

Characteristics of graduate professional education: expectations and experiences in psychology and law

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This paper argues that there are some common characteristics that define what we label graduate professional programmes. By analysing two programmes, law and psychology—as experienced by the students—it becomes obvious that while the programmes educate their students well in the academic aspects of professional work, they do not prepare students sufficiently for dealing with moral conflicts and complex moral challenges. Although there are substantial differences between the two programmes, they reflect cultural characteristics of the academy with its emphasis on the authority of disciplinary knowledge. The findings suggest that while there are critical challenges for professional graduate programmes to keep up to date with the academic content, there are also even larger challenges in preparing students more adequately for dealing with practical and moral issues.

Introduction

The well-being of the individual as well as the society as a whole is increasingly contingent upon the quality of professional work and how professionals conceive their professional mandate and responsibility. Consequently, professional education is not only of great significance for the certification of professionals according to formal criteria, but also for the purpose of establishing a core of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes within the individual professional students (Freidson, 1988). We have been both encouraged and enthused by such arguments to explore issues of curriculum, the content and pedagogy of professional programmes.

At a general level, the purpose of a western modern mass university education is to develop knowledgeable and responsible citizens with a capacity for critical thinking including the ability to understand oneself critically and to act critically. In liberal as

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well as professional programmes an aim of graduate education is to prepare students for professional as well as for civic responsibilities in a democratic community. Universities want all students to leave their institution committed to values of moral and social engagement, but also to critical reflection on how society and individuals may benefit from the knowledge and competence they have acquired and developed during their journeys through higher education (Barnett, 1997; Shulman, 2002; Sullivan, 2005).

Being situated in a university context places graduate professional education in the tension of a dual influence of the professions and the academy. Professions directly and indirectly influence formal education and its curriculum and assessment systems through requirements of licensing and certification of graduate students (Squires, 2005). At the same time, professional programmes are subject to the standards of the academy. In this sense, professional education is a bridging institution with one foot in the academy and one foot in the world of practice. Professional education programmes therefore are considered to balance between these two influencing powers, and fields of interest. At times, their interests may coalesce, while on other occasions, they may diverge, thus increasing tensions. However, some researchers in higher education see the practice-oriented model for professional education as overly narrow, specialized and focused on skills training, in comparison with the academic *bildung* tradition of liberal education. Within academia 'the liberal arts fields have been considered as more scholarly and hence more worthy than professional education', Kemper argues (1994, pp. 250–251). As a consequence it is claimed that many professional programmes have modeled themselves according to the arts and sciences by developing similarly abstract vocabularies and similarly illuminating theoretical perspectives (Brint, 2002, p. 238).

Graduate professional programmes are situated in institutions that have experienced dramatic changes in recent history. During the last two to three decades, massification has changed higher education from an elite system to one of universal and multicultural access. Students recruited to higher education no longer automatically represent the elite of society (Barnett, 1997; Robertson, 2000; Delanty, 2001). Moreover, the role of higher education has come under an increasing pressure from society's interest in providing a sufficient number of professionals to sustain the economy. The increasing impact of market forces on the academy alters the traditional idea of higher education to remain publicly committed (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Gumpert, 2002). The mission of higher education for public good has traditionally distinguished the enterprise of higher education from profit-making enterprises. However, following Gumpert's (2002) analysis, an 'industry logic' has gained momentum at the macro level as an alternative to the traditional logic of the university as a 'social institution'. Consequently, the university's relative autonomy in judging the significance of different forms of knowledge has been reduced (Brint, 2002). Furthermore, in a European context, the Bologna process challenges the traditional curriculum discourses in higher education. The credit accumulation and transfer discourse asks for a curricular framework that enhances mobility, employability and competitiveness. Although a flexible curriculum approach together with a

student-centred pedagogy are advocated, the Bologna process can be read as a rational project which tends to create a discourse for the governing of the student (the self) in light of the objectives *already set* (Karseth, 2006). However, there is no universal narrative on how these new discourses might or should affect educational programmes.

To contribute to the understanding of how professional programmes are lived out in practice, we explore and discuss how traditional characteristics of professional education are met within two university programmes, law and psychology. The two programmes chosen are both prestigious professional programmes in the Norwegian context located in a traditional research university, the University of Oslo. Education for the profession of law has been offered by the Faculty of Law since the foundation of the University of Oslo in 1811. The programme of psychology, organized within the Faculty of Social Sciences, has a shorter history. Emanating from the discipline of philosophy, it was established as an independent discipline at the University of Oslo in 1909. The professional programme was first formalized in 1956 and psychology is therefore considered a young professional programme (Baklien, 1976).

In this article, we explore the characteristics of professional programmes as they are commonly described in the literature. We present and discuss the cases of law and psychology programmes as experienced by freshmen and senior students. Based on these descriptions we discuss how these programmes correspond to the established characteristics and we propose some challenges for the design of professional programmes situated in a traditional university.

Graduate professional education—some characteristics

There is a dominant discourse, inside as well as outside the university, which assumes that there are some significant differences between liberal degrees in arts and sciences and graduate professional degree programmes (Berg, 1997; Bleiklie *et al.*, 2000; Bleiklie, 2005). While the aim of liberal education is to educate students towards general critical reflection in different disciplines with no clear connection to occupational life, the aim of professional education is to educate students for specific occupations and thereby provide them with the knowledge that gives professions their claim to special competence (Bok, 1986, p. 74). Hence, graduate professional programmes are required to integrate the complexity of critical and analytical thinking with the skilful practice and wise judgment upon which each profession rests. The aim is that students gain specialized knowledge at an advanced level, as well as the skills and values necessary for successful entry into their particular professional work (Weidman *et al.*, 2001; Sullivan, 2005).

One point of departure for analysing the distinctiveness of professional education is that of the curricular structure and the pedagogy of a programme. According to Bleiklie (2000, p. 310), professional education within the university is characterized by the following elements: *A selected group of students follow a study track particularly structured for their purpose. In this track the university decides most of the disciplinary content and courses and the curricular structure reflects an idea of a consistent and*

sequenced curriculum. The ambition is to offer a *coherent programme* where the different elements of the content represent a whole. There is also an underlying idea that students who participate in professional programmes engage in many *mandatory activities* with a high level of *student activity* and are being *closely followed up* by their teachers. This structure creates a *distinction* between those who are members of the programme and those who are not.

Another hallmark of professional education is the emphasis on the relationship between education and the field of the profession as practice. Consequently, there is an expectation that professional programmes establish a *close relationship between theory and practice*. The nature of the relation however varies from one of integration to a linear relation from theory (first) to practice (later). We also find that the form of relationship between theory and practice in professional education has changed through history. There has been a move from practitioner-controlled forms of education to *school-based* professional education (Bok, 1982; Burrage, 1993; Pihlajamäki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2003; Sullivan, 2005). Implied in this shift is *an adjustment to academic standards* and the relationship between theory and practice has become more blurred. Nevertheless, there is still a strong argument in the discourse of professional programmes to the effect that there *is* an important relationship. This indicates that professional programmes, in addition to teaching the students theoretical knowledge and ways of reasoning about practical problems, should *help students develop practical skills and professional discretion*.

Finally, the history of professions and professional education also shows that the *development of moral and societal responsibility* is an obligation for the educational institution (Sullivan, 2005). Embedded within this element of professional preparation is the necessity to learn to *be* and *act* as a doctor, lawyer, teacher or psychologist. The aim is to develop particular habits of mind, a professional mentality and identity, and the moral order typical for the profession in question (Freidson, 1988). Through a successful process of professional formation, students should come to *understand ethical and social challenges* of their particular professional work as well as their *obligations to clients and to society*. However, we do not wish to convey a sense that there is an ‘ethical monolith’ within each profession; rather there are dominant characteristics of professional cultures, of which ethical considerations are a significant part.

Although it is difficult to describe a well-defined concept of graduate professional education, it is reasonable to identify some typical or dominant characteristics. It provides research and teaches specialized knowledge for an identified professional field. It follows a coherent curriculum structure and the pedagogy (normally) emphasizes a high level of student participation with corresponding degrees of student regulation through records of attendance, written work and so forth. It emphasizes the relationship between theory and practice, and the importance of educating for certain professional responsibilities.

With these characteristics in mind, we ask how such expectations regarding professional education are actually met by the two cases of law and psychology—as experienced by the students.

Methods and data sources

The data referred to in this paper are drawn from an international comparative research project¹ on students' experiences from higher education and their entrance into work life. The sample of 46 law and psychology students is randomly drawn from 'freshmen' students in their second semester of their first year and 'senior' students in the last semester of their final year of the programmes. The number of interviewees is 12 in each of these four groups, except for senior law students, where 10 were interviewed. The interviews took place in the spring semester of 2002.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to grasp the students' experiences and conceptions at their respective stages in their educational 'journeys' (Dahlgren *et al.*, 2002). The interview guide was structured around students' motivation, conceptions of learning, knowledge, competence and moral and societal responsibility, as well as their experiences of the programme and expectations for the years to come. The interviews lasted for 60–90 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. By encouraging the students to talk freely about their educational expectations and experiences, we gained insight into their conceptions of central aspects of their educational programme. In this article we focus on the parts of the interviews dealing with student expectations of and experiences with the programme from the perspective of becoming a 'good professional'. As a backdrop to, and in preparation for, the interviews, we studied curricular texts and institutional documents. The interviews however constitute the main data source for this article.

Phenomenographically inspired analyses (Marton, 1981, 1994; Marton & Booth, 1997) were carried out in two steps. First, preliminary interpretations of the students' individual conceptions and experiences were identified, shared and discussed in the research team. We then focused on freshmen and seniors separately and identified patterns typical of the students in each group. The findings were clustered and categorized under themes characterizing the most common experiences and dominant discourses arising from the interviews. The students' experiences were compared with the identified curricular discourses of the programmes discerned as a result of a simplified discourse analysis (Gee, 1999) of institutional documents. More thorough presentations of the method and data analyses may be found in the reports from the research project (see Dahlgren *et al.*, 2005).

In the following data presentation, we begin by presenting the curricular structure of the two programmes. Thereafter, we focus on themes related to the content and pedagogy as experienced by the students. The presentation is summative, but we use quotations from the student groups to illustrate common meanings.

The structure of the programmes: degree of coherence and selectiveness

As indicated earlier, both programmes are prestigious and they follow a relatively traditional path in higher education. They are divided into introductory courses and a professional degree programme. Apart from some elective elements and

thesis work, the content of the programmes is rather fixed. The courses are strictly structured and controlled by a combination of syllabus and examinations. The respective faculties provide detailed lists of prescribed readings for the different courses. The overall length of both programmes is six years. Nevertheless, there are some profound structural differences between the programmes.

Law: an academic 'mass' education

Law students may gain access to the professional programme after having completed the two years of basic courses (c.f. Faculty of Law, 2001). Approximately 600 students are registered per semester at the basic study course and 160 are admitted to the professional programme. The purpose of the professional programme is to give candidates a basic as well as a professional competence. The focus is on cognitive, rational analysis and application of the legal method. There is no practice offered in external institutions. As an optional element of the professional part, however, it is possible to include a term of practice, but this is availed of by a minority of students only. The law programme relies heavily on independent studies, and has no compulsory attendance. The only requirement for students is to pass exams and write a thesis. The study plan states however that law is a demanding programme. Although none of the courses are mandatory, students are recommended to hand in assignments and attend courses, seminar groups and colloquium groups in order to get enough training for passing the exams. Students are simultaneously urged to evaluate critically how much time to spend on attending teaching, and individual studies remain the most important learning strategy (Faculty of Law, 2001). Programme graduates are qualified for legal work in a relatively wide area, but to work as an *attorney*, for example, a graduate from the law programme has to work for two years under some supervision, take a course and to pass an exam.

Psychology: an 'exclusive' programme

Entrance to the professional programme of psychology is possible after having completed a one-year foundation course. Approximately 500 students are registered per semester at the foundational level exam and only 40 of these are accepted on to the professional programme based on their grades. The programme consists of two parts, each of two years duration. The aim of the first part of the professional degree programme is for the students to acquire theoretical and methodological knowledge and skills required for future professional practice. The aim of the second part is to provide in-depth studies of applied and theoretical psychology and experiential knowledge of professional work and this part includes an internship period of six months in an external institution as well as shorter periods of practical studies. The psychology programme requires high attendance of the students. In addition to exams and the thesis, practice training, seminars, group work, and assignments are mandatory (Faculty of Social Sciences, 2001). The programme leads to licensing as a psychologist, which is a qualification protected by law.

Taken together, it is reasonable to conclude that both law and psychology obviously bear some of the main characteristics of professional programmes described in the introduction. Firstly, they both represent, to some extent, *coherent programmes*. Secondly, the programmes have *selection procedures* which implies that the professional programme is restricted and not open for other students. However, there are some crucial differences related to these dimensions.

The regulation of law students is primarily done by required readings and by written examinations. Such regulations are also found in psychology, but additionally the students are obliged to attend courses and practical work. While the law programme is structured more or less as a purely scholastic programme (Pihlajamäki & Lindblom-Yläänne, 2003), the psychology programme intentionally aims at combining a scholastic approach with some apprenticeship learning in practice settings. While the psychology students enter the restricted part of the programme just after a year of study, the law students study for two years in an open programme before they enter the professional part. When it comes to access and the role of grades the students in psychology need excellent grades to be accepted for the programme, but the grades earned through the programme play a minor role. Law students also need relatively good grades to enter the professional programme, but not at the same level as the psychology students. More important for them are the grades they accumulate throughout the whole programme and especially at the final examination.

Not surprisingly, in subsequent analysis it becomes evident that the fundamental structural differences between the programmes concerning the amount of students, their relation to practice, assessment and expected student attendance, seemingly influence the pedagogy, learning strategies and the role of the students in the two programmes. First, however, we turn to the students' experiences concerning the content of their programme and their perceptions of the relationship between theory and practice.

The content of the programmes: the relationship between theory and practice

The data indicate that the majority of freshmen as well as senior students in both programmes experience their respective programmes as defining theory, academic or scientific knowledge, as *the* base of professional competence. Among the students there is a profound belief in the transformative potential of codified authoritative knowledge in both programmes. There appears to be a willingness on the part of students to adapt to the tradition of their selected profession in a manner that is more likely to perpetuate versions of the status quo rather than becoming transformative agents of a profession. The students' accounts reflect the discourses of the two curriculum texts underlining the importance of acquiring theoretical knowledge in order to develop a scientific basis as fundamental for future professional practice (Faculty of Law, 2001; Faculty of Social Sciences, 2001). However, what theory means is conceived differently by the students, thus reflecting the different traditions of the two professional fields.

Law: the primacy of factual and procedural knowledge

The law students describe their programme as predominantly academically-oriented, emphasizing factual and procedural knowledge. By factual knowledge is meant the knowledge about laws as found in the volume containing the Norwegian Laws: the 'Red Book', as the students call it, as well as other kinds of legal sources. Procedural knowledge is seen as knowledge about methods for defining what is the legal problem in an actual case, finding which rules and regulations apply, which order of priority each source will have and how to draw conclusions on this basis and present the analysis and conclusion. This legal method is what constitutes the main professional base, the students argue. The aim is to learn 'the method', as the students describe it, as an analytical tool and intellectual skill that is transferable to different sectors in the field of law. 'This is what they [the teachers] have imprinted in us since the day we started', a senior student says. At this stage, to manage 'the method' stands out to be the hallmark of a competent lawyer.

The programme also appears, according to both the study plan (Faculty of Law, 2001) and the students' accounts to be a generally homogenous programme with small changes in type of knowledge. As a professional programme it appears rather 'self-contained' within the framework of the Faculty with no periods of practice involved and limited variation in the ways knowledge is made available for the students.

Psychology: theory first, then practice

The students in psychology experience their programme as both an academic study and a professional education. Their experiences correspond to the rhetoric in the study plan; that theories and research methods in the first phase constitute the basis for 'the *forthcoming* practically oriented study and profession' (Faculty of Social Sciences, 2001). The impression of a 'dual' education is also experienced by the students as representing two different forms of logic; theory representing their formal science-based qualifications and practice representing the 'practical wisdom' of the profession at work. Although these students appreciate their scholarly training, they would have wanted more practice and most of them regret what they see as the lack of integration or 'bridging' the gap between these 'two worlds'.

In contrast to the law students, there is not *one* specific 'method' to learn in psychology. The students of psychology relate the content of the programme to a *plurality* of theoretical and research-based knowledge. As professionals they have to select among competing theoretical schools of psychology and decide what to apply to practice. The aim is to acquire a solid and broad knowledge base relevant for professional work. One of the seniors argues: 'A good psychologist is first of all a good professional, knows his theories, and consequently knows his subject well'. Scientifically-based knowledge is what constitutes the hallmark of a professional psychologist, the students argue.

Summing up, there is clear reliance on the dominance of academic knowledge in these two programmes. They meet the crucial expectation of graduate professional programmes to teach specialized advanced knowledge and to see *academic knowledge*

as absolutely essential to their performance in work life (Shulman, 1999). Taken together though, it seems obvious that both programmes lean heavier on the academy foot rather than the practice foot. Implied in such an orientation there seems to be an underlying idea of a linear relation from theory to practice, emphasizing *application* of theory, learnt in advance of practice—into professional practice. The students seem to be ambivalent about this orientation. On the one hand they acknowledge and appreciate the academic status of the programme. They support the ideas underlying a traditional disciplinary discourse that education ‘should be an apprenticeship into powerful ways of knowing: of modes of analysis, of critique and of knowledge production’ (Ensor, 2004, p. 343). On the other hand, most students in both programmes criticize a too one-sided reliance on theory, and argue for more vocational oriented programmes and practical training. It is noteworthy though, that the psychology students are more critical than the law students who seem to ‘accept’ the total absence of practice as the ‘way it should be’.

It is evident that the two programmes offer teaching activities that put emphasis on *transmitting the disciplinary culture*. The students become recipients of a discipline and its tradition (cf. Barnett, 2003, p. 148) with a strong emphasis on the values of academic knowledge. Students sense at this stage in their professional socialization that it is this ‘theoretical knowledge’ that is the hallmark of their professionalism. This is understandable since in the part-absence of ‘practical’ knowledge and experience, there is a consequent over-reliance on theoretical knowledge as the primary socialization vehicle. In the next section we depict and discuss how this more theoretical orientation influences the role of the students and their learning strategies.

The pedagogy of the programme: the role of the students

The independent and competitive law student

The rhetoric in the study plans of both programmes emphasizes the clear scholarly orientation by claiming that the students are expected to be academically able, well-prepared and take on much responsibility for their own learning (Faculty of Law, 2001; Faculty of Social Sciences, 2001). From what the students say, we also find that there is a predominantly vertical pedagogic relation between teachers and students (cf. Ensor, 2004) in both programmes. Especially within the law programme, the role of the teacher is primarily conceived to be a ‘transmitter’ and a ‘controller’; to check whether the students have obtained the correct knowledge which is predefined by the teachers. There is furthermore an emphasis on the method of ‘written lecture’ (Pihlajamäki & Lindblom-Yläänne, 2003) which means that the teachers lecture on the basis of a textbook. This pedagogical approach is also prevalent in the psychology programme. However, this programme also offers and requires participation in more varied teaching and learning activities as we have seen above. The ‘visible pedagogy’ therefore, particularly in law, is primarily about gaining ‘mastery’ of a body of content and a specific method, and what is ‘visible’ is examination performance, prepared for by private study. In such circumstances, the promotion and development of professional skills and responsibility is marginal and to a significant extent ‘invisible’ due to

the dominant pedagogies and mode of assessment (for a distinction between visible and invisible pedagogies, see Bernstein, 1996).

Taking a degree in law is regarded as an individual project. ‘Very much a one man show’, as a senior puts it. This attitude reflects the rhetoric in the study plan that the students themselves are responsible for the individual learning process. In order to get good grades, which are important for future work options, ‘the students have to invest an extensive amount of time in individual study’ (Faculty of Law, 2001, p. 19, authors’ translation). This is, as the following senior illustrates, what the faculty imprint in them as well: ‘There is a lot you have to read and learn by heart. ... They [the faculty] told us to read through books on the reading list three times before the exam; they expect us to read a lot’. As a consequence, the inevitable learning strategies are those of sitting for long hours in the reading hall, handing in individual assignments and participating in just a few seminars.

Although many law students talk about close friendships with peers, there is no doubt that the individual orientation and a strong focus on grades lead to a general attitude of competition rather than collaboration and support (cf. Jensen & Nygård, 1999; Åkvåg, 2000). The grade you get in your first exam is a significant artifact that defines who you are, and your grades follow you throughout your educational journey to the very end of a professional career, the students argue. ‘I have never experienced such pressure on exams and grades before’, a freshman argues. This reveals a strong element of individual and competitive performance which exemplifies an emphasis on learning through measurable outcomes rather than learning as engagement through systematic reflection and critique (Barnett & Coate, 2005).

Moreover, the students describe their relationship with their teachers as hierarchical and ‘distanced’. Despite some exceptions, they often point to the lack of collaboration between faculty members and themselves. ‘The professors are not very available. ... I can’t imagine knocking on an official door to ask questions that may turn out to be very simple and trivial’, a freshman student argues. However, the students seem to accept this structure as part of the culture of the university, as this freshman continues: ‘This is a university programme, so I guess that’s the deal. At the university you should learn individually and independently, be mature enough for that—not to be headed into a time schedule’.

The experienced vertical pedagogic relation is explained by many of the students as a result of structural conditions. As previously described, the number of students enrolling in the professional law programme is high. This is experienced as a crucial obstacle to closer contact between teacher and student. Another fact is that many of the teachers are professional lawyers giving lectures as a part time job. Hence, their interest in and opportunity to engage with the students seem to be limited, the students argue.

The privileged and collaborative psychology student

Even though we find a vertical pedagogic relation between teachers and students in psychology as well, the picture is different. Getting access to the professional

programme means becoming a member of the exclusive class of a maximum of 40 students. This represents a great shift regarding teaching and learning, collaboration and support. Compared with their experiences from the lonely 'journey' at the foundation level, they are now closely followed up through a lot of mandatory teaching and group work. They are already one of the 'chosen people'! As one freshman illustrates:

It is probably hard for you to understand, but for us who are coming from the foundation course where there is perhaps a lecture three times a week and no follow up—and then you come to the first semester of the professional programme and then they [the faculty members] tell us that we are 'favoured students'. We are offered a lot of teaching, and it has been arranged so that we can have colloquia. We are really being followed up.

Students in the psychology programme are obliged to participate in relatively extensive mandatory teaching activities. This is described in the study plan as a requirement in order to learn to become a professional (Faculty of Social Sciences, 2001, p. 51). The students support this idea. They report that mandatory group discussions, role-plays and the awareness of multiple theoretical perspectives, prompts them to develop their understanding of the science of psychology and to envisage a future professional role. Participation in these activities also encourages community building and a supportive student milieu, they maintain. 'We will all help each other through the programme' is a frequent statement. The fact that there is less focus on grades than in law seems to support a more collaborative attitude. They have already shown that they are good by getting access to the professional programme, and the final grades are not essential to work options unless you want a scientific career, they claim.

Regarding their future professional role, the psychology students experience the external practice as significant in order to become a competent practitioner. To collaborate with practitioners, to interpret the meaning of theory and practice *in situ* and to encounter patients, engages and challenges their professional selves and develops notions of professional responsibility, they argue.

Summing up the students' experiences, it is rather obvious that the law students experience law as a programme where the role of the student is quite self-ruling, but also more 'lonely'. The psychology programme on the other hand requires attendance and participation. To engage and collaborate are explicit premises for being a student in psychology. The differences between the two groups may partly be explained by structure and regulations. With the small exclusive student group, and the large amount of mandatory teaching, the theory–practice dimensions of psychology create conditions for a more collaborative student role than what is possible in the large groups of law students having no mandatory teaching or practice.

The ethos of the programme: education as a venture into developing moral and societal responsibility?

As suggested earlier, graduate professional education is expected to educate both for technical expertise and notions of *moral and societal responsibility*. However, there is a

lack of focus on this kind of responsibility in professional education (Sullivan, 2005). Brint (1994) claims that there has been a historical transformation of professionalism that has marginalized the inculcation of moral values in favour of an emphasis on cognitive and technical expertise. The reasons for this change are manifold and complex. One reason is linked to an increased specialization of knowledge and the development of autonomous disciplines, frequently resulting in delimiting ethical and moral issues to separate courses or to the field of philosophy (Pihlajamäki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2003). Another reason is university teachers' fear of indoctrination by imposing their personal beliefs on the students (Bok, 1982, p. 126). Nevertheless, probably the most important reason for this decline is the historical shift in professional training from a practice-based apprenticeship model to a school-based academic model.

In the apprenticeship model, students in their daily training had to cope with practical as well as morally challenging situations. In contrast, in scholastic training, initiation into the 'wisdom of practice' embedded with moral and societal considerations in real-life situations, remains on the margin of their professional training (Sullivan, 2005). The strength of the academic model, though, is the transmission of ideas and research based on up-to-date knowledge, although this is often dependent on how professional responsibility is exercised by the relevant teachers. Its weakness may lie in its limitations in developing a particular habit of mind necessary to enable the practitioners to integrate technical skills with moral values of the profession (Freidson, 1988).

Law: moral deliberations as marginalized activities

As we have seen above, there is a strong reliance on theoretical and science-based knowledge as constituting the hallmark of professional competence in the two programmes scrutinized. The data further indicates that the dimensions of moral and societal responsibility have not been a major element of their studies. This is particularly visible in the case of law where the students reveal a sense of disappointment concerning the limited training in ethical judgement as related to professional tasks. 'Capability to feel empathy, knowledge of people and so on, get very little focus in the studies', a senior argues. Although they accept that practical and moral skills like empathy and communicative competence, are supposed to be learned and developed in practice after graduation, most of the students regret the lack of training in ethical judgment and professional discernment.

Our findings suggest that there is a prevalent wish among the students to act morally and to 'abide by the law and follow the rules' as many of them describe it. What this means in practice, is something they would like to have discussed more. For example, most of the students react against being taught what they see as immoral behaviour. A senior exemplifies this:

I have reacted a little to teachers who do a little bending and twisting of the rules. ... To be taught to do so, it seems to me a little. ... But that is also in a way to know the rules and regulations. But the way it was presented, that you can cheat the system one way or the other!?

We may argue, though, that being introduced to what they define as morally wrong reasoning and performance confronts and challenges the students' personal values. In such situations a sense of professional and moral responsibility may evolve as a 'bi-product'.

However as the programme, according to the students, does not systematically create spaces for dealing with issues of moral and societal responsibility, moral training does not appear as an integral part of the law programme. Rather, it seems that the students turn to more personal evaluations and informal ad-hoc discussions with peers, friends and their families in order to build their sense of professional responsibility. Developing a sense of professional responsibility therefore appears to be left to student's biographies and social networks, to the vicissitudes of life, rather than something worthy of more systematic and formal attention. This indicates that the moral and societal values advocated in the traditional ethos of professionalism (cf. Brint, 1994) are inadequately met in the law programme.

Psychology: moral deliberations as theory-based activities

Among the psychology students, the emergent picture is more varied. Some students report that ethical issues have been dealt with rather thoroughly in the programme, especially in the ethical course in one of the last semesters. Others think, however, that moral issues have not been systematically dealt with. One senior suggests that the approach has been 'very much value-neutral'. Nevertheless, a general impression is that the institute, and particularly the practice period, have helped them to develop a professional understanding of their moral mandate. They have developed a profound sense of belonging to a professional community, and by this being committed to the professional ethics of their profession. One of the seniors illustrates this by saying; 'All the ethical guidelines are of immense importance'. Embedded in their notions of professional responsibility there are elements clearly inspired by a moral attitude that they think the programme has helped them to develop, as this senior says: 'Preserve the self-respect of the client. ... Show humility in relation to the client's experience and feelings. ... In that respect I think the institute has been very capable. ... Show empathy and immediate positive acceptance.'

In these remarks it is possible to discern a certain focus on ethical and moral aspects of professional responsibility in the programme of psychology. Yet, from what the students say, there is an emphasis on what we may call the 'academic responsibility'. By this we mean that the psychology students tend to relate professional responsibility as frequently to the values of science as often as they do to care for future patients. Although the students do report having worked with moral and ethical issues in the ethics course and in their meetings with patients in practice, it is interesting to notice that the immediate responses to questions about moral and societal responsibility concerns science as a crucial hallmark of professional responsibility. This senior illustrates it well: 'I have a moral obligation to try to keep updated on what takes place in my profession. That is both a moral and societal responsibility'. This quotation also includes a sense of membership in a specific profession and

the claim to live up to its defined 'expertism'. However, talking about their responsibility for patients, the students include a moral responsibility for 'seeing the other', '... and in a therapy context show respect and empathy'. Nevertheless, it seems as if the emphasis on values of science to some extent overshadows the moral and societal dimension in the concept of professional responsibility. Across the spectrum of opinion garnered by the study, it appears that these students struggle to find an appropriate equilibrium between professional identification with a 'body of scientific knowledge' as an important hallmark of what it means to be a 'professional', and this loyalty has to be 'traded' against a commitment to, and care for, the client or patient.

Summing up, we may say that the programme of law, by more or less leaving out the moral dimension only partly keeps its responsibility towards a professional education. Although the programme of psychology to a larger extent than law encourages moral development, its dominant orientation tends to be on the academic and cognitive training and less on the practical and moral dimension. We find that the students argue for more training of moral reasoning skills as related to ethical issues in practice situations. Their experiences indicate that they do not feel sufficiently prepared for dealing with moral conflicts and complex moral challenges in professional work. Such a view support earlier studies claiming that practitioners argue that professional education does not prepare for handling moral conflicts and dilemmas (Wallace & Brody, 1994; Sullivan, 2005). Increased sensitiveness of the moral and societal dimensions of professional responsibility and its practical implications are developed in interaction between theory, reflection and practice experiences (Schön, 1983; Ozar, 1993; Sullivan, 2005). Where the practice elements are underplayed, there is likely in turn to be too little focus on and cultivation of the moral and societal dimension of professional responsibility. It is therefore tempting to support the students who regret the lack of integration between theory and practice.

Summary and discussion

In this article we have presented and discussed how two graduate professional programmes in the setting of a traditional university meet some commonly defined characteristics of professional education. On the basis of the students' reported experiences, we have argued that these two programmes:

- Provide a structured study track for a selected group of students following a defined curriculum structure. The selection procedures and the size of the groups selected, however, vary significantly between the two programmes and only the psychology students are closely followed up by academic staff.
- Represent two different pedagogical approaches. While student participation and collaboration are inevitable learning activities in psychology, individual study is described as the most important learning activity in law.
- Educate their students in the academic aspects of professional work by providing extensive theoretical studies.

- Build on a linear relation between theory and practice, although this is approached differently.
- Do not prepare students sufficiently for dealing with moral conflicts and complex moral challenges in professional work. This, however, differs somewhat between the programmes. While the moral aspect is (largely) absent in the law programme, the psychology programme provides *some* possibilities for practising and reflecting on moral aspects of professional work.

As mentioned in the introduction, higher education is a changing enterprise and the institutions are confronted with increasing international and national pressures to embrace change. The aims of higher education are questioned in radical ways and traditional missions are not taken for granted as the main bases for public investments in higher education (Amaral & Maassen, 2002). Nevertheless, higher education institutions do not always follow international and national precedents. The different institutions and departments have their own agendas too, and try to find ways of incorporating new structures and policies that fit with their own values and worldviews. The profile of education at the University of Oslo is still based on a strong integration between research and education and as our data shows academic knowledge is still the main educational pillar that define and legitimate the two educational programmes.

This dominance of academic knowledge may be understood in light of a more or less articulated 'pact' between higher education and professional life (Solbrekke & Karseth, 2006). According to Abbott (1988), the power and prestige of academic knowledge is important for a profession to sustain its jurisdiction, status and autonomy. This means that it is in the joint interest of faculty members and professionals to keep up the academic values in professional education. It may also be the case in law, where a substantial amount of the teaching is contributed by practising lawyers that the values of the marketplace, as well as a more instrumental, means-end model of professional learning, comes to dominate the programme to the extent that it becomes its defining ethos.

As earlier stated, professional and liberal education are linked to different sets of values. They thereby represent contesting ideas regarding the purpose of the university. When legitimizing the purpose, contents and structures of a programme in higher education, we may argue according to two different and partly competing principles of legitimation (see Ensor, 2004; Elzinga, 1990). The first one represents a *projective orientation*, meaning that we rely on a social legitimation pointing to the *utility* of the programme with references to external functions (in work life) and mainly to stakeholders outside the university. The second principle represents an *introjective orientation*, meaning that we rely on an epistemological and cognitive legitimation with reference to the programme's relation to the scientific and intellectual qualities of the discipline and mainly to stakeholders within the university. Graduate professional programmes must be understood in relation to both of these two principles and the institutional and cultural context in which they are situated. It may be the case, therefore, that how such programmes are staffed, especially the proportion of personnel employed full time by the university with a consequent

allegiance to the academy rather than the profession, is a significant axis point on which the balance of a programme turns.

Our findings also show that the differences between the programmes identified above encourage different values and student roles. An examination of the ways in which these different orientations influence the students' understandings of their prospective professional mandate and responsibility is beyond the scope of this article. It seems reasonable, though, to argue that since the spaces for critical reflection and practical studies are not particularly evident in either of the programmes, the programmes provide limited possibilities for developing conscious senses of professional responsibility in their students.

Challenges and further implication

On the basis of our study, we see some challenges for the design of graduate professional programmes situated in a traditional university context. In order to educate for the manifold dimensions of professional practice and its implied responsibilities, we argue for linking the 'best' of the academic tradition—the development of the individual and the enhancement of cognitive and critical thinking—to the practice and values of the professions for which the students educate. This means:

- Keeping up the strong focus on familiarizing the students with theoretical, research-based knowledge and its relevance for use in professional work.
- Strengthening the practical element of the programmes and integrating it with the programme's theoretical strengths.
- Designing programmes that provide communities of learning for deliberating on moral and societal aspects of professional work and promoting reflection on these aspects.

In an international context where globalization tends to privilege market values, and universities are being encouraged to attract private sector funding, the climate may become increasingly hostile to discourses on and about professional responsibility. Due to the fact that more time pressure is put on students, there is also a risk that students are encouraged to survive by a strategy of defensive withdrawal from questioning the values or the ideology of the education they take part in. In such circumstances, there is a considerable challenge to traditional universities to re-examine and possibly also to reinvent old 'missions' and to mint them in ways that prepare students more adequately for rapidly changing and more unpredictable work environments. Therefore, it is necessary to design spaces for systematic reflection on the complex questions about the purposes of graduate professional programmes in the academy as well as in the professions.

In which ways may the ideas discussed in this article be of relevance outside the two cases presented here? Educational programmes are social constructions. This means that decision-making in the construction and implementation of such programmes is a cultural and political process (Slaughter, 1997). Therefore, the curriculum and pedagogy of programmes might be shaped differently in different

contexts. Our data refers to two programmes at one specific university influenced by its traditions and the cultural context in which they are situated. Other universities offer different programmes, for instance with more problem-based orientations like law studies in the universities of Maastricht and Uppsala (Pihlajamäk & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2003) or psychology at Linköping University (Dahlgren *et al.*, 2002). These curricular constructions probably represent different pedagogical discourses. Nevertheless, we see the cases of law and psychology as examples of the phenomenon called 'graduate professional education'. We have compared them to characteristics commonly used to identify such programmes. We have come to the conclusion that, to varying degrees, they fulfil such criteria and, we have tried to understand why and to suggest challenges for future developments.

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Notes

1. The data presented here are drawn from a comparative project (2001-2004) called 'Students as Journeymen between Communities of Higher Education and Work' (EU Fifth Framework Programme, HPSE-CT2001-00068), including research teams from Germany, Norway, Poland and Sweden.

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