating for the students' needs. However, the social pedagogue has highlighted that every school does not have such a highly resourceful well-being person. The school social worker also stated that every school is very different even amongst geographically close areas. It raises questions on is it adequate how the government and the municipality have divided the services? If not, how could it be altered? Which is beyond the scope of this paper.

This chapter illustrated how many layers of complexly intertwined aspects influence student well-being in school. This bring to light the next question on how the social work professions working in schools are enhancing the well-being of the students, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Roles of Social Work Professions in Formal School Setting to Enhance Student Well-being

This chapter will discuss some of the roles of social work professions in school, identified by the informants. The biggest challenge for social work professions in schools is to have a clear definition of the roles because it is ever evolving and highly contextual.

The list below illustrates some of the examples of roles of social work profession identified by the informants: school social worker, students, teacher, social pedagogue and well-being person.

- Mediator
- advocator
- Early intervention
- Profession having more focus on mental health and social well-being than academic outcomes
- Looks at the social aspect of the student
- Mother's role (parenting role) and parental guidance
- Bridge between the municipality and the school
- Making things easier for schools and families
- Translate the students' and the families' voices in meetings with the social services workers
- not in class, a neutral person in school
- consultant for intervention plans
- home visitor

One of the most prominent roles was the mediator between different actors such as teachers, families, students, social service professions, doctors, nurses and so on. The sequence of responses from the interview below illustrates this role:

Teacher*: She's she's (referring to the well-being person) a mediator*

Researcher*: mediator*

Well-being person: yea

Teacher*: OK yeah, between the family and the teacher.*
Well-being person*: and the social worker*
Social pedagogue*: and the psychiatry and the and the and the and the //*

The school social worker defined this role as a bridge between the municipality and the school.

// so one of our like the one of our focus areas was also to like build a bridge between the municipality in the schools. So 'cause families are often a little cautious and a little nervous about getting in contact with the municipality.
(School social worker)

From the empirical study, the need to connect or fill in the gap between the various departments such as Department of Education, Department of Family and Employment, the psychiatry, the doctor, or other social service actors, while they 'figure out' in the municipality which department will take action, is essential to uphold the well-being of a child.

In order to function well as a mediator role in school, the well-being person and the teacher shared that background education just on social work would be insufficient because the person needs to know the 'school language.' There is an interesting phenomenon that roles of social workers in the municipality are perceived to be clearer but narrower than that of school social work professions. One possible explanation is because the municipal social workers are governed by different laws and different department from that of a school. Social workers in the municipality and the multidisciplinary team (PPR) not being very 'visible' from the schools also add up to the blurry understanding of the roles towards each other. This blurriness is the gap where students and families tend to fall into.

This gap could be potentially overcome by the implementation of the school social work scheme in the whole area of Aalborg Municipality. Because it has already been decided that if school social work scheme were to be implemented, all social workers will be

employed by the municipality and not the individual schools (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). This means that future school social workers working in schools will be governed by the same department as municipal social workers which makes the political conflicts smaller by not having to decide which departments' resources to use when the school refers to the municipal social workers for a more complicated case. Also, by having a more 'visible' agent in school will influence the perceptions that teachers and social work professions in school and social workers in the municipality have towards each other.

The strength of having social work professions in schools is that they can detect and intervene at an earlier stage. As schools being the closest institution for the family, trust becomes a vital element. Construct trusting relationships with the students and families was a theme the informants from School X all have emphasized multiple times during the interview. Therefore, another important role as social work professions in schools are relationship building with the families. Building upon the foundation of trust, home visits and close collaboration with the parents become possible.

As though to strengthen this point, the Danish government has furthered the 'freedom' of the local authority on the local practices in the primary/lower secondary schools (MCE, 2019). This relates with the global influence of the neoliberal regime where the responsibilities are shifted to the local authorities and to the individuals from the state (Sewpaul, 2015; Sewpaul, 2019).

Teachers and social pedagogues' roles are being extended to perform the social work roles. They are assigned to be the contact persons for students which they have divided amongst themselves. The teachers', social pedagogues' well-being person's roles are extended to fill in the gap between the municipal social workers and other social services. The empirical study shows that this model depends solely on the resources that each schools have. School X was trying to cope with the growing need for social work services in school by assigning one extra well-being person who is a social pedagogue. With many of the times root of the problem unsolvable in school, how far can this function in school be stretched? This question is reflected by the following sequence of responses:

Well-being person*: //the lines [Danish word] the lines to go because we're school we're not.*

Teacher*: We're not everything,*

Well-being person*: But we're gonna become everything. so that's where I need my colleagues to say. [referring to herself] stop it. [referring to the school leader] it's his priority with me stop the line is here [referring to herself] no further but no [referring to herself] I'm the boss no further. They have to go home. I had kids who were in no. I did begin*

Teacher*: abuse,*

Well-being person*: abuse, sexual abuse and and I have to put them to their dad and I know they were going to be abused the next day. It's out of your line, yes, but it's very difficult. I want to act. But it's not woo it's the social workers. It has to do something at that point you have. I've been doing everything and the older I get, it's easier to say after doing everything I can, I can look myself in the mirror.*

This stimulates a wider discussion on how far does a school go? What are the roles of schools, teachers, well-being persons in schools and what are the roles of social workers in the municipality? Also, what would change if school social work scheme was implemented in the whole area of Aalborg? The example of Wiesbaden shows that when there is a clear guideline, it becomes easier for the actors involved to know what to expect from each other. It is important that during the creation of this guideline, it is a co-construction process with the social workers and the social work professions in school.

Much of the roles identified are inclined towards individual interventions which are crucial, but at the same time, when the actual problem is lying outside the school boundaries, it becomes difficult for the school to do 'everything.' Which means that advocacy towards structural change becomes essential. In an informal discussion the researcher had with the well-being person in School X, the well-being person shared the plan about advocating for an interdisciplinary team including social workers to work with schools at the forefront than in a municipal office. When a need could not be met by the resources

the school has, or the core of the problem is outside the school's reach, advocacy role of a social work profession in school becomes essential to enhance student well-being.

What makes defining the roles of school social work even challenging is the multiple layers of interactions with multiple actors with ever changing social problems. For example, individual level, classroom level, grade level, whole school level, municipality level, national level and international level. The different actors are the students, families, teachers, social pedagogues, social workers in the municipality, doctors, school nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, family therapists and so on. Each profession has its interests and focuses which well collaborated will help a more holistic approach to enhance student well-being but if not, the problems are prolonged. This is illustrated in the quote from below:

> Teacher: *It can actually be. It can be quite difficult to to get to the point where we think we have students that are in in, in in a good place because it's. It's like a [referring to the well-being person] says, it's sometimes it's not something we actually can do anything about it because the problem is outside the school. However, of course we will do anything we can to to have an influence that it can be better. But Sometimes it can start all in kindergarten and the problem is still going on in the eighth grade or in the ninth grade because. Just there's some things we can't do anything about.*
>
> Well-being person: *And they they get in this. OK, you we have to do we have to do something when when the their parents doesn't collaborate. So we will make some papers one place then it comes back and next day and nothing*
>
> Teacher: *There's a lot of paperwork*
>
> Well-being person: *nothing happens. Then we have to write again and then How do you see the kid right now? Do you see the kids right now? I just told you three years*
>
> Social pedagogue: *and then we call the social worker. Then she's ill, there's a new social. Then we call the new social who I haven't got the case. and it's now two and three years and the children is still in this situation*

Social pedagogical, clinical interventions for individual cases are vital, but it is also crucial to highlight that advocacy for structural change and coordination of collaboration to make the multidisciplinary collaboration to work efficiently to enhance student well-being as well as digging into the roots of the problems.

Chapter 7: Interventions on Enhancing Student Well-being in Schools

This chapter introduces the interventions taking place in school to enhance student well-being. Below are some of the examples of the interventions that are implemented:

- Home visits by the well-being person
- Collaborate with Danish teacher, Math teacher and a social pedagogue from the class the student is in and make a plan, implement and evaluate.
- Close collaboration with the parents
- Trusting adults in school
- Once a week meeting with well-being person, social pedagogue, school leader, social worker from the municipality and the school
- Parental guidance
- Calling hospitals, social workers, nurses, PPR and other social services
- Advocacy for structural change to accommodate students' needs

The general steps for interventions are explained by the well-being person in school as the following:

1. Parent(s) or teacher flags a concern school.
2. Teacher and or social pedagogue talks with the student.
3. Parents are contacted (if it was not flagged up by the parent)
4. The Danish teacher, math teacher and a social pedagogue make a team meeting on how to make an intervention.
5. An individual plan is made in collaboration with the parent(s), math teacher, Danish teacher, social pedagogue and the well-being person.
6. If the case is difficult, well-being person is contacted and involved in the planning process.
7. Implementation of plan for 2-3 weeks
8. Evaluate

9. If the situation is not getting better or escalates, the school leader is included,
10. If it becomes a referral case, social workers in the municipality and/or PPR are referred to.

There are stages for intervention and when the stage goes up, meaning the case escalates, more professionals come on board.

An example case is described below to illustrate the collaboration between different professions.

The case: A family with multiple children and the oldest is in 7th grade. The family situation had been flagged up ever since the student came to school in second or third grade. The situation is still ongoing for at least 4 years. Each child in a different grade has their own contact teachers. However, the communication between the parent is difficult to maintain. Therefore, all the teachers contact the well-being person, and the well-being person becomes the one window for contacting the parent. This arrangement is in place so that the parent does not feel "pressed into a corner" (Well-being person's words). The well-being person contacts the parent daily to build the trusting relationship. The well-being person also becomes the one window for contact with the social worker in the municipality, with whom the well-being person meets every week. When there is a case conference where the parent is invited to go with the social services in the municipality, the well-being person also accompanies the parent to 'translate' the words of the students to the parent and the parent's voice to the other professions, such as municipal social workers, external psychiatrists and so on. The well-being person also gives parental guidance and takes on a parental role in some instances.

As the case illustrates, the well-being person has a mediator role between the students and the parent, teacher and the parent, social worker and the school and between parent and the external social services. A teacher for one of the students also quoted an important function of an advocate of the wellbeing person as follows:

Teacher: *[Well-being person] is also the one when [the parent] has to go to a meeting concerning kids, [Well-being person] will go with [the parent], and that's also very good for us, because [Well-being person] she knows the*

system. She knows where to push and therefore when she goes to a meeting
but the [parent] and the social worker and who else is going // [Well-being
person] she can. Let's call it, turn it into her advantage, not her but our for the
kids. //

Social pedagogue*: And then there's a lot of people, and in case [the parent]*
is not saying much. [Well-being person] is telling the story through her
because [the parent] can't put words in it. So [Well-being person] can say it
anyway. And you (addressing the Well-being person) talk with [the parent] so
[the parent] trust her what is difficult for yea.

The well-being person pointed out that the position not assigned to a class creates a neutral position within school which makes it easier for the students to open up about certain things they do not want their grade teacher to know about. To have an extra adult in school to talk about issues students have been holding in themselves for some time, influences student well-being.

Continuous effort for school-parent collaboration and trusting relationship building is also one of the key elements in the interventions by social work professions in schools. The strength in this relationship will directly affect the well-being of the students.

Another important intervention by the social work professions in school is acknowledging of the individual being of the students. The students voiced that when a social pedagogue that they knew for a long time knew the characteristics and difficulties each student faced, which meant a lot for them. This was observed during the interview when both students were talking about this particular social pedagogue. Both were smiling with somewhat distant eyes as though they were reminiscing the memories with her. This highlights how important trusting relationships are to the students and the impact it has on student well-being.

Through this chapter, the interventions in connection with the roles of social work professions in schools were described.

Chapter 8: Implications for Formal Danish Primary/Lower Secondary School and Future Research

This chapter highlights some key findings from the research and the implications for social work practice in the Danish context.

Th research highlighted that more and more responsibility is on the school. The school is doing all they can in the capacity and the structure that they are complied with. However, social work professions in the field are overloaded and student well-being is affected. This is nothing new to be heard in the social work field. Through the research what has been significant were the influence of political agendas and legislation on student well-being as well as the changing roles of schools. This points to a question whether clinical individualistic approach will be enough to solve the problems and enhance student well-being. With so many influencing factors on student well-being outside the school boundaries, it is nearly impossible to hold up student well-being without structural change, for example implementation of school social work scheme, alternative educational system, and so on, in perspective. Because without any structural change, the cases are going to keep rising as it does now that a second well-being person was assigned in school to respond to the growing demands. This current response is unsustainable and highly dependent on the schools' individual resources, manpower, skills of individual staff, school climate and so on. Aalborg Municipality has already had trials for having school social workers in school which has proven effective (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). Although it has been decided that school social work scheme will be permanent, it still has not been implemented in all the schools. By school social workers being the bridge, coordinator and advocator linking the students and family to the appropriate resources, the collaboration between the multidisciplinary team becomes more smooth leading to efficient problem solving. The strength of this model is that the help is more visible to the students/ families and the teachers. With social workers being more visible and closer to the citizens and teachers in school, the role misrecognition between professions could be overcome. School social worker in Rudersdal and Viborg says that visibility of the social workers was essential for early intervention (Mørk, 2021; Nielsen, 2019). When the

schools can intervene at an earlier stage, it also prevents students and families to be "objectified" as a case by the municipal social workers (Brøndum, 2019). Being an object is not an empowering position to help oneself. This model of school social worker implementation will help communication and collaboration smoother which has already been proven effective. However, this is still an individualistic approach to a structural problem. For example, if a student's anxiety comes from large classes, an individual intervention might be for the child to come few days a week, study in a smaller class setting and so on. However, with a broader perspective on structural change, the question to ask would be, is the education system the way it is now relevant for teaching and learning? If the anxiety is coming from tests, a broader question to ask would be, are they necessary or are they just for the convenience of the labour market? Then a fundamental question would be that what is education and what are the roles of schools? These questions are vital to be reflected upon because if the roles of education were for human flourishing, are tests necessary? If the schools' goal was socialising, are curriculums necessary? A school is a complex institution that its goals cannot be simplified into one. However, reflecting upon these roles and goals stimulates different discourses for education in the institution. As the international Federation of Social Work states the definition of social work profession that promotes "social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people" (IFSW, 2021b), school social workers have the potential to bring these reflections within the school setting to influence a structural change to enhance student well-being.

In order to work on the aspect of bringing structural change, the definition of school social work must be broadened. There is a trend now in Denmark that more and more school social workers' identities and roles are shaped as consultants, coordinators and mediators (Mørk, 2021; Vejle, 2017) This is considered to be a neoliberal trait on individualising the problems rather than questioning the bigger structure (Ringø et al., 2018). As the schools are sometimes used as reproducing of knowledge to "maintain the *status quo*" (Hart, 2014, 19), it is crucial to be critical about the existing system governing the school practices and the society.

For further research, one of the topics could be how to enhance interdisciplinary team collaboration within a society with high flexicurity. The quote below from a teacher highlights the problem:

> Teacher: *but there's a lot of different places we have to go and there's also that does always problems one of the places because of course the sickness. Then they have to go on maternity leave for it's always something that deletes the process and that's why sometimes we can have a kid in the second grade who still has the same problems in the 8th or 9th grade because it's just.*

Flexicurity allows people to shift easily within the labour market and receive generous amount of social benefits (Bredgaard and Larsen, 2007). One of the side effects of this is as the case illustrated above. The disconnection of the case affects the trusting relationship that the children/youths and the family had with the previous social worker. The families have to build a new relationship again with the new social worker. Schools also go through the same process while helping the students. Even when the case files are handed down to the new case worker, human relationship cannot be just updated. It has to be rebuilt and it takes time while the problems are still occurring. Therefore, this is an important aspect in enhancing student wellbeing. This could be a potential research area for smoother collaboration and linear support for the families and students to enhance their well-being in school, in a society of high flexicurity.

Chapter 9: Implications for International Social Work

This chapter discusses the implications for international social work practices drawing upon the discussions from earlier chapters.

Findings form the research indicates that clinical support directly responding to the needs of the students are essential to enhance student well-being. However, it is also vital to have a broader perspective to be able to tap into the roots of the problem which many are in political and international levels. With lack of resources, narrow definition of school social work, professional identity being shaped by other professions and legislations, and other reasons, school social workers have struggled to have a role broader than that of just a clinician (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002). Now it's time for school social workers to take on the role as a change agent within the school institution.

Huxtable and Blyth point out that Advocacy and leadership role:

> *They (school social workers) have knowledge and skills in evaluating problems, understanding behavior and involving community organizations to help schools make the transition to more democratic institutions* (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002, 238)

As school social workers being the key persons to enhance student well-being, having a broad perspective on the actual causes of the problems is necessary. Working in an institution where resources and power is collected to influence a huge population, school social workers need not only to respond to the direct needs of the students but to constantly have a critical reflection on what is the right to education, what is the roles of schools, what are the causes of the problems that the students are facing and how could it be changed.

As Huxtable and Blyth suggests, "school social work must also take initiative to define its role, rather than allow itself to be driven by the agendas of others" (2002, 239). School social workers professional identity and roles are many time defined by other professions and legislations. As Huxtable and Blyth suggests, it is necessary to voice up what their roles are and advocate for change. As school social work is now an international

profession implemented in 50 countries and regions, more than ever it is important to connect and learn from each other (Huxtable and Blyth, 2002). How education has evolved, how it is framed, how school social work developed, how it is portraited now is very dependent on the countries' context and culture. Therefore, we have a huge resource to learn and develop from.

Current schooling is formed in a pragmatic and convenient way to teach students (McCowan, 2010). From this research looking through the lens of enhancing student well-being, it has become evident that whether formal school setting is the best environment and method to uphold the children's right to education is a question. Therefore, as a profession to ensure children's well-being and social justice in school, school social workers should engage more in stimulating discussions in schools to reflect on the critical issues of the purpose of education and whether the environment and resources are adequate to fulfil them. As many countries have already implemented compulsory education and education becomes more accessible around the world, school social workers have the duty to make sure that the institution does no harm. Because of its dominant role in the education field, critical reflection on what goes on in the schools are vital. As Freire has suggested, liberation must come from dialogue. By shaping the environment for more dialogue and a platform for co-creation of knowledge between teachers and students become crucial (Freire, 2000). It could be implied that it is one of the school social workers role to ensure that the students are the subjects of learning and not the objects which equates to whether the students are being able to be the subject of their life. This is essential for enhancing the well-being of a student.

Chapter 10: Recommendations

This chapter will introduce several recommendations for practice in three levels: school board/ municipality level, school level and national level. To first enhance the well-being of the students, the researcher recommends the implementation of school social work scheme into the school. Working on the well-being of the students is a priority because learning is built on a foundation of student well-being. Next, school social worker's role in transforming the school into a more democratic institution is illustrated.

School board/ Municipality level

Aalborg Municipality has a plan for implementing school social workers in all the primary/lower secondary schools (Aalborg Kommune, 2017). With the flow already in place, asking the school board why school social worker is not placed in the field of research is a start. Advocating for the implementation of school social work service in Aalborg could result in reducing the workload of the school, especially the well-being persons, and make the collaboration easier and smoother between the municipal social services. The collaboration between the school and the municipal social work services becoming smoother is vital for the well-being of students as illustrated in chapter 5. In addition, asking the municipality why it has not been implemented yet is also crucial to understand the political catalyst behind these decisions. Why has it not been implemented yet will direct light to some other aspects that are hindering the process. Once they are identified, next action could take place.

School level

Although the students recognise it as there's no hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, the researcher observed a power dynamic between these two actors; the students being very reliant on adults for problem solving. This mirrors the problem-solving approach by the adults in the institution. When an adult gives an answer or simply transfers knowledge, Freire refers to it as the "banking concept" (Freire, 2000, 72) This way of teaching or intervening enhances domestication of the students (Freire, 2000). One of the reasons for this occurrence is that there are not enough resources for

the teacher to engage in dialogue with the students as the students have identified in their interviews. True liberation which Freire identifies as the purpose for education can be achieved through dialogue (2000). To give space for dialogue to stimulate critical reflection is crucial for students' learning as well as their well-being. In order to achieve this, the researcher suggests two things. One is a project with the student to critically reflect on the roles of education and schooling, asking the students "what do you think schools are for?" "Why do we learn what we learn?" "Is the method appropriate?" If the answers imply that the schools have become an institution for merely gaining qualifications, it means that schools have lost one of the important aspects of its purpose of education. The next step would be to identify the reason for this and advocate for structural changes. Danish primary/lower secondary schools have the potential to do this because of its autonomy in the curriculum and management of their resources.

Another is a dedicated time for class discussion (frequency and length of time could be decided according to the needs) dedicated to talk about various topics. This was one of the recommendations from the students who wanted to have the time back which was dedicated to reflection on the class, interactions with peers and other topics.

> *We used to have a class when we were younger, where we used to talk about everything so if we had issues with the class, we would take it up with the teacher there and I would like that back.* (Student)

This recommendation coincided with a recommendation from a school social worker from a different municipality who strongly felt the need to have a time dedicated to talk about how they are as a community.

> *Like you just don't take for granted that the children are nice to each other that you like, sometimes have focus on how are we? How are we to each other? How are we acting towards each other? And so maybe like have this every once a month that you have some time where you don't have to learn Danish and you don't have to learn English or math and and just like have community on the schedule and and talk about how how will we being friendly to each*

other, how we trust each other and. Like have focus on that. (School social
    worker)

Well-being persons and social pedagogues could take a central role to advocate for a
bigger focus on social interaction between students and between teachers and students.
For the implementation of this new space in the curriculum, co-construction between
teachers and social pedagogues and student participation is essential. Focusing on the
relations and giving students opportunities to influence the school decision are two of the
well-being factors in the WBMSIS model to enhance student well-being.

National level

As part of the dissemination for this research, the researcher could contact one of the
social workers who belong to the Danish Association for Social Workers to suggest the
topic of broadening the definition of school social workers in the social worker's national
forum in Denmark to spread awareness towards looking at the problems in school in a
broader context in order to tap into the structural problems that are affecting student well-
being and collectively advocate for change. In order for school social workers to start
taking initiative in defining their own roles, it is important for school social workers working
in different municipalities to come together and talk about what they face and how it could
be bettered. Using the opportunity where social workers from all the municipalities in
Denmark gather in the forum could be utilised. As Huxtable and Blyth also state,
connecting, exchanging information and providing peer support amongst school social
workers is essential for its further professional development (2002).

With the ever-changing society, roles of schools and education are being influenced by
global economy, globalisation, international credentialism, outcome-oriented evaluations
and other influencing factors which are governing the practices of the school and
influencing student well-being. The researcher believes it is an essential time for school
social workers to reflect on whether clinical approach is just enough to tackle these
societal influences (Allen-Meares, 1987; Dore, 1997; Huxtable and Blyth, 2002; Lowe,
2000; McCowan, 2010;).

Conclusion

Schools today have strong focus on attendance. Even now, school social workers and social work professions in school implement interventions such as home visits to ensure that students are going to school. As much as schools have benefits, it is essential to reflect for who's benefit is the government enforcing school attendance? Social work professions working in schools must critically reflect on what is education and why is school the way it is to understand the driving mechanism behind it. It is also important to view the problems the students are facing in a more macro perspective instead of placing the problems in the student or the family. School social workers working in one of the most powerful institutions in a country, it is crucial to view the problems occurring in school in a broader perspective and reflect on what system is causing these problems? Schools can become the hub for social change with school social workers being the leader.

Because schools nowadays hold an important role in society, there needs to be a role who can critically reflect on the goals and practices of this institution which has a great power to influence such a big population in society. The experiences, tools, knowledge that the students gain are going to shape their individual lives as well as the society, country and the world. Schools now face numerous problems which affect student well-being. Social work professions and school social worker have been in the forefront to respond to these various needs. However, from this research it has become clear that individual responses are not enough to eliminate many of the problems that the students and families face. Many root causes are outside the school boundaries. Social work professions are defined as a profession to promote "social justice and social change" (IFSW, 2021b). This research proposes that it is high time that school social workers take up this role to challenge the society and the governing systems to advocate for a school system which promote well-being of the children, our future.

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Appendix 1 Interview Guidelines

1-1 Interview Guideline for School Leader and a Teacher in School X

Research Topic:
 Danish public primary School's experience of challenging behaviour and informal peer
 support

Interview format: semi-structured interview
Interviewee: Teachers who teach the age group of 11-12 years old students

Objective of this interview:
The objective of this interview is to gain an overall insight into the school environment
regarding the research's main concept "challenging behaviour" and "informal peer
support." It also intends to explore some practicalities of focus group interviews and
surveys for students.

Questions regarding the main concept:
1. When you hear the word "challenging behaviour," what comes to your mind?
2. What do you think is influencing this notion on "challenging behaviour?"
3. What does a "good student" and a "hard-to-teach student" mean to you?
4. What does informal peer support mean to you?
5. What do you think is the influence of informal peer support towards solidarity in a classroom?
6. Are there any specific tools/ interventions or methods you are utilising to promote solidarity in a class?

Questions regarding practicalities:
1. Do you think 11-12 years old students are capable of having an online English group interview with the researcher?

2. Considering the fact that the researcher does not have any relationship with the students, how do you think is the best way to conduct a focus group interview with the students?

3. In order to explore the concept of challenging behaviour and informal peer support, who do you think is best to include in the focus group interview within the school?

4. How do you think about a survey in English for students regarding the concept of challenging behaviour and informal peer support?

1-2 Interview Guideline for School Social Worker in Municipality Y

<u>Research Topic:</u>

Danish public primary School's experience of challenging behaviour and informal peer support

<u>Objective of this interview:</u> To get an overview of the roles of a social worker in an educational setting (public primary school) and learn about peer support among students

<u>Questions:</u>

1. What is your role as a school social worker?
2. What do you think is the significance of having a social worker in a school?
3. Do you feel that there is a difference in roles of social workers in the municipality and in a school? If yes, how?
4. What does informal peer support mean to you?
5. Are there any tools/ interventions you use to promote solidarity among students?
6. Do you approach the students as a group?
7. New!! → What is your title and how do you address yourself to the students?

1-3 Interview Guideline for Students in School X

<u>Introduction</u>

- I am studying at Aalborg University about international social work and how school systems can be improved. You can help me today by sharing with me your experience as a student.

- There is no right or wrong answer. Please feel free to let me know what you think.

- I will be asking for your name, but anonymity will be respected, so your name will not be appearing anywhere in the research.

- Is it okay I record our interview session?

<u>Questions</u>

- Could you tell me your name and which class you are in?

- How was your experience in the school?

- Was there a time when it became difficult?

- Was there a particular class you liked?

- What was good about it?

- How do you see the power dynamics in the class?

- What do you think is influencing it?

- What is peer support for you?

- What is an equitable learning environment for you?
  *equitable in dictionary means fair and reasonable, treating everyone in an equal way

- What would have made your experience at the school better?

- What is your dream school? How would the class be like? What is the atmosphere? How are your classmates like?

<u>Debriefing questions</u>

- Are there anything you would like to add?

- Would you kindly share how this interview session was for you?

1-4 Interview Guideline for Group Interview at School X

<u>Topic of the research</u>:

Exploring the social workers' roles to enhance well-being of students in a Danish public primary school

<u>Objective of this research</u>:

The objective of this research is to explore the roles of a social worker in a school. The objective of this research is to explore the roles of a social worker in a school. The research also aims to explore the dynamics between various professions working in schools, focusing on how to enhance student well-being.

<u>Interviewee</u>: Trivselsperson, social pedagogue, teacher

<u>Main questions:</u>
1. What is your definition on student well-being?
2. What is the top prioritised task in ensuring the well-being of the students?
3. What kind of theories/ skills/ approaches do you apply to your practice?
4. How do you collaborate in your daily practice? Do you feel that there are overlaps in roles? If yes, how do they affect your practice?
5. What are your perceptions of the roles of school social workers?
6. Do you feel the need for school social workers? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think in some other municipalities in Denmark had implemented school social work service?
8. What would you change about the education system or the environment to enhance well-being of the students? Why?
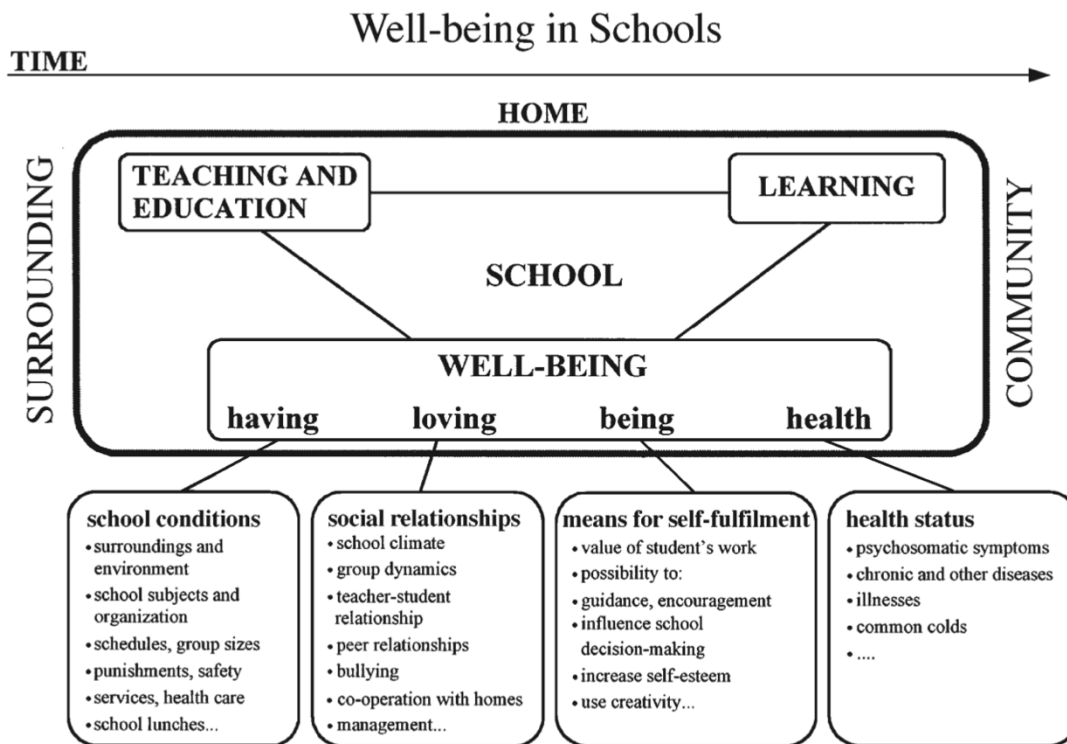9. What are your perceptions on the limitations and challenges of your role in a school?

<u>Debriefing</u>
10. Are there anything you would like to add?

How was this session for you?

Appendix 2 "School Well-being Model"

The original "school well-being model" introduced by Konu and Rimpelä (2002, 83)

Fig. 1: The School Well-being Model.