Chapter 4
Images of Norwegian Educational Leadership – Historical and Current Distinctions

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Abstract This chapter aims to situate cultural and moral dimensions of Norwegian educational leadership within the broader social and political environment and in relation to political-ideological transformations that have taken place during the last 70 years. The analysis draws on historical and contemporary research on education policy and leadership. I start by drawing attention to some aspects of the ideology and history of Norwegian education to demonstrate the historical, political and cultural embeddedness of the education system. Purposes, curricula and moral foundation will be highlighted, and this analysis will be followed by a presentation of key principles for organising and leading schools today. I will use findings from three comparative research studies among school leaders to illustrate and discuss changes in conceptualizing educational leadership over time, and why. These findings indicate which conditions there are in Norway for adoption of theories of school leadership and governance that have been circulating internationally in research network. Finally, I will discuss how the cultural dimensions and key principles for organising and leading schools intersect with current globalised policy trends, and where there is likely to be tensions between these global trends and the political, cultural and historical imperatives of educational leadership and schooling.

Keywords Social democratic welfarism · Education as public good · Social justice and democracy · New public management

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Introduction

Public schools reflect society's values and mirror which principles and norms a society has chosen to cultivate in its citizenry, as well as deep-seated assumptions about the purposes of public schooling. In this chapter, I examine cultural images and approaches to educational leadership in Norway over time. The aim is to situate cultural and moral dimensions of educational leadership within the broader social and political environment and in relation to political-ideological transformations that have taken place during the last 70 years. While recognising the transnational dimensions of new public management that have travelled across national boundaries I will offer insights into the importance of national contexts in mediating this development. The following research questions will guide the analysis: How do changes in the policy environment influence school principals' framing of mission and mandate and their way of conceptualising educational leadership? Which cultural traits of school leadership is it possible to identify regardless of new governance structures that provide a particular context for leadership and reforms?

The argument developed in this chapter draws on different resources.

First, I draw on historical analysis of Norwegian education conducted by leading researchers in Scandinavia (Sejersted, 2004; Telhaug et al., 2006). This includes an informative historical analysis of 'a common school for all' as part of the Enlightenment project, forming an important contextual background to more contemporary transformations. The analysis contributes to understanding the role of the Norwegian educational legacy in mediating the influence of adopting managerial reform policies as the roles that principals may play are historically and culturally contingent (Carpenter & Brewer, 2014).

Second, I draw on research on educational leadership and school reforms in a Norwegian context during the last 20 years. To address recent changes in the political economy that have challenged the idea of education as 'public good' – a key feature of the Norwegian educational legacy – I will include findings from empirical studies. The first focuses on how Norwegian school principals in different career phases frame their professional identities and career trajectories. The study is informed by the theoretical work of Wenger (1998) and Bourdieu (1996) and provides a grounded vision of leadership as practised and perceived in Norway over time until the new millennium (Møller, 2004, 2005). The second research inquiry draws partly on findings based on Norway's participation in the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) during more than 15 years (e.g. Møller & Eggen, 2005; Møller, 2012, 2017), and partly on research within the network "Leading Democratic Schools" (LE@DS) that situates educational leadership in Norway in relation to political-ideological transformations that have taken place over previous decades (Skedsmo & Møller, 2016).

The third study investigates how school leaders make sense of social justice and democracy in their practice and is grounded in the assumption that social justice is not possible without deep democracy and vice versa. Both concepts constitute moral purposes of schooling, and the frame of deep democracy suggests a processual

striving toward social justice in school (Furman & Shields, 2005). The study includes outsiders' interpretations and conceptions of the main cultural traits of school leadership in Norway based on their observations and reflections after visiting Norwegian schools (Trujillo et al., 2021). It contributes to show how principals may enact their roles in ways that are largely defined not just by their historical and cultural foundations of educational leadership, but their macro-level political contexts.

The selected studies show changes in ways of framing and practising educational leadership over time, and the analysis provides a basis for discussing how and why our cultural understanding of educational leadership with a focus on education as a public good is in a state of becoming contested (Møller, 2007; Møller & Rönnberg, 2021; Skedsmo & Møller, 2016). In sum, the analyses will demonstrate how and why school principals negotiate multiple purposes of education, and how principals mediate between values that prevail in local contexts and those that weigh on them from afar.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. I start by drawing attention to some aspects of Norwegian ideology and history to demonstrate the historical, political and cultural embeddedness of the Norwegian education system. The purposes, curricula and moral foundation of this system are highlighted. After depicting key principles for organising and leading school in the current situation, the following section focuses more specifically, on how school principals have conceptualised and framed their leadership role and activities over time based on empirical research. The chapter ends with a discussion of tensions connected to political and ideological transformation that have taken place during previous decades.

The Social Democratic Welfarist Legacy

In the late nineteenth century, Norway was a poor country with no traditional aristocracy nor economic elites. Anti-elitist lay religious movements constituted a special form of popular resistance. Through participating in these movements, the Norwegian people learned to argue against the rulers and stand up for their own arguments. This implied broad public involvement in both economic and educational developments (Stugu, 2001). Out of this mobilisation grew political parties and parliamentary governing by a silent revolution (Sejersted, 2004). Local teachers, who had the cultural and social capital to act on a trans-local level and to mobilise people to move on, became agents of the civic society. Often, schoolteachers became involved in a variety of activities in the local community, running local youth clubs, sport activities, mission societies and other charities (Hagemann, 1992). Norway's many small local communities gave the society a distinctive character, and nurturing a national identity played an important role in the construction of a national curriculum and a common school for all. Even though the role of teachers and school leaders as tenets of civic society declined after the Second World War, such images of educational leadership continue to influence the

expectations of teachers and school leaders, particularly in the rural areas. So, as a background for understanding the conceptualisation of educational leadership in Norway, one must know that Norwegian schools and their teachers played a crucial role in nation-building processes and in the shaping of national identities.[1]

Although the meaning of democracy or democratic schools is ambiguous (Apple & Beane, 2007), Norway's historical development as a nation has established a way of understanding democracy in the workplace. A strong welfare state has simultaneously played a powerful role in shaping job security. It has been, and continues to be, important for everyone to have a sense of control over their working conditions, and, to some extent, there has been a similarity of lifestyle between managers and workers. Resilient unions are important elements in our way of framing legitimate leadership and management in schools as well as in other organisations. The unions have contributed to robust elements of negotiations in the workplace and to a form of institutionalised trust relations (Sejersted, 1997, 2004).

Until the 1970s, Norway was also quite homogenous in its ethnic, linguistic and cultural circumstances, and the vast majority of the population were members of an Evangelical-Lutheran state church. In the Education Act, it was emphasised that education should be based on fundamental Christian and humanistic values and should uphold and renew our cultural heritage to provide perspective and guidance for the future. The period from 1945 until about 1970 is often labelled the golden era of social democracy, in which the national state became the framework for restructuring the society and the school (Telhaug et al., 2006). Equity was one of the distinctive features of the Norwegian education model and concerned the educational system's ability to distribute financial and economic resources in order to meet the needs of all users in a way that provided equal opportunities. As such, it was associated with the democratic ideal of social justice. It implied that one of the main responsibilities of school principals, teachers and other school staff is to focus on promoting democracy, social justice and equity in school as well as in the wider community (Møller, 2006). It also included equity at the individual level, addressing student diversity and therefore the necessity for unequal treatment in order to meet individual learning abilities (e.g. greater resources for greater needs).[2] School access for children from all socio-economic groups, free of charge, was – and still is – considered important, and schools should prepare children to become able employees as well as to play constructive roles in a democratic society (Møller, 2009). As such, the ideological tradition emphasised the role of educational institutions in the making of a civic society, one built on ideas of comprehensiveness and egalitarian values.

[1] At the same time, the nation-building project tended, in the past, to exclude the cultural rights of ethnic minorities in education. This was the case, for instance, for the Sami people and the Kvens (Stugu, 2001).

[2] In the new millennium, the individual aspect of equity in public discourse has increasingly been restricted to discussions about student performance in both national tests and international comparative assessments and to the demand for school choice (Volckmar, 2019).

Due to a strong argument that children should attend their school without having to leave their families, there are a large number of small schools in remote and sparsely populated areas.[3] Another argument was that attending the same school across different socio-economic groups is of great value, as it would enhance collaboration, solidarity and national integration in the society (Volckmar, 2019). The cornerstones were education as 'public good' with the aim of securing equality in terms of equal opportunities, citizens' equal rights, state responsibility for the welfare of all citizens, narrowing income gaps, and promoting equity and social justice.

Another aspect of the development of the comprehensive school system in Norway is connected to the unique tradition of consensus-seeking politics in education. Both the right- and left-wing parties have sought compromises and agreements on educational reforms. This has its historical roots in the political mobilisation of and alliance between the farmers and the workers. It does not mean absence of conflicts, but there has traditionally been a political will in Norway to ground decisions in education on consensus. The farmers organised themselves in the Liberal Party in the late nineteenth century, and many were recruited to the government. Their political involvement had a basis in social-liberal values closely linked to the labour movement. The Social Democratic Party was not rooted in radical socialism; and after the Second World War, the workers were able to ally themselves with the growing white-collar middle class, and they welcomed a strong state (Sejersted, 2004). In this case, the state played a role due to the expanding public sector and influenced the development of a non-selective comprehensive school system, supported by the labour market model, with collective bargaining in co-operation between governments and labour organisations (Telhaug et al., 2006).

The Growth of Neo-Liberal Reforms in Education

In the 1980s, a wave of neo-liberal reforms gained ground internationally, and an interest in principals as managers gathered momentum in Norway 10 years later. This interest was largely influenced by the new public management (NPM) discourse, with its focus on strong leaders and entrepreneurs as a vehicle for the modernisation project in education. It was argued that the welfare-state project had turned national and local authorities into unresponsive, bureaucratic organizations (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021). The NPM agenda did not directly challenge the established tradition of schooling during the 1990s, but it did have consequences for the restructuring of the local educational administration at the municipal level in terms of deregulation, horizontal specialisation and management by objectives (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013). However, the launch of the first report based on findings from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2001 accelerated the

[3] In 2019–2020, there were 792 schools with fewer than 100 students out of the total 2800 compulsory schools; 195 schools, most of which are located in the Oslo area, had more than 500 students (UDIR, 2019).

shift from more input-oriented policy instruments towards a more output-oriented policy. New titles were created for managers at the municipal level, who were trained and accredited as managers using business models. Master's programmes in educational leadership and management at the university level were first launched in the beginning of the new millennium. Some years later, a national programme for newly appointed principals, one which contains key elements of NPM, was introduced (Møller & Ottesen, 2011). Increasingly, school principals were trained as managers. Moreover, rising immigration and the related challenges of educating an increasingly heterogeneous population, as well as heightened global attention to international rankings of assessments of basic skills, have coalesced to strengthen Norwegian policy- and law-makers' concerns about the most efficient means of maximising school quality and improving test scores.

The interplay between such changes in school governing and current distinctions of understanding educational leadership in a Norwegian context is an empirical question. Is it, for example, possible to identify some main cultural traits of school leadership regardless of new governance structures that provide a particular context for leadership and reforms? This question will be analysed and discussed in the following sections of this article. First, however, I will shortly describe key principles for organising and leading schools of today.

Key Principles for Organising and Leading Schools

Even though neo-liberalism, emphasising competition, privatisation and marketisation, has influenced Norwegian educational policy during the last three decades, the education system in Norway is still predominantly public. The Directorate for Education and Training is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research and is responsible for the development of primary and secondary education, while municipal authorities are in charge of running most compulsory schools. The establishment of private schools is strictly regulated by law, and currently only 4% of the school-aged population is enrolled in private elementary schools and 8% in private upper secondary schools (Statistics Norway, 2018).[4]

Local municipalities have played a strong role in school governance. The leadership responsibility at the municipal level is shared between professional administrators and elected politicians. Through this linkage, education is related to broader community affairs. Municipalities finance the schools and perform a key role in providing in-service training. Central government requires that municipalities establish a system for evaluating and following up on the schools' quality of education and students' academic performance. The local educational authority in each municipality employs principals and teachers. Principals must have pedagogical

[4] There is, however, immense regional variation. While 16% of the upper secondary students in Oslo and Hordaland (including Bergen) attend a private school, fewer than 1% do so in Finnmark.

qualifications and the necessary leadership abilities. They might be appointed on fixed-term contracts, but lifetime tenure has been more common. The municipality is also in charge of hiring teachers; normally, principals have a voice in the hiring process, although they highly depend on effective collaboration with their superintendent. It is demanding to terminate principals (or teachers) unless they have committed a criminal act.

Legal regulations of Norwegian schools represent one of the main pillars in the governing architecture of schooling within which the leadership role is embedded (Karseth & Møller, 2018). Schools are regulated by many rules, and practitioners in schools are expected to know and understand the law in order to attend to their role as civil servants. Primarily, legal regulation of teachers in education has been achieved by means of normative values and self-regulated motivation, and the interpretation of legal standards is usually highly situational, i.e. not based on strictly legal considerations. Furthermore, teachers have traditionally been rather autonomous (Ottesen & Møller, 2016). The Education Act regulates some leadership practices to ensure democratic representation from teachers, parents and students in the governance of the school, and it requires that each school create formal bodies for user participation. For instance, a coordinating committee should be present at each school, with two representatives for the teaching staff, two for the parents' council, two for the students, two for the municipality, and one for other employees,

Today, schools are experiencing increased centralised regulation in terms of coordination by measuring, monitoring and evaluating educational outcomes, and national inspection as a governing tool is being used to control the legal practices of municipalities and schools (Hall, 2016). Pressure for increased school accountability has become a distinctive hallmark of the development of a new educational reform in the new millennium. New assessment policies with an emphasis on performance measurement, expectations about the use of data to improve education, and emerging accountability practices have characterised the transition process over the last decade (Skedsmo & Møller, 2016).

Conceptualising Leadership Over Time

Principals' individual learning trajectories and attendant identity constructions, with a particular focus on the interaction between persons and contexts, can help us to understand how school leaders are shaping and are shaped by the contexts in which they live and work. The findings presented below draw on a series of interviews with samples of principals, including early career (up to three years), mid-career (4–15 years) and late career (more than 15 years) principals, with data collection occurring during 1998–2000. Constructing their professional identities can be seen as a device for justifying, explaining and making sense of their conduct, career, values and circumstances. Their stories reveal something about the relationship between their personal values and cultural traits of school leadership over time

(and more generally, about the relationship between the individual and the society) as well as how they cope with changes in the political environment (Møller, 2004).

Tracing Learning Trajectories and Attendant Identity Construction

Up until the 1990s, trust in teachers' work was a tacit dimension in principals' approach to leadership, establishing accepted zones of influence (Berg, 2000). This meant that the school principal was 'first among equals' and suggested a flat organisational structure for the school, with little or no formal distinction among members of the teaching staff. The titles of the formal leadership positions in schools mirrored this feature. For instance, up until the late 1960s, the title *overlærer* (head-teacher) was used in Norway for the person in charge of leading compulsory schools. Teachers did not welcome a leadership profession that could influence their control over classroom activities (Tjeldvoll et al., 2005), and the dominant teacher unions strongly contested the need for formal, university-based preparation programmes for school leaders until the late 1990s (Hall et al., 2017; Møller & Schratz, 2008). The framing of leadership as 'first among equals' can be illustrated by an excerpt from an interview with Birger (a pseudonym), a Norwegian late-career principal (Møller, 2004).

Birger was educated as a teacher and started his career in the late 1960s at a small primary school located in a rural area an hour's drive from Oslo. When the serving principal retired, his colleagues encouraged Birger to apply for the job. Before that moment, Birger had never thought of becoming a principal:

> My colleagues persuaded me to apply for the post, and after a while, I thought it could be a good idea. Before that, it never struck my mind. Well, then I, as a rather young man, was appointed as a head. […] By that time, I had no thoughts about leadership, not at all. I was a teacher with some administrative duties in addition to teaching. In my first years as a principal, I still had extensive teaching duties, and I did not have any help from a clerk. I did everything myself and was comfortable with that. In fact, I still felt like a teacher who, in addition, had some work to do with budget and time schedules for teachers.

As the excerpt shows, when Birger started as a principal, he looked upon himself as a teacher with some administrative duties in addition to teaching. In the 1970s and 1980s, he attended different leadership courses, but only gradually did he reframe his understanding of school leadership. Reflecting back, he assumed his perception of leadership was partly shaped during his years in military service, partly by his participation in different communities of practice, and partly by his own experiences at school and from feedback he received from friends and colleagues. In a similar way, principals in their mid- and early-careers emphasised that they did not reflect on becoming a school principal when they started their career as a teacher, and it was possible to identify a link between their vocation as a teacher and their later vocation as a school principal.

Birger described how his basic beliefs drove his actions, and this characterised most veterans who participated in the life history study. He wanted to retain the kind of psychological rewards he received as a teacher, framed as 'stay in touch with the kids'. In contrast, the mid-career and newly appointed principals told stories about establishing professional accountability, but they, too, wanted to create close relationships with the students. Simultaneously, the study demonstrated that the discrepancy between school principals and staff remained relatively small, reflecting the historical collegial tradition. Instructional leadership was primarily the teachers' responsibility and domain. There was little or no intervention in classroom practices from principals or local authority, unless the parents had voiced complaints about the teachers (Møller, 2004).

Until the early 1990s, it was taken for granted that schools lived up to their public mandate, and the authorities did not see any need to look into matters other than organising a national final exam for students in central subjects. The teacher unions also played a powerful role in framing the ideology of educational leadership until the new millennium. Professional accountability has been valued and encouraged, but standards of good teaching and leadership have been until recently implicit. Hence, the distinction between professional and personal accountability was blurred.

In addition, the principals' stories demonstrated that they did not have to pay special attention to managerial accountability, and veteran principals in particular seemed to have a rather relaxed attitude (Møller, 2005). Even though an analysis of the policy context during the 1990s demonstrates that the discourse of NPM had a rather strong influence on how the municipalities organised and governed the schools (Møller & Skedsmo, 2013), it was difficult to trace this discourse in the stories told by the principals. Both veteran and mid-career principals conveyed an ironic tone when describing their relationship with superiors at the municipal level. It was as if they had distanced themselves or blamed the municipality for establishing managerial accountability in a way that could harm the school. Their position has a connection to the history of Norwegian education, in which the State has played a strong and authoritative role. However, those in their early careers seemed to take managerial accountability for granted and related this attitude to being professional.

Framing Successful School Leadership

During the 1990s, and in the beginning of the new millennium, both parents and people outside schools started questioning the individual autonomy each teacher had in his or her classroom, and they challenged established zones of control (Møller & Schratz, 2008). The power relationship between the parents and the school shifted as more emphasis was given to the external control of educational processes. Strongly influenced by NPM discourse, which focused on strong leaders and entrepreneurs as a vehicle for the modernisation project in education, interest in school

leadership in Norway began to gather momentum in the late 1990s. This shift essentially moved the principal from being 'first among equals' to being a manager in the dominant discourses and in national policy documents; but also, among many school leaders, an understanding of leadership as *primus inter pares* was often recognised by the principals as a romanticised, old-fashioned view of leadership in schools (Møller, 2004).

The ISSPP study, which included case studies of successful principals based on interviews with principals, teachers, students and parents, provided a window into the lived experiences of school principals who were considered successful by the educational authorities across more than 20 countries. The Norwegian principals emphasised how mutual trust and respect between school leaders and teachers were at the core of what they thought should count as a successful school. They were primarily driven by their commitment to making a difference for children, and they worked hard within the system to balance all of the demands placed on their shoulders in order to ensure more equitable learning environments for all students. Although we could discern a greater awareness of student outcomes in Norway because of the continuous debate about the PISA findings in the media, the current climate of managerial accountability does not seem to influence the principals' stories of their approaches to leadership. None of the principals participating in this project limited their understanding of success to student academic outcomes but instead took the students and the school context into consideration when they defined success. Matters of care were a main concern, and the principals emphasised that both teaching and principalship demands dedication, hard work and commitment to the development and well-being of children (Møller, 2006).

Overall, the study showed how school leadership in a Norwegian context is an interactive process involving many people and players. The terms 'team leadership' or 'team on top' capture a striking feature of collaboration and teamwork in all Norwegian schools that participated in the ISSPP study (Møller, 2012). The findings demonstrated how school leadership constituted a mixture of both 'power over' and 'power with' models of leadership, in which leading and following was a fluid, interactive and reciprocal process. The following quote from a teacher in one of the participating schools captures this framing: 'There is a combination of flat and hierarchical. Everybody is co-responsible and has an opportunity to influence, but simultaneously there is a structure' (Møller & Eggen, 2005, p. 340). The school leaders recognised that they had power in their formal position – but at the same time, they were aware of the relative nature of power. They partly presented themselves as strong and visible through stories influenced by public discourses of heroic leadership, but, through highlighting working in teams, they mainly interacted with the notion of distributed leadership. The strategies they chose differed due to local cultural contexts, as well as due to their understandings of limits and opportunities. They all told stories of how they worked hard to mediate government policy and external changes to integrate demands with school values. Their stories were linked

to codes on professional ethics and values as well as to a concern for the students' best interest.[5]

Leadership for Social Justice and Democracy in the Context of Managerial Demands

As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the political environment has changed substantially over the last decades, and the government has invested much faith in assessment tools that provide data and information to improve practice. Both national and local levels use results from national testing for benchmarking purposes (Skedsmo, 2011). This use of new evaluation technologies by principals and managers at the municipal level to monitor student outcomes represents a shift towards what has been termed 'organisational professionalism', which incorporates standardised work procedures and relies on external regulation and accountability measures (Evetts, 2009). It echoes the management discourse promoted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where a performance orientation is one of the main pillars, closely connected to output control. Educational authorities, both at the central and local levels, have introduced multiple managerial devices to address achievement gaps across different social and cultural groups, and national testing and performative accountability are now framed as a means of providing universal access to education of equal quality, prioritising the need to identify and support low-performing students. The knowledge produced by these test data impacts education policy, demonstrating its potency as a policy instrument. To some degree, the public debate about equity and quality has been re-articulated to performance indicators based on national and international tests (Camphuijsen et al., 2020).

However, although the government looks to standardised test results as a measure of effectiveness, schools and principals do not experience heavy-handed consequences for low performance on national tests, and leadership for social justice and democracy is still an integral part of the mission of Norwegian educational professionals. It is also emphasised in the Education Act and the recently launched national curriculum. A study based on observation and reflection data from two international principal exchanges more recently (2016–2017) emphasises this aspect and has also provided rich evidence for tracing national ideologies and values to daily schooling practices (Trujillo et al., 2021). Most prominently, American principals have observed comparably low levels of attention to standardised testing in the Norwegian schools they have visited. While Norwegian school leaders acknowledged that policymakers and politicians were increasingly focusing on

[5] The principals who participated in the LEXEL project from 2012–2016 told similar stories when they argued that feeling safe and confident, both academically and socially, served as the foundation for students' well-being (Ottesen & Møller, 2016).

national and international test scores, the test results were of little consequence to their practice or their professional well-being. Their colleagues from USA underlined this aspect when they observed that the Norwegian government's policies were not highly punitive towards educational leaders. Instead, they found that Norwegian principals were provided professional support if their school had low test scores; in other words, their system relied on more carrots than sticks to steer schools and their principals' practices. This probably reflects the ideology of the social democratic education model, which frames education as crucial for cultural and political citizenship. However, these dynamics were not evenly distributed throughout the country. In large cities, greater attention to test performance was a common theme for secondary schools, much like what was observed in the US.

When the Norwegian principals were asked explicitly about education for democracy, they called attention to the importance of protecting the common good, as well as to enacting their collective responsibilities to one another. One of the Norwegian principals crystallised most of her colleagues' thoughts when she reflected on such notions in the following way:

> Nowadays, there is a strong focus on individual rights; it is me, me, me and my rights, but we should focus on common duties. It should not be survival of the fittest, and we should not only listen to those with the strongest voice.

Typical for all US leaders' reflections was that they were impressed by the way democracy seemed to be a fundamental value in education, and they in particular commented on how the student council was organised. In a comment to these reflections from outsiders, a Norwegian upper secondary principal emphasised the following (Trujillo et al., 2021):

> Democracy should be lived in schools… For example, when students say they are not involved [in decision-making] and demand a meeting, or if they complain about differences in the teachers' way of assessing their work, we have to listen carefully. However, they should also learn that democracy includes rules, procedures and structural mechanisms of accountability; they have to attend to timing, such as when it is possible to negotiate and influence decision-making. The same rules apply to the teachers.

Despite all American principals' consistently positive impressions of the centrality of structures for practising democracy, two Norwegian leaders reflected more critically on their country's treatment of democratic principles in schools. They interrogated the belief that every school fully utilised student councils for students to participate in decisions that affected them (as they should). Overall, the findings showed how the participating principals repeatedly emphasised the ideological purposes of education in Norway focus on promoting democracy as a fundamental value and an ethical guide to citizenship, and the welfare state was reflected in their understandings about the purposes of public education. In addition, the study shows political contexts and educational policy structures shape schools capacity to cultivate democratic communities, how school leaders may assume different purposes of schooling when they are held to account to different educational mandates.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to situate cultural and moral dimensions of Norwegian educational leadership within the broader social and political environment and in relation to political-ideological transformations that have taken place during the last 70 years. The following questions have been explored: How do changes in the policy environment influence school principals' framing of mission and mandate and their way of conceptualising educational leadership? Which cultural traits of school leadership is it possible to identify regardless of new governance structures that provide a particular context for leadership and reforms?

Policy analyses have demonstrated how the Norwegian development of leadership models during the last decades has incorporated managerial elements such as a combination of performance measurements, quality indicators, target settings, accountability, and incentives and sanctions (Hall et al., 2017). Today, an overall tension can be distinguished between those who argue for top-down conceptions of 'strong' leadership and those who argue for a participative approach and distributive leadership. Overall, the changing social environment in Europe in general has led to new governance structures that provide a particular context for educational reforms, and the OECD seems to play a powerful role in driving and attenuating policy across nation states (Møller, 2017). These structures are also affecting the roles and responsibilities of school leaders as well as the approach to leadership development. Norwegian school leaders have, like their colleagues in other countries, taken on many more administrative and managerial tasks. Their superiors, in addition to teachers and parents, all expect far more of them now than ever before. However, while Norwegian principals acknowledged that policymakers and politicians were increasingly focused on national and international test scores, the test results seemed to be of little consequence to their practice or their professional well-being.

Constructions related to classical professional ideals are still present, but teachers have also become more proactive in terms of creating legitimacy for their work and are currently redefining their understanding of professionalism under this new governing regime (Mausethagen, 2013). Another study designed to disentangle the complexity of legal standards and school leaders' professional judgement demonstrated, for example, that even though managerial devices have entered our educational policy and schools are faced with dilemmas of discretion based on economic constraints, there is a significant space for discretionary decision-making at the local level (Karseth & Møller, 2018; Ottesen & Møller, 2016).

Policy documents include tensions. On the one hand, education as a public good (Englund, 1994) has more or less been taken for granted in the policy rhetoric, on the other hand, the overall policy direction has clearly promoted the idea of education as a private good. In current policy documents, it is argued that education policy should simultaneously be driven by values of social justice and inclusive education as well as by the market. Politicians do not see themselves as tearing down the welfare state. On the contrary, it is argued that marketization reforms can mobilise teachers and school principals to do better than before. There is, however, an uneasy

tension between public and private good embedded in such arguments (Møller & Rönnberg, 2021).

Although the reported studies were not designed to generalize to all Norwegian schools, the findings confirm how principals mediate between values that prevail in their local contexts and those that weigh on them from afar. To some extent, new managerial elements, particularly performativity, have challenged traditional egalitarian values and the conceptualisation of equity. Nevertheless, the narrative of a common public school for all remains strong, and there is a significant space for discretionary decision-making at the local level. The international dimension is both important and constitutive, but there are national and historical particularities, as well as more overall ideologies on what constitutes 'successful' education, that contribute to the framing of educational leadership. Although it is possible to identify a growing homogenisation of approaches to governance due to global forces, local traditions ensure that these approaches play out differently in different national contexts. The reported studies support arguments that school leaders function as political strategists, who negotiate among competing interests and conflicting efforts by different groups. However, changes in the political economy are challenging the idea of public education, and in the future school leaders will have to deal with the realities of national manifestations of marketisation and privatisation. Therefore, it is an open question whether Norway in the future will continue to maintain its legacy of valuing the common school for all as a tenet of equal educational opportunity.

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