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Towards Context Integrity – the Critical Potential of Interventions within Interprofessional Collaboration at School

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Abstract

In research on inclusive school interventions, concepts such as intervention integrity and fidelity were developed to describe the extent to which prescribed intervention procedures are stringently implemented and loyally adhered to. These concepts are conceived centrally to discussions on the development of so-called evidence-based practices. Through analyses of two cases from different research projects on interprofessional collaboration at school, we explore how interventions are reproduced in practice. Such collaboration often originates in various interventions designed to guide professional interaction, but how does this influence professionals' collective agency and the development of practice? Theoretically based on social practice theory and critical psychology, we analyse and highlight the importance of the way in which each intervention is situated, developed, and contextualized within the specific practices it aims to impact. Based on this, we develop the concept of context integrity in a discussion of how interventions are reproduced in relation to foregrounding conditions and challenges at school and the critical potential of interventions expanding professional collective agency and thereby transforming practice.

Keywords: Context Integrity, Critical Psychology, Interventions, Interprofessional Collaboration

Introduction

In Denmark, there is a noticeable tendency — across municipal policies, national political strategies, research, and educational practice — to frame the development of children's communities as a central solution to various challenges faced by schools in relation to inclusion. In recent years, schools in Denmark and their support systems — such as the Pedagogical-psychological counselling services (PPR) — have moved towards more interprofessional ways of working. These services, known in other countries as educational psychological services or school psychology services, have traditionally collaborated with schools by focusing on individual children. This has often occurred within what Little (Little, 2013) has described as a "*wait-to-fail*" model, where support is provided once problems have become severe. Today, however, there is a growing shift towards focusing on children's communities, aiming to create wider opportunities for participation and inclusion within mainstream education (Borring, 2024; Madsen, 2023; Mardahl-Hansen et al., 2020). These efforts can be seen as attempts to move beyond the historical tendency to individualize challenges at school — where difficulties have often been perceived as being inherent in the child, and therefore support systems primarily focused on assessing whether a child should be placed in general or special education (D'Amato et al., 2011). In contrast, recent developments reflect a shift towards supporting children's communities, emphasizing inclusive practices, early intervention, and preventive efforts to create meaningful participation opportunities within general educational settings. Rather than narrowly focusing on the remediation of individual children or the development of Individual Educational Programmes (IEPs), these efforts aim to expand school structures and their support systems for the purposes of addressing wider systemic and relational dimensions of schooling. This shift is also evident in the evolving role of the school's support systems, such as PPR, which now increasingly engage in interprofessional collaboration aimed at fostering inclusive environments (Borring, 2021; Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Røn Larsen, 2011).

The movement towards children's communities in education takes place alongside broader movements within international educational policy and practices. These trends promote the use of standardized interventions and educational programmes that demonstrate effectiveness and transferability. Trends framed as Evidence-Based Practice (EBP), 'evidence informed practice' and 'research-based education' have gained significant traction in educational policy and practice across countries, especially as a response to neoliberal demands for greater accountability, efficiency, and measurable outcomes at school (Biesta, 2016; Corcoran & Thomas, 2021; Jones, 2024).

In a Danish context, these developments are reflected in the way in which schools and interprofessional support systems engage with a growing number of educational programmes and interventions. These are often introduced as tools for managing complexity and promoting inclusion and learning at school. The interventions are typically supported by manuals and guidelines that guide practitioners in their implementation (Dahlbæk et al., 2023; Aabro, 2016). Examples include Positive Behaviour Support in Learning and Interaction, PALS (Laursen, 2013) which targets behavioural challenges through systematized approaches to school-wide support; and professional reflection models such as the LP model (Wick, 2013). A Scandinavian developed framework supports educators in the systematic analysis and development of their pedagogical

practices through structured team-based reflection. Other widespread practices include Cooperative Learning (Buchardt & Laursen, 2013), which fosters peer interaction and academic engagement together with e.g. neuro-pedagogical approaches, low arousal strategies, and social-emotional learning. These interventions exemplify how the ambition to strengthen children's communities is increasingly being translated into programmatic initiatives, framed by school effectiveness paradigms and evidence-based logics.

Owing to their increasing prevalence, interventions have been subject to criticism (Dahlbæk et al., 2023; Stanek, 2022; Aabro et al., 2017). Some researchers describe the implementation of interventions as a 'programme invasion' or 'projectitis' in professional work within daycare centres and schools (Englund & Englund, 2012; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2019a). Englund et al. (2009) question who demands such interventions and why they are considered to be necessary. Others argue that school policies, institutional, and administrative structures will lead to interventions being decided, funded, and developed far away from the professionals and children they are intended to serve (Borring, 2024; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2019b). Dahlbæk et al. (2023) even characterize intervention-based pedagogical work at school as ironic, pointing to the paradox that while society is described as "*hypercomplex*", there is a simultaneous reliance on a logic assuming that problems can be controlled and resolved through the structured application of standardized interventions.

Not all methods and interventions used at school are officially recognized as being evidence-based. Nevertheless, they may acquire evidence-based characteristics when implemented rigidly through predefined manuals and procedures with limited attention as to how they are translated into the specific contexts in which they are applied. On the one hand, such interventions offer structured frameworks for collaboration, developed through accumulated knowledge and experiences from multiple stakeholders. On the other hand, they cannot be regarded as one-size-fits-all solutions to the complex contexts of children's everyday lives. This tension — between standardized frameworks and the situated conditions of everyday school life — constitutes a central dilemma that professionals must continuously navigate in their work with interventions at school.

Aim and Structure

Rather than aligning with a binary for-or-against stance on intervention-based interprofessional collaboration, this article proposes an alternative approach. We explore the relevance and value of interventions, arguing that these cannot be determined solely by their standardized design, research-based rationale, or policy-driven legitimacy. We argue that their significance should rather be understood in relation to the way in which interventions are enacted and made meaningful within the everyday school practices. We explore how interventions are reproduced in practice and how this influence professionals' collective agency and the development of practice. This calls for theoretical perspectives that can illuminate how interventions are enacted, negotiated, and evaluated within the situated contexts of professional practice. Rather than rejecting interventional approaches in interprofessional collaboration, we aim to advance context-sensitive understanding and situated implementations at school, informed by an everyday-life perspective for the purpose of developing professionals' collective agency (Stetsenko, 2017).

Our examination of intervention-based interprofessional collaboration aimed at fostering inclusive school communities draws on social practice theory, critical psychology, and the practice research tradition (Holzkamp et al., 2013; Lave, 2019; Schraube & Højholt, 2015). This foundation thus includes a criticism of the notion of interventions as one-size-fits-all solutions that can be transferred into practice as ready-made instruments guided by manuals. Through analyses of two cases from separate research projects on interprofessional collaboration at school, we explore how interventions are enacted and reproduced in practice. In this part, we analyse and emphasize the importance of how interventions are situated, developed, and contextualized within the specific practices they aim to affect in meaningful ways. Based on this, we analyse how interventions are reproduced in relation to the conditions and challenges of school practice. We develop the concept of *context integrity* and discuss the critical potential of pedagogical interventions in interprofessional collaboration, focusing on how professionals can collectively develop and contextualize interventions — expanding professional agency and, in turn, transforming practice.

Interventional Approaches

Framed around the logic of "*what works*", EBP interventions is grounded in the belief that educational interventions can be selected and implemented on the basis of scientific evidence — typically generated through Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs), meta-analyses and be framed in cognitive, behavioural or other positivist-inspired research traditions (Jones, 2024). Within this framework, educational problems are often approached as technical challenges, best addressed by identifying the most effective interventions and ensuring that they are implemented with high fidelity and integrity (Castro-Villarreal & Rodriguez, 2017; Fan et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2018). In this context, fidelity and integrity refer to the degree to which practitioners deliver the intervention as it was originally designed, with less contextualization to local conditions and situated practices. From this perspective, working with interventions can be framed as a question of choosing the right one and executing it accurately and with high integrity, under the assumption that correct implementation will produce predictable and desirable outcomes. EBP-based interventions and their increased prevalence have been the subject of extensive criticism (Corcoran & Thomas, 2021; Stanek, 2022; Aabro et al., 2017). Terminologically, this has been referred to using various synonyms such as programmes, projects, methods, EBP-based interventions, context-independent solutions (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2019a; Aabro et al., 2017). Réol has expressed it as "*Pedagogical recipes that promise effectiveness, provided that techniques and methods are followed faithfully*" (Réol, 2022, p. 32, our translation)

Discussions about intervention-based pedagogical work have increasingly centred on the tension between standardized EBP and the value of professional, situated judgment and teacher agency. The EBP model, in particular, has been the subject of growing criticism — especially owing to its claims of universality, its instrumental logic, and its constraining effects on teacher agency (Borring, 2024; Dahlbæk et al., 2023; Hedegaard-Sørensen, 2022; Aabro, 2019). In contrast to the predominant EBP paradigm, critical approaches such as Evidence-Making Interventions (EMI), offer an alternative to a more situated and relational understanding of how interventions function in educational settings (Corcoran & Thomas 2021). Rather than treating evidence as something permanent,

external, and universally applicable, EMI emphasizes that evidence and the subjective meanings of the interventions are constructed with departure in and through the ongoing context-sensitive practices of educators, children, and the wider school environment. From this perspective, interventions are not simply applied to solve problems as a technical rationality as Schön stated in 1983. They are rather co-produced within specific social, material, and political conditions (Dreier, 2011; Schön, 1983). These critical approaches stress the significance of professional judgment and their situated responsiveness to complexity at school practices, thereby challenging the assumption that strict fidelity and adherence to standardized interventions will automatically result in expected outcomes. The question we will venture here is not merely whether specific interventions are classified as being evidence-based. Neither will it solely be a matter as to how they are enacted in practice by the individual professionals' judgment. Rather, our alternative approach proposes how professionals together with children can critically and actively integrate and transform them at and across school into collaborative processes aimed at transforming everyday practice.

Methodological Framework

Our theoretical foundation draws on social practice theory and critical psychology which, philosophically, are based on historical dialectical materialism (Dreier, 1979; Holzkamp, 2005; Lave, 2019; Vianna & Stetsenko, 2014). This perspective emphasizes a reciprocal developmental relationship between subjects' participation and societal structures, which evolve and are driven by contradictions in social practices within which subjects participate. In this sense, professionals and children at school must be understood as negotiating participants — not merely as carriers or implementers of current trends, bringing evidence-based interventions into their work with children's communities. Social practices are continuously evolving as children and professionals participate in their production and reproduction (Lave, 2019; Marx et al., 2001; Ollman, 2003). Rather than being fixed, interventions will develop and transform through the participation of multiple actors — such as children, school professionals, and PPR — as they collaborate to develop practice. These transformation processes, which we will describe later, can vary significantly in terms of the ways in which children and professionals perceive their level of influence or constraints. These variations, in turn, shape how meaningful the intervention becomes to the participants, particularly in relation to the specific challenges they are already working to address.

Our ontological assumptions in examining evidence-based practice (EBP) interventions at school can be described from three standpoints. First, we build on the premise that human beings are not defined by mere adaptation. According to Stetsenko (2023), human beings are always actively engaged in co-developing possibilities with others for the purpose of establishing meaning within a social world. This means that professionals in schools will engage with such frameworks as interventions provide, transforming them to integrate with other ongoing work within school practices. Therefore, interventions invariably coexist with the consistently ongoing everyday life at school, which simply cannot be 'halted and organized' owing to 'technical rationality' with school-related problems being neatly controlled and arranged, provided the use of the right tools (Schön, 1983, 1991).

This leads us to the second standpoint: interventions do not operate in isolation but are always contextualized based on what children and professionals are already engaged in, as well as how they find meaning in the interventions as they are enacted within these practices. This dialectical understanding of development implies that even if an intervention is integrated into one school practice, it is an ontological impossibility for it to be reproduced in exactly the same way in other social practices (a similar point is emphasized by Dreier, 2011; Nissen, 2016). The two standpoints concerning dialectics between humans, practices, and interventions will culminate in a third standpoint: namely, that professionals are invariably already intervening, drawing on diverse perspectives, methods, and experiences. This emphasizes that everyday school practices are continuously undergoing change, as compared with the implicit view of EBP interventions as fixed and static and exempt from ongoing development. Consequently, interventions will evolve in different ways, depending on the specific practices and contexts within which they are enacted.

A Theoretical Notion of Everyday Life

The three ontological standpoints inform an epistemological approach that emphasizes the need for attending to the ways in which social practices at school will unfold through the dialectical relationship between subjects' agency, shared activities, and the structural conditions of their everyday lives (Holzkamp, 2005; Lave, 2019). For the purpose of understanding the everyday life conditions that professionals and children at school negotiate and transform in collaboration our investigation of interventions requires a socially situated analysis based on an everyday life perspective. Disciplines within everyday-life research — such as anthropology, sociology, and social psychology — collectively emphasize that societal problems, dilemmas, and conflicts become visible and are enacted through people's everyday practices. This kind of research is widely concerned with the ways in which the everyday lives of multiple actors can serve as a foundation for an empirical enquiry by analysing how people experience and engage in their everyday lives. In our analysis of interventions in interprofessional collaboration at school, we draw on the following concepts and theoretical understanding.

Contexts being Interrelated

The various contexts in which children and professionals participate within school frameworks are mutually connected, just as the diverse social practices through which they live their lives are interwoven (Axel, 2011; Højholt & Kousholt, 2020; Ollman, 2015). This means that professionals and children's participation in school contexts is also connected with their opportunities for engagement in many other contexts throughout their everyday lives. In our subsequent analyses of the two cases, it for instance becomes evident that intervention-based interprofessional collaboration at school struggles to address the complex and interconnected issues that unfold across school, home, and leisure environments. Children and professionals' conditions with respect to life at school, as well as their opportunities for developing communities, should therefore be understood as being linked with participation across multiple contexts, while also being shaped by the school as a societal institutional practice.

History in Situated Practice

Children's participation at school and professionals' collaboration around it are deeply rooted in history. To understand the historical and societal significance of professionals' concrete everyday conditions for collaboration — including the incorporation and use of interventions — we draw on Lave and Holland's concept of the *history of the present*. They describe how social practices and subjects' conditions are historically grounded and, likewise, that this historical development is "*brought to the present (...) to local, situated practice*" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 5). Lave (2019) further emphasizes that historically developed societal conditions are manifest in situated ways and have tangible implications for subjects' participation in social practices. The school represents a unique setting that historically contributes to the emergence of contradictory issues which children and professionals navigate — often in conflicting ways (Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Sylvest-Berg & Tybjerg, 2026; Tybjerg, 2023). Consequently, the political and historical development of the school and its support systems will shape professionals' concrete conditions for collaborating around children's communities, influencing both why and how interventions are incorporated.

Participation History

Children and professionals' subjective experiences of participation in and across social practices significantly shape their engagement. Beyond examining cross-contextual everyday life and the school as a historically situated societal institution, we emphasize the importance of these subjective participation histories. We draw on Borring's (2024) further development of Dreier's concept of *participation trajectories* (Dreier, 1999, 2009) reframed as *participation history*. This concept enables a dialectical analysis of the conditions, motives, and subjective histories that professionals bring into collaboration as reasons for participation. As we will illustrate later, professionals in our cases sometimes face constrained opportunities for action when their own histories of understanding and transforming social practices are marginalized in favour of rigid intervention manuals and procedures. Borring's concept highlights the subjective and historical dimensions of school issues and the way in which professionals have historically engaged in addressing them. This underlines how school issues have complex histories shaped by multiple actors and, likewise, how a subject's participation history is at one and the same time subjective and collectively reasoned.

Methods

This article builds on two research projects that are based within the tradition of critical psychological practice research (Holzkamp 1998, 2005, 2013; Dreier, 1999). In practice research, context-sensitive designs are developed with the purpose of contributing to ways of reflecting on and identifying issues, opportunities, contradictions, and dilemmas within the field. The methods used in both projects comprise participant observations together with situated dialogues taking place during observation at the schools as well as interviews conducted with teachers, pedagogues, school principals, PPR-professionals and leisure time activity counsellors, and students. Practice research is based on the principle of collaboration and on the understanding that knowledge is distributed among participants within practice (Jensen, 1999). This means that research becomes a collaborative process,

involving an ongoing exchange between researchers, professionals, children, and young people at school, all of whom are considered to be co-researchers (Kousholt & Højholt, 2011).

The analysis is shaped by an integrated theory–practice relationship. We define this strategy as a *conditional analytical lens* (Tybjerg, 2023), conceived as a dialectical prism encompassing multiple facets that correspond to the various theoretical concepts outlined above. These concepts are interconnected and help us identify the intertwined social conditions in which professionals and children participate and, likewise, how interventions are reproduced through their actions in specific settings. Similarly, a conditional analytical lens enables us to discern different facets of these contexts through various concepts. We have condensed these facets into themes, which should not be seen as isolated entities — neither empirically nor theoretically — but rather as interconnected clusters that unfold throughout the analysis. These clusters emerge from interpretations of what, from an everyday-life perspective, appears to shape the conditions and experiences of participation among professionals and children regarding interventions in practice. At the same time, the selection of themes is informed by the theoretical concepts described above. Concepts which, through iterative readings of the empirical material as part of the analytical process, have been developed and refined for the purpose of illuminating the conditions and their significance from various perspectives within the material.

Intervention to Address Conflicts at school – case 1

The first case draws on a three-year research project examining collaboration between schools and the Pedagogical Psychological Service (PPR) in a suburban municipality surrounding one of Denmark's larger cities, conducted at a medium-sized public school. Throughout the project, several different collaboration processes between school professionals and PPR have been followed within the same municipality in Denmark, and the case presented in this article is based on one of these processes, which was followed over the course of a full school year (Borring, 2024). The project has explored collaboration from both teachers' and PPR's perspectives, focusing on the conditions under which collaboration unfolds, including the dilemmas and possibilities for action that emerge in practice. Empirical material was generated through participant observations, situated dialogues, and qualitative interviews. The project focuses on a growing shift towards working with school environments and children's communities, with school professionals and PPR collaborating more systemically — highlighting a move away from the historically individualised focus on the child.

In this article, we zoom in on how this collaborative work often takes the form of interventions designed to support such shifts. In this particular case, the collaboration is expressed through a Forum Theatre (FT) intervention — an approach inspired by critical pedagogy and participatory theatre, exemplifying how intervention methods can engage with this wider movement. FT's goal is to help overcome societal oppression by fostering a critical awareness of social, political and economic conditions, as well as alienating structures (Freire, 2017). At school, FT is used to address children's conflicts by enacting a real-life problem as a play which ends at the peak of the conflict. The children are then invited to propose possible solutions. Such suggestions can either be acted out by the audience or conveyed verbally (Hammond, 2015). In this particular case, FT is analysed

as an ‘evidence-based’ intervention, since it is introduced in a structured manner, with its framework and procedures strictly shaping how the collaboration is structured in practice. This reflects a strict emphasis on intervention fidelity and integrity, with pedagogical interventions being instrumentally applied according to predetermined frameworks rather than adapted to the specific contexts and challenges they address. Here, rather than serving as an open-ended dialogic space, FT functions as a firmly controlled tool for directing professional collaboration towards fixed educational and organizational goals, leaving little room for contextual responsiveness.

The case

In a third-grade class, conflicts among the children have persisted for several years, prompting the involvement of PPR for the purpose of collaborating with the class teachers. The teachers report that the boys treat one another very harshly – a dynamic which has “spilled over” into the rest of the group, making the classroom an unpleasant environment for children and professionals alike. These issues are manifest outside the classroom, during recess, with the occurrence of physical altercations, and continue inside the classroom, where conflicts and arguments persist. The overwhelming presence of these conflicts thus leaves teachers unable to conduct lessons. The teachers have tried various interventions but feel that none have effectively dealt with the conflicts. One teacher explains, "We've tried everything, but nothing works”. According to the two class teachers, the conflicts among the children have also extended to conflicts among parents. Heated exchanges have been posted on Facebook, discussing which children are responsible for the conflicts and which children, according to some parents, 'should be transferred to special schools'. The teachers have described the Facebook exchanges between parents as a state of war.

Additionally, the teachers highlight challenges related to one specific boy in the class, whom they struggle to support. They describe him as often being involved in conflicts and experiencing difficulties with engaging in lessons. The classroom conflicts are discussed at the initial meeting between the school and PPR, whereupon the PPR consultant puts up three key issues on the board: 1) "the boy," 2) "children’s communities and classroom culture," and 3) "parental conflicts". Subsequently, the PPR consultant asks the teachers which type of support they expect to receive from PPR. One of the class teachers replies that they expect PPR to "fix it". The PPR consultant responds that though PPR is not in a position to fix problems at school, they can collaborate with the teachers on strengthening the children's communities rather than focusing on specific children. In justification, they explain that PPR experience as well as research shows that community-based approaches "work effectively". The issues concerning ‘the boy’ and the conflicts between parents are not discussed any further. However, the PPR consultant points out that if they succeed in the work with the children's communities, this could also exert an impact on other issues. At the meeting, it is decided that the theatre-inspired intervention, FT, should constitute a framework for such collaboration.

Prior to the implementation of FT together with the children, the PPR consultants provide the teachers with a comprehensive introduction to such intervention, its origins, and its procedures. After the establishment of this methodological framework, the classroom conflicts are subjected to a brief discussion. The PPR consultants requests concrete

examples of conflicts which could be addressed by FT. The football field is highlighted as a key setting, as many conflicts arise there — not only on the field as such but also in the transitions between recess and returning to class. One example involves a boy using a chokehold on another child. This is the same boy to whom the teachers repeatedly refer as being a challenge to support in the classroom. This example becomes the basis for the first play, performed in anonymized form by the two PPR consultants, with the class as the audience.

During the discussion of the specific conflicts related to the football field, the two teachers mention to the PPR consultants that the children are highly preoccupied with the matter that concerns with whom they will walk to the afterschool activity centre[1], which is located some distance from the school premises. Throughout the school day, the children frequently try to make plans with each other concerning by which children they will be accompanied. The teachers explain that they are frequently approached during the last lesson of the day by crying children – children who have not managed to make provision for a walking partner. However, this concern is not further pursued at the meeting, as the conversation shifts back to the focus on FT and how the plays can be made authentic in relation to the children's conflicts on the football field.

FT is conducted in the class over three 45-minute sessions, facilitated by PPR with the teachers primarily observing. Between sessions, the teachers and PPR consultants hold meetings to discuss their experiences with FT, and they plan the next session. Both at meetings and during the intervention as such, it becomes evident that the PPR consultants emphasize specific procedures and guidelines. Teachers, the school principal, and the children make several suggestions for modification or expansion of the intervention during these meetings. Such proposals are however rejected by the PPR consultants, who state that "this is not the way that FT works".

An evaluation meeting is held at which one teacher acknowledges that the children enjoyed the sessions; albeit the same conflicts and group dynamics — especially involving the same boy — remain unresolved. However, no further dialogue occurs concerning the way in which collaboration may continue, or how, forward-looking, the school professionals may address these persistent conflicts.

History in situated Practice – a Basis for Interventional Approaches

PPR's involvement in the collaboration described above can be understood in the light of its longstanding historical focus which, for more than 100 years, has primarily been directed at individual children. Many PPR-units across municipalities in Denmark are now striving to move beyond this individualized approach, just as they try to do in the case. Significant resources have been allocated in this particular PPR unit for the purpose of fostering professionals' engagement in school practices, shifting the focus toward children's communities. However, this shift poses an ongoing challenge to PPR professionals, as existing structures within and around schools — such as Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), assessments, referral procedures to placement committees, and

[1] In the Danish school system, an afterschool activity center is a school-based programme for children in the early primary grades, where they spend the hours after formal lessons engaged in supervised play, social activities, and organised leisure time programmes.

meeting agendas — predominantly remain designed for the purpose of addressing individual children. As a result, PPR professionals implement various interventions for the purpose of organizing collaboration between schools and PPR, focusing on children's communities within instrumental frameworks or in instrumental ways such as the FT. Their participation in this collaboration must therefore be understood in relation to their historical involvement and their ambitions to develop a new collaboration form breaking away from historical practices. Several PPR professionals who participate in the research project describe how they are working towards creating a new collaboration model and professional identity within PPR which require experience-building and knowledge development. Part of this process involves the creation of interventions that transcend PPR's historically individualized focus on problems at school.

Conditions of Intervention Fidelity and Integrity

According to Pettersvold and Østrem (2019a), evidence-based interventions are often understood as context-independent standards that should be implemented consistently across settings. Aabro (2019) describes how the concept of *evidence* reinforces expectations that problems will be resolved through the strict and faithful implementation of a particular method. A logic that, in the present case, is enacted through the FT intervention. In this understanding of practice, integrity becomes central: if professionals follow the procedures about FT closely, the desired effect will follow. In line with this, Borring (2024) shows how terms such as intervention integrity and intervention fidelity are used within the field of school-PPR collaboration to assess how loyal interventions are implemented in practice. This ideal of uniform implementation gives rise to the ways in which interventions are actually applied and experienced within support systems at school.

In the collaboration concerning the third-grade class, this logic is manifested in the use of FT as a predefined intervention framework. The PPR consultants involved present FT as an intervention that must be implemented with high integrity referring to its evidence-informed foundation as a justification for adhering closely to the method's original design. As a result, the intervention is experienced by teachers as rigid and inflexible, providing limited opportunities for adapting or incorporating their own perspectives and contextual knowledge. Teachers' participation history and insight into the class dynamics are frequently dismissed with the justification that "*this is not allowed within the FT intervention*". This is reflected in a teacher's description of the process: "*PPR came in storming the classroom, did the Forum Theatre, and then they left again*". This statement captures a sense of disconnection and experienced short-term temporality in the collaboration — despite the fact that PPR and the teachers engaged in several meetings and spent 3 × 45 minutes in the classroom together.

The way the intervention is applied in this collaboration — with a strong emphasis on integrity towards the intervention — illustrates a tension between remaining loyal to a predefined models and interventions and the professionals' possibilities for developing approaches that will respond meaningfully to the specific contexts and issues with which they are working.

Figure-Ground Reversals

For several years, the class has been characterised by ongoing conflicts with which teachers, pedagogues, and parents have attempted to cope through various initiatives, such as different programmes focused on the children's social emotional learning, well-being in class, play-date arrangements during recess, as well as learning-environment analyses in the afterschool activity centre. On several occasions, teachers have also worked directly on conflicts with the children, providing the children with various conflict scenarios on which to reflect. Additionally, despite the intense conflicts — described by teachers as parents being "*at war*" on Facebook — there has also been parental collaboration, as parents have taken turns escorting the children between the school to the afterschool activity centre. Additionally, some parents have, at times, remained in the school hallway throughout entire school days as, otherwise, their children would not have been able to attend school.

However, the strong focus on interventions and loyalty thereto, the FT collaboration appears to have the effect of suppressing knowledge and experiences developed in the everyday school life of this third-grade class, preventing the children from becoming part of the collaboration. This intervention-based approach seems to create a form of figure-ground reversal, with attention being directed more towards FT procedures rather than the specific and diverse and cross-contextual challenges within the class. As a result, the strict focus on FT in this interprofessional collaboration between teachers and PPR is centred on whether and to what extent the procedures are followed faithfully and with intervention integrity and fidelity. From the teachers' perspectives, this is experienced as being both irrelevant and inflexible in relation to working collaboratively with PPR on issues which, over several years, have already been addressed in various ways. The teachers repeatedly propose alternative ways for structuring the FT collaboration, whereas the PPR consultants reject such proposals, arguing that "*this is not possible within FT*". Analysed from the teachers' perspectives and with a focus on their participation history, the FT collaboration does not seem to effectively address the issues within and around this third-grade class in ways that engage with the everyday school life in which the conflicts unfold. Consequently, the collaboration becomes centred more on the FT intervention as such than on the everyday life in which children and professionals participate.

Cross-Contextual Conflicts

An analysis of the participation history of school professionals reveals how conflicts in this third-grade class have branched out cross-contextually, extending far beyond the classroom, and the transition between recess and lessons. Nonetheless, it is decided that focus should be on what is defined as "*the children's community and classroom culture*". This results in the contextualization of the intervention being unable to address complex and cross-contextual challenges across children's multifaceted everyday lives. The long social history of conflicts involves many participants having contributed to their development as well as the numerous attempts at resolution. In interviews, the teachers report that, over the years, the Afterschool Activity Centre as well as the parents have also been involved in the resolution of conflicts across contexts.

While the teachers thus have an extensive participation history in the understanding and resolution of the complex issues both within and around the class, this valuable knowledge

is not effectively integrated into the collaboration with PPR — partly because the teachers do not actively bring this knowledge into the process, partly because they expect PPR to 'fix the problem', and partly because the PPR consultant maintains that as long as the community-building work through FT succeeds, the other related issues will resolve themselves.

From the school professionals' perspective, the FT process increasingly appears to address problems in a fragmentary way, with PPR positioned as a support that can only intervene in certain aspects of the wider, cross-contextual issues. This division of labour leaves the teachers with the responsibility for managing the other interconnected dimensions — such as parental involvement, individual children's needs, and the transitions between school and the afterschool activity centre. Ultimately, the heavy emphasis on the intervention as such as well as its intense fidelity will shape the conditions for interprofessional collaboration. This defines what the collaboration can focus on, thereby potentially narrowing the professionals and children's opportunities for participation as well as their ability to respond to the cross-contextual complexity of problems arising at school.

Intervention to Address Conflicts at School – case 2

The second case is based on empirical material from a research project called *"Participation and Situated Inequality in Children's Institutional Lives*" (Røn Larsen et al., 2023). Over three year the project examines what hinders and promotes children and young people's opportunities for participation in their institutional lives and across their everyday life's context. In this article we zoom in on a case in a 6th-grade class in school and a afterschool activity centre. In the case, we explore how teachers at a school collaborates with professionals from the local afterschool activity centre on an intervention called "*Me and My Strengths*" (MMS). The school is a medium-sized public school and is located in a marginalised urban residential area in a large city in Denmark. In this area there is a history of collaboration among professionals across the different settings of children's everyday lives. The empirical material consists of participant observations in the class during the period of the intervention (6 months), dialogues and one interview with the class teacher, the leader of the school and a counsellor of Leisure-time Activities.

Professionals from the local afterschool activity centre are educated as pedagogues as well as counsellors. Counselling of leisure-time activities is another Danish support system offered to children and young people who attend leisure-time activity centres. In Denmark, when the school day ends — typically around 3 p.m. — a structured support system takes over. Leisure-time activity counsellors help children and young people participating at afterschool activity centres, sports programmes, and youth clubs. This division between school and leisure facility is part of the institutional organization of children and youth services in Denmark. In this case, the counsellors work both at the local school during the intervention and at the afterschool centre.
The intervention on which they collaborate, MMS, is highlighted as an evidence-based method that supports the development of children's social-emotional skills, self-awareness, empathy, and social competences. It includes a structured manual for implementation, and the goal is to strengthen the individual child's ability to participate in both school and leisure-time activity communities. Therefore, the intervention focuses on identifying and

building on personal strengths. The school principal and leisure-time activity counsellors have collaborated on this intervention for several years. The counsellors are certified as MMS instructors with the aim of implementing the intervention at the school in the 6th and 7th grades. The 6th-grade class at this school was selected for intervention due to social issues within the group. There were frequent conflicts, including physical and verbal confrontations among the girls, which contributed to a pervasive sense of insecurity in the class, affecting both students' social relations and their engagement in everyday school activities. The teachers had been working on these issues for some time and, in collaboration with the school principal, it was agreed to try out MMS. The counsellors are already familiar with the 6th-grade children from the leisure-time activity counselling and with the children attending the afterschool-activity-centre.

The intervention runs over six months including six school days and concluding with one overnight stay at the afterschool-activity-centre. Over six days, the class works with a textbook that, structure-wise, resembles their academic textbooks, whereas the exercises also focus on practicing social skills such as active listening and the interpretation of facial expressions. Between tasks described in the book, the children engage in various exercises such as drama and role-playing. According to one of the counsellors, the book-based tasks as well as the practical exercises have been designed for the purpose of strengthening the class's sense of community. The following case describes the third day, during which one of the authors observed the intervention taking place in the class. This description also draws on an interview of one of the leisure-time activity counsellors and on dialogues with the school principal, teachers and children gathered in the course of one year of participant observation at the school.

The case

On the third day, the children begin by taking out their books and moving to another room that has been set up for the MMS activities at the school. The room resembles any other classroom, with desks arranged in a horseshoe shape, albeit with more floor space to allow physical activities. Posters from MMS are stuck on the walls, illustrating different exercises, including definitions of empathy and ways in which it may be practiced. With the counsellors leading the day's programme, the class teacher is present throughout the day, assisting with group formations and conflict resolution. To begin with, the children stand by the board, taking turns to demonstrate their mood to the others. The others try to guess the mood, and everyone laughs. After the initial exercises, the class works on the task book. During a break, one of the counsellors mentions that they are careful to adjust the number of tasks relative to the children's energy levels and the way in which the class is functioning on that particular day. Therefore, they sometimes develop the activities in a flexible way, adding more physical exercises if they assess that this is needed. According to the counsellor, this is often the case, as the children consider these exercises to be great fun and often request them. This day in 6th grade, it seems that the exercises on the floor are what engage the children the most, as compared with the tasks set out in the book. When the individual work on the book begins, several children lean across their desks, thus giving rise to conflicts between them, as with the teachers concerning which activities they should be carrying out. In one situation, the counsellors interrupt their work and initiate a role-playing exercise from the book about active listening.

Throughout the MMS intervention, the class has worked on expanding their comfort zones for the purpose of addressing feelings of insecurity. The leisure-time activity counsellor explains that children and professionals have discussed how to define a comfort zone and what it takes to collectively challenge such zones within the community. Some children suggested that a field trip to a place never visited before might be a way to challenge their comfort zones and get together in new ways. Although this idea does not constitute an element in the MMS programme, the teacher and counsellor decide to pursue it. After lunch on the third day of intervention work in the class, they begin to prepare for such a trip, focusing on how to challenge the children's comfort zones and address feelings of insecurity within the group on the trip. This involves agreements about how to sit on the bus, behaviour in new environments, to enjoy one another's company, etc. The counsellor later expressed in an interview that the trip had exceeded all expectations and the class took a photo which has since been framed and put on display in the classroom. The counsellor also expresses, that the class is planning an overnight stay to signify the end of the intervention. She explains that, in other MMS interventions, overnight stays have been applied for children to prepare presentations for sharing with their parents during pick-up, which is part of the intervention manual. Based on children's feedback, however, they have instead taken to conduct these exercises at school, as performing them during the overnight stay was considered to make less sense. Instead, the overnight stay focuses on creating opportunities for more relaxed activities, thus reflecting the children's preference for spending time with their classmates in more informal settings.

Throughout the participant observation, several of the children say that they find MMS to be fun because of the many exercises they perform together, and they look forward to the trip and the overnight stay. According to the counsellor, the professionals involved in MMS gain valuable experience by connecting with the children in different contexts and in ways beyond the school and afterschool activity centre. She explains that practicing the intervention together enables them to collaborate with the teachers as they get to know each other better. The class teachers and the school principal also express enthusiasm about the collaboration, noting that the intervention has entailed fewer conflicts in the class. They all agree that, afterwards, more children will attend the afterschool activity centre, as the overnight stay facilitates their becoming more familiar and comfortable with each other.

Contextualized practice development

As the case illustrates, the MMS intervention is contextualized with a focus on the daily life in class which makes sense to both children and professionals. This can be seen when the counsellors adjust the day's programme, allowing the class to influence the exercises and their extent throughout the day. Here, the children negotiate their participation and engagement in the exercises, which, in turn, influences how the professionals will develop the intervention. This is equally observable when all the participants plan a trip as part of the intervention, responding to the children's requests for concrete activities which they believe will help strengthen their community and address the insecurity issues in the class. In this particular case, we observe how the intervention evolves by actively incorporating the children's perspectives — for example through the planning of the trip with children and professionals collaboratively entering into agreements on how to strengthen their community. Additionally, MMS has been developed in a way that allows the children to

prepare and deliver presentations during school hours rather than during the overnight stay. Instead, this creates conditions for more relaxed interaction — thus reflecting the children's expressed preferences. Both children and professionals continuously negotiate the activities in ways that result in the intervention being contextualized and reproduced in new ways.

As noted, the counsellors have worked with intervention at various schools and in various classes. Over time, they have gained insight into which tasks are difficult to perform, and which can be ignored. Likewise, they found that, often, physical exercises and games will create engagement, and – as compared with others – some exercises exert a more positive impact on the children. This means that, based on their history of participation and accumulation of knowledge in practice, the counsellors actively make decisions about what they consider to be important for the children to engage in while, at the same time, considering the children's specific engagement on the day and how, based on MMS, teaching can evolve in new and relevant ways. In this way, the professionals flexibly adjust the frameworks of interventional and pre-defined procedures, thus performing the intervention in ways that make sense from an everyday-life perspective. Ways that differ from what has been designed in the manual. The intervention is contextualized through this process, taking into account the participation history and the perspectives of the specific individuals, thus contributing to the development of the ongoing social practices of the class and the collective agency of the professionals' collaboration.

All this means that, in practice, the dilemmas and challenges experienced by all participants are placed at the forefront and, also, the intervention aims to facilitate their transformation within their specific contexts. It will be the context integrity processes that enables them to overcome such challenges, which we expand on later.

Bridge-Building Collaboration across Contexts

The contextualization of the MMS intervention is centred around the collaboration between many parties managing to integrate several of the cross-contextual areas of the children's lives of which they constitute a part. Along the way, new connections will be created between counsellors, teachers, and the school principal. From their respective perspectives, various parties and professionals discuss how this process is perceived as a factor that contributes to the development of their interprofessional collaboration with respect to class communities. This intervention can thus be understood as a connecting link that brings together actors across the many contexts of children's lives. Here, many parties have a stake in collaborating on a cohesive effort, and MMS becomes a linking framework for such cooperation. Collaboration is thus based on MMS intervention, but it mainly becomes a *point of departure* for collaboration rather than a rigid content with procedures set out in manuals that define the conditions for collaboration with a focus on intervention integrity.

In this case, collaboration on the MMS intervention can be understood as a way to initiate, professionalize, and systematize interprofessional collaboration for bringing together many professionals' perspectives and current concerns about children's communities across the contexts of their everyday lives. This contributes to the professionals' ability to see the children in new ways as well as exploring and exchanging knowledge and

experiences based on the intervention as part of their professional work (see Mardahl-Hansen & Tybjerg, 2025 for the concept of *exploring professionalism* across contexts).

Among other things, leisure-time activity counsellors participate in the school environment, gaining insight into children's lives through their involvement. They also provide opportunities to connect with parents and informally include their perspectives on children's leisure-time activities. Likewise, teachers will gain insight into what takes place at the afterschool activity centre and the ways in which the children participate there. Thus, the inclusion of the intervention can be understood as a contextualization that expands the professionals' opportunities to gain knowledge about the children across different settings as well as collaborate with the children and focusing on their participation within the school community and the afterschool activity centre.

What Tybjerg and Mardahl-Hansen (2025) refer to as bridge-building collaboration is the identification of opportunities and barriers for participation in different contexts as well as the collaboration with many parties at and across school for the purpose of developing conditions for participation in school communities. This involves the creation of connections between professionals, children, and young people across the various contexts of their lives for the purpose of supporting practice development at school. This means that many parties at and around school will share the responsibility for working together to develop participation opportunities and ensure inclusive communities at school.

Unlike the first case, the collaboration regarding the children's communities in this 6th grade more actively involves the specific social practices and the participants' history, as their participation across various places is foregrounded as the basis for what the collaboration address. Thus, the focus is not on fixed, pre-defined procedures, as the community-building activities are situated developed, based on what professionals and children perceive as being meaningful with respect to the intervention in their common community-building practices (see Mardahl-Hansen & Tybjerg, 2025; Mørck et al., 2023).

Discussion – Towards Context Integrity

Through two case analyses, we have demonstrated how interventions are differently incorporated and developed within interprofessional collaboration focused on the establishment of children's communities. In the case concerning collaboration that addresses conflicts among children in a third-grade, the FT intervention is incorporated in a fixed manner that frames the collaboration narrowly. As a result, the complexity of social practices, professionals and children's histories of participation, and the cross-contextual nature of problems experienced at school are largely excluded from the collaborative process. In contrast, the second case illustrates how MMS is contextualized within an expanding collaborative framework, where professionals and children's diverse perspectives are included by way of flexible, situated developments based on their everyday lives.

Subject- and Context-Free Communities?

As demonstrated in the analysis of the collaboration on FT, the multiple perspectives of the involved parties as well as the complexity of the issues become only a minor element

in the collaboration. Cross-contextually, the conflicts extend across school and afterschool care with parental involvement, whereas teachers report that they encounter significant challenges in their support of one particular boy's participation in school communities. Yet, the collaboration departing from a specific intervention result in a narrow focus on the children's communities within the classroom as an isolated unit.
Historically, the issues addressed by teachers and PPR have primarily focused on individual children, have now undergone a shift towards communities. However, as one teacher reflects, this increased focus on children's communities can be experienced as follows: "*We can no longer talk about individual children, because now we only talk about communities*".

This division uncovers a significant dilemma within interprofessional collaboration: when problems are predefined with focus on either individual children or communities, there is a risk that the latter will become a diffuse and decontextualized intervention that neglects the subjects and their participation histories, which are shaped across multiple contexts.
By focusing on communities, the collaboration on FT represents a foundational effort towards strengthened professional participation within inclusion work. Tensions will, however, emerge when an excessively narrow emphasis on communities results in an oversimplified understanding of complex, historically embedded, and cross-contextual issues involving multiple stakeholders.

From the perspective of social practice theory and critical psychology, it is therefore relevant to ask whether such community work may pose a risk of blinding us to the specific subjects and contexts involved. This may happen if focus shifts exclusively to communities within the classroom, thus excluding the social and cross-contextual problems from the collaboration (the participation histories of children, professionals, and parents, including their reasons for participating). In the first case involving the third grade, issues appear to be reduced to problems that must be solved without incorporating the perspectives of the various parties — although these perspectives are central to the development and ongoing resolution of the issues. Consequently, focus is not on the boy who is struggling to develop his participation in the class communities. It thus appears paradoxical that an intervention aimed at strengthening children's communities can be an intervention where the specific children and professionals, who are continuously striving towards developing such communities, are missing. In a critique of the division between children and their communities, we draw on Stetsenko to conceptualise individuals and communities as dialectically related:

> The individual and the social dimensions of collaborative transformative practices are seen not as two separate realms but, rather, as existing in unity – as complementary and interrelated aspects or dimensions of one and the same reality composed of social collaborative practices carried out by interacting individuals who bring each other, and their word, into existence (Stetsenko, 2017, p. 213).

This points to the necessity —theoretically as practically — for reinforcing our understanding of the way in which to engage with children's communities across contexts and the relationship between individual children and their communities at school. A dichotomy seems to be emerging between children and communities as separate areas of work, with different interventions targeting either one or the other. When this division

takes hold in practice — and when interventions may even reinforce it — there is a risk of bypassing the cross-contextual social history of problems and their interconnected nature in attempts to address them.

Therefore, the use of interventions in pedagogical work may contribute to a reinforcement of the disconnection of children from communities, such as it is analysed in case 1. It may also have the potential for establishing coherent understandings and actions in the work with children's participation in communities at and across schools, such as it is analysed in case 2. Rather than considering interventions as context-independent solutions aimed at subject- and context-free communities, we should instead focus on how interventions can be contextualized for the purpose of supporting interprofessional collaboration around children's concrete opportunities for participation in everyday school communities – and in many unpredictable ways.

Here, it is crucial to collaborate with all participating parties for the purpose of jointly examining and developing conditions for participation. In case 2, professionals collaborate with children in situated and flexible ways for the purpose of developing MMS across different contexts, based on the subjects' participation histories and on what is meaningful with respect to the specific practice development. This involves the adaptation of MMS by selecting, removing, or adding elements according to what professionals and children consider relevant issues for addressing, such as insecurity, and for developing their sense of community.

Professionals' Collective Agency Through Critique

Interventions are introduced at school on the basis of diverse scientific foundations and varying methods and procedures. FT, which constitutes the framework for collaboration in case 1, is originally focused on liberation and social empowerment, although the way it is contextualized does not appear to contribute to these goals. Teachers do not experience new opportunities for action or collective agency with respect to addressing the issues at hand and, hence, the children's conflicts remain unresolved.

In contrast, the MMS intervention is centred on the individual, emphasizing the development of personal and social competencies as being crucial for participation in communities. According to MMS, these competencies can be practiced and developed through tasks and exercises. However, the professionals' bridge-building collaboration regarding the children's everyday lives across contexts does not fully reflect MMS's core assumptions or its focus on fostering children's social and emotional skills. Moreover, the intervention and its manual do not actively promote the involvement of children in the planning, nor will it make them co-creators in the work with their communities.

Although MMS initially focuses on the individual, a more community-building orientation emerges through the participants' contextualization of the intervention. The focus on children's personal competencies diminishes as activities such as role-playing, games, trips, and overnight stays are prioritized activities which children as well as professionals experience as meaningful contributions to their shared daily lives. As a result, several core elements of MMS transform through participants' engaged decisions and their activist insistence on making the intervention meaningful. From our perspective, this should not

be deemed a faulty implementation, as it might be suggested by an integrity/fidelity framework. Contextualization rather requires situated adjustments to effectively address specific issues related to children and young people's communities.

As demonstrated, the work with MMS in case 2 is more closely connected to the specific communities which children and professionals are already working to develop on an ongoing basis, forming a contrast to what we observed in case 1. The various tasks and exercises are adapted to the specific practices, enabling the collaboration on fostering new conditions for these communities — providing both children and professionals with opportunities to engage with them. The work with MMS thus progressively develops social practices by centring on children's opportunities to participate and influence, rather than primarily focusing on changing the individual, as originally intended by the intervention. This contextualization of MMS also contributes to theoretical discussions about children and young people's participation in social practices and the development of competencies for such participation. For example, Stanek (2022) argues that instead of viewing competencies as individual traits, children and young people's social-emotional actions should be understood as concrete forms of participation developed within — and evaluated through — the social practices in which they engage.

Professional Paradoxes and the Role of Interventions at School

The contextualization of MMS can be understood as a practice development through which participants — more so than in the case of FT — develop loyalty and integrity to everyday life and the contexts that professionals and children continuously shape together. This case demonstrates that interventional collaboration can bridge efforts across children's everyday lives when *relevance* is assessed and developed from the bottom up, and when the everyday-life contexts are placed at the forefront. By doing so, interventions can both unite and inspire participants to collaborate on establishing directions and take action for developing relevant approaches — sometimes requiring that they go beyond the interventions' predefined assumptions, methods, and procedures. As Chimirri and Pedersen (2019) describes with an activist stance, this depends on: "*The commitment is to not only participate, but to participate and take a stance in relation to creating a desirable future for oneself and others*" (p. 619). This approach refers to the concept of *collective agency* (Stetsenko, 2016) and the participant´s critical actions in transforming practice. Therefore, we propose the concept of *Context Integrity* to a critical analysis of the conception of loyalty and fidelity primarily directed at the intervention. Beyond critique, this concept also emphasizes a shift in focus towards foregrounding the specific contexts in which interventions are introduced to address particular problems.

All this proposes a professional paradox related to the way we understand and apply interventions in addressing challenges at school — and to what extent professionals can or should pre-structure and proceduralize the collaboration in advance. Interventions are introduced with the promise of change while, at the same time, being negotiated and adapted by participants within the very practices into which they are meant to be integrated.

In this article, we argue that this paradox should be navigated by professionals who will not adhere blindly to the intervention with unquestionable integrity, nor will they reject it outright. Instead, they must engage critically with the assumptions, methods, and procedures of the intervention, focusing on context integrity. Through collaboration with all participants within the context, professionals can develop their collective professional agency by negotiating and co-creating interventions tailored to the specific challenges they are tasked with addressing.

Conclusion

Interventions take many forms and can impose both restrictive and expansive conditions on the participation of professionals, children, and young people in and across everyday school life. In this article, we have demonstrated how interventions are always developed through contextualization based on the collaborative efforts of professionals, children, and young people in their efforts to develop their local practices.

Interventions need neither be fully accepted nor rejected in their entirety. Instead, they can be understood as potentially expanding the conditions for practice development when approached with a concept of *context integrity*. This occurs as professionals, in collaboration with each other and with children and young people, negotiate interventions by foregrounding social practices and addressing cross-contextual challenges through bridge-building collaboration.

Through professionals' critical engagement, interventions can thus contribute to the development of new forms of collective professional agency and, in some cases, act as connecting links that expand opportunities for working with children's communities at school. Our analyses demonstrate the critical potential of interventions and show how collaborative contextualization creates opportunities for making them relevant to professional practices in situated and unpredictable ways.

In this respect, it is crucial to remain attentive towards what the fundamental assumptions of an intervention are aimed and to what its frameworks and procedures may simultaneously blind us. The professionals' engaged positioning and exploratory approach to collaboration become essential in determining what can support and create the conditions for the collaborative work with children, young people, and colleagues. On this basis we argue that navigating this paradox requires professionals who neither adhere blindly to interventions nor reject them outright, but rather engage critically with their underlying assumptions, methods, and procedures focusing on context integrity.

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