

Abstract

Sister was born: A sociological study on the growing and transformation of the nurses occupation.

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This dissertation addresses how boundaries of different types of work are legitimated and their consequences. Focus is given to conflicts of interests as well as the phenomenon of striving for reward and competition within the health care organization.

The study has both theoretical and empirical components. A *neoweberian perspective* is used on the relation between social closure and rationality (formal and substantive); a general sociological theory that involves how history can be understood as a series of monopolies by professions and positions, but also revolts against them through new closures.

Empirically, the emphasis is on the relationship between nurses and physicians and the strategies used by these groups to maintain or change dominance and subordinate relations. Present-day strategies are compared to those at the turn of the century. The *central issue* is the 1982 legislation (Swedish Law of Health Care) that dealt with the medical and administrative responsibility of management. With the advent of §14, physicians lost their previous legal rights of total medical and administrative responsibility with only medical responsibility remaining. Other occupational groups, mainly nurses, were granted the authority over administrative issues at care units. Since 1977 the nursing education included a college education with nursing care as the main subject. Nurses wish to control their sector, therefore the competition between nurses and physicians is not restricted to administration but also concerns the position and competence of nurses in the organization. This means that opening strategies are emphasized. In 1990 the law was changed again with only some possibilities remaining for other professions but physicians of total responsibility of management for a care unit.

The majority of the *data* used was obtained through primary material such as law texts and bills; submissions, private members' motions and certain trade union internal material; The Journal of Nursing and The Journal of Physicians with valuable support material gathered from interviews and secondary material.

The *analysis* includes the development of a number of closure and opening codes (in terms of principal, derivative and contingent forms) that were often claimed to be needed by rational reasons. Laws showed to be the most important principal code of closure. Other principal codes were e.g. education system and work organization.

Rationality and status are shown to be closely related. The tasks that before a change in legislation were looked upon as 'less attractive' suddenly changed character with the new law. An important conclusion is that government planning and regulation is of decisive importance for closure but most of all for opening - and in the extension for dominance and subordination.

Closure, rationality, opening strategies, health care organization, responsibility of management, nurse, physician, nursing education, professionalization, sociology.