Studies in Educational Leadership 19

Lejf Moos *Editor*

Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership

Is there a Nordic Model?

Springer

Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership

STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

VOLUME 19

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Lejf Moos
Editor

Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership

Is there a Nordic Model?

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ISBN 978-94-007-6225-1 ISBN 978-94-007-6226-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg New York London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013934356

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Forewords

John MacBeath: Questions of Culture and Context

There is something unique about Nordic countries that inadequate description for a group of nations each with their own distinctive cultures and histories but nonetheless conjoined by common values and a shared ‘Weltanschauung’. Is there something in the air in these northern states that creates their unique perspective on social and intellectual life? What accounts for their stubborn resistant to the blandishments of politicians and the seductions of statistics? As Pasi Sahlberg has written in his book *Finnish Lessons*, Finland’s high-performing education system is owed to adopting policies counter to those of most Western education systems – standardisation and prescription, transfer of models of administration from the corporate world, high-stakes accountability policies – control and punitive inspection. He writes:

> As Finnish teachers were exploring the theoretical foundations of knowledge and learning and redesigning their school curricula to be congruent with them, their peers in England, Germany, France and the United States struggled with increased school inspection, controversial externally-imposed learning standards, and competition that disturbed some teachers to the point that they decided to leave their jobs. (p.5)

Resistance and compromise in this brave new world of indicators and league tables will determine the extent to which Nordic countries can retain their position in areas where they have traditionally scored highly, such as on quality of life and child well-being, and in Geert Hofstede’s international rankings of ‘power distance’ and ‘tolerance of ambiguity’. These social measures are reflected in the cultures, leadership and ethos of Nordic schools which have traditionally held their privileged place as the most democratic and inclusive of educational systems. ‘Power distance’ and ‘tolerance of ambiguity’ are defined respectively as:

> The extent to which members of the organizations accept and expect the equal or unequal distribution of power. Cultures that endorse low power distance expect and accept power relations that are more consultative or democratic. People relate to one another more as equals regardless of formal positions and contribute to and critique the decision making of those in power. In high power distance countries, the less powerful accept power

> autocratic and paternalistic relationships, ceding to the power of others based on their formal, hierarchical positions
>
> Tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity refers to the ability to accept and feel comfortable in unstructured situations or changeable environments and to have as few rules as possible. These are in contrast with organizational cultures and leadership which proceed with careful changes step by step by planning, by implementing rules, laws and regulations.

A textual analysis of the chapters in this volume juxtaposes two vocabularies, one of enduring values and the other of impatient prescription. On the one hand, we read of 'culture' and 'context' and on the other of 'consumerism' and 'control'. 'Power' competes with 'voice', 'participation' with 'prescription' and dirigiste decision-making with deliberative democracies.

These are some of the tensions revealed in these chapters as we travel virtually across these northern landscapes. Once there was trust and now there is accountability. Once there was dialogue, now there is a politicised discourse. It confronts us with dilemmas. Is there a happy resolution to be found in the marriage of internal and external accountability? What underlies the plea for professional autonomy? Does it address the inherent tensions between individual freedom and collective responsibility? What do we understand by the 'trust', a recurring leitmotif in these chapters? Has there been too much trust, failing to address the autonomy teachers once enjoyed behind the closed doors of their classrooms, their own protected domains?

In response to the global imperatives and the recognition that complacency and self-satisfaction are the enemies within, these chapters reveal the extent to which different countries within the northern alliance are adopting greater centralisation, monitoring and sanctions for noncompliance. Power distance and power distribution are emerging in new forms. There are perceptible and distinctive shifts in quality assurance from bottom-up to top-down, differing attempts to address the balance between central and local authority.

In summing up, Lejf Moos poses the question: 'are the transactional influences homogenising educational politics and practices, or are traditional values, cultures and discourses persistent?' It is a rhetorical question, one that finds complex and nuanced answers in a close reading of these country and cross-country reports. A careful reader will emerge with an enhanced understanding of what unites these countries of the north but also less prone to stereotypes and easy generalisations about 'Nordic countries'.

Professor Emeritus, Cambridge University, England John MacBeath

Peter Mortimore: Nordic Leadership: Something Worth Keeping

In 2012 I visited an exhibition of new Nordic architecture at the beautiful Louisiana Museum outside Copenhagen. Though its subject was not education, the question it asked was similar to that of this book: has globalisation superimposed an

international mode, is there still a Nordic model underpinning the different national styles?

The answer was left to the visitor to decide on the basis of the exhibitions' plans, models, installations, pictures and films. What, for example, could be the possible connections between a community centre in Greenland, a preschool in Sweden, a primary school in Finland or a hotel – suspended above a hill – in Norway?

I observed a striking contrast of form and design, but could I also detect some common themes: the awareness of light, a sensitivity to weather conditions, bright colours, use of natural materials and the sense of a need for public participation – perhaps best evoked by Jan Gehl's panorama of everyday life in the space between the buildings of a modern city?

The five education case studies and the six thematic chapters in this book are the equivalent of the models and installations. The reader has to review the evidence and decide whether there is a common Nordic model underpinning the different education systems and, particularly, in their approach to school leadership.

As a participant in two of the three annual NordNet residential meetings – and a frequent visitor to Nordic countries – my view is unambiguous. Despite the different landscapes, histories, cultures, languages, education systems and even politics – so clearly demonstrated in the case studies – I still find common foundations: openness and contestability, the search for equity, the protection of the years of childhood, trust of teachers, local control – through ownership of schools – and a patient search for quality. I think I can discern the idea of 'a school for all' in the culture of Nordic countries – though the experiments in more market-based philosophy are having a negative effect, as a recently published article demonstrates (Sundberg and Wahlstrom 2012).

As the introduction to the book notes, these values are under threat. According to the Finnish case study – even in the Nordic country judged by PISA to be its most successful system – 'education has increasingly come to be considered a private good, rather than a public good'.

The ideas that make up 'new public management' with its focus on financial reward as the sole motivating factor and its denigration of teachers as 'knaves not knights' (Le Grand 2003) are taking their toll and damaging public confidence in education systems. The allure of the market – with its promise of choice and personalisation – will be strong until, when the damage has been done, reality reveals its flaws. The growth of private schools and the challenge to inclusion are difficult policies to resist – as the Iceland case study reports.

I am not a fan of the 'Ghengis Khan School of tough educational leadership'. Like most of us, I can be impressed with obvious charisma but find it quickly loses its attractions if it is accompanied by arrogance or the failure to delegate. I prefer consensus builders 'first among equals' according to the Norwegian case study: those who can judge when a decision needs to be shared by all the staff, the whole community (including, at times, the students) and when it is imperative that it is taken, from the front, by the leader.

The school leaders I have observed in Nordic countries are more likely to be those who share and delegate (sometimes, perhaps, too frequently) rather than the

'heroic' strong leaders so favoured in UK and US schools. As the Danish case study argues – 'there is an understanding that the principal or leader cannot be sufficiently informed to make all decisions in a school'. This implies that there has to be a sound balance between the professionalism of the school leader and that of the class teacher. An issue not always easily resolved, as discussion of the theme on professionalisation reminds us – 'the leadership type, tasks and role resulting from this (re)professionalisation may conflict with the teacher ideal increasingly promoted by teacher education in the Nordic countries since the 1970s'.

An open – distributed – style of leadership is worth fighting for. It is a model not only for schools in Nordic countries but for those working in other professions everywhere. As our world changes, and technology plays a bigger part in everyday lives, it is imperative that we retain the positive qualities that make up our humanity. Leadership needs to be thoughtful – but not selfish. It should pull communities together rather than divides them. It appears to work best in the Nordic countries. Hopefully, it will have an increasingly important role to play in the future.

Readers – read this book and decide: is the Nordic model just for architecture, crime thrillers and restaurants, or do you believe it should continue to underpin your different education systems?

Professor Emeritus, Richmond, England Peter Mortimore

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Jim Spillane: School Leadership Research Context and the Context of School Leadership

School leadership is a growth industry. Indeed, organisational leadership in general is an industry on the rise. Books on the subject, albeit only a chosen few from those published, appear to have a ready market among education scholars, practitioners, policymakers and sometimes even the lay public. Moreover, the sway that the ideas put forth hold among consumers is often a better predictor of market share than the soundness of scholarship. In the education sector, work in Canada, the USA and other English-speaking countries (e.g. UK and Australia) appears to have cornered a very large share of the market on school leadership. (Though it is tempting to think of approaches to education and its improvement in these countries as roughly similar, that would be a mistake; even the USA and UK show tremendous differences). While there are several potential explanations for this large market

share, all of which are beyond the scope of this foreword, the monopoly does illuminate a concerning puzzle for empirical research on school leadership: considering the diversity in the designs and origins of 'education systems', research and policy initiatives (sometimes, though often not, derived from research) frequently treat national sociopolitical systems and geopolitical regions as incidental or, at best, simply settings.

The book sets out to examine how the nation state and geopolitical regions are an important context for understanding school leadership. Using cases from the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – the authors explore national education discourse as it relates to school leadership. The country cases are coupled with cross-case analyses conducted by identifying key themes such as 'leadership for democracy' and 'quality control'. Interpreting the work carefully, one finds evidence for extending this argument: the sociopolitical circumstances of the nation state serve not just as the context or stage in which school leadership happens but also as the raw materials (e.g. institutional logics) that constitute and are constitutive of everyday leadership practice in schools.

One way to see this volume is as an effort at pressing the 'pause button' on emergent transnational trends and scholarship on education leadership; calling for a 'time out' so that we might ponder the current monopoly on education leadership and its consequences for developing a sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon, we easily and effortlessly refer to as school leadership. Should this volume succeed in creating a pause or time out for scholars, policymakers and developers in our field to reflect and reconsider, it will have done a service to the field.

Reading the manuscript, I began to contemplate three issues, not explicitly discussed at length, if at all, in the manuscript but prompted by my own reading. (The value of reading a manuscript for me is often not in the answers I find but in the questions prompted by the manuscript). First, and as addressed in the manuscript, the book can be read as a cautionary tale for those who work in the field of education leadership – researchers, practitioners, policymakers, developers and especially transnational agencies. The caution is simple but significant: to be savvy consumers of research and reform proposals, we must pay particular attention to the national origins of such work. This caution should *not* be construed as simplistic protectionism or naïve nationalism, because it is not. Instead, it is an effort to point out that schools are situated in education systems, and more broadly sociopolitical systems, that differ radically across nations, regions and continents. Most importantly, as I have suggested above, the situation is not simply a context or a stage – it is constitutive of and constituted in practice – be that school leadership or classroom practice. Our field could benefit greatly by not only heeding this caution but also seriously grappling with how to systematically examine the ways in which sociopolitical and institutional settings define and are defined by everyday practice in schools. Simply describing national contexts does not meet that challenge. As I have argued elsewhere, serious empirical investigations of school leadership must attend to the 'ménage-a-trois' of which school leadership is the only one partner, in addition to the sociopolitical system (institutional sector) and classroom teaching – the core technology of schooling (Spillane and Mertz in press).

Second, reading the book, I began to reflect on research designs for cross-national comparative work on school leadership that would generate not only robust empirical findings but also practical and useful research findings. By the very act of writing the manuscript, the authors clearly believe that such work is critical to our field. I agree! The focus on the six Nordic countries makes a case for such work. By extension, I am prompted to think about nested designs for comparative cross-national work on school leadership and education more generally. A key challenge in comparative work is careful selection of purposeful cases – nation states where the education systems are known to differ on two or three dimensions that have been carefully theorised to influence the phenomenon of study. Comparative work on school leadership might also sample countries by considering 'groupings' of countries (e.g. 'Nordic countries', 'former British colonies', 'federal systems', 'parliamentary systems' and so on) and sampling both within and across each subgroup. Of course, this sampling will ultimately depend on the research question. Nested multilevel comparative study designs may prove especially fruitful for scholarship on school leadership.

Third, transnational movements and globalisation more broadly are most likely here to stay. Ideas travel and tend to travel from particular countries and regions of the world to others, though that is apt to change over time if history is any gauge. Regardless of whether we attribute the spread, vitality and ultimate stick of ideas about school leadership (e.g. research findings, policy initiatives, reform proposals) to technology, market forces, efforts of transnational organisations (e.g. OECD, EEC, UN) or something else, I am of the mind we should embrace, or at least acknowledge, this globalisation phenomenon though with the critical eye of a scholar. Moreover, I think the broad diffusion and mingling of ideas from different regions of the world is likely to be beneficial in the long run. Rather than fighting or challenging the transnational networking of ideas and information, we may be better off thinking about how to become more critical consumers of 'foreign' research and policy ideas as scholars, policymakers and practitioners (Spillane and Kenney 2012; Spillane and Mertz in press). This is no simple task, but is an important one.

A key challenge in such efforts will involve defining constructs and conceptual frameworks and carefully operationalising these to allow for systematic application across countries in studying school leadership and related phenomena. For example, constructs such as organisational legitimacy and organisational integrity, prominent in scholarship on organisations and new institutionalism, are likely to 'hold water' in empirical studies of school leadership that cut across education systems and nation states (Spillane and Kenney 2012). Such a framework will enable the exploration of leadership across countries in that it systematically engages the broader sociopolitical systems in which schools are nest and on which they depend for resources, not simply as context or stage for leadership practice. Critics of transnational and globalised school leadership would do well to see opportunity in these trends. These trends provide opportunities for empirical research, allowing for investigations of how 'foreign' ideas, sometimes advanced by transnational organisations (e.g. OECD), get translated and enacted in new terrains. It provides us with an opportunity to explore how ideas as policy instruments (Weiss 1990) travel,

and manage to colonise or not, everyday practice in new education systems. This is an opportunity to understand a familiar phenomenon anew, and that is surely the essence of our efforts as social scientists.

Professor at Northwest University, Chicago, USA Jim Spillane

Philip A. Woods: Nordic Culture as a Resource for Adaptive Response

One of the things that strikes me about this volume is that its scholarship is informed by a long historical focus, not just back into the nineteenth century but beyond. It is clear that to understand the Nordic countries and their interconnections, and the development of education within this context, the impact of relationships long ago, such as the union of the countries from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, has to be acknowledged. Such historical awareness is largely absent from the dominant discourse and research paradigm on educational leadership and policy in countries like England and the USA. The overriding concern there is the production of propositional knowledge and rationales to justify innovation 'unburdened' by the past. Paradoxically, some policies in England during the reforming era since the 1980s have appealed to images of an idyllic past and sought to recreate these in new form. Nonetheless, to understand the cultures we are part of, a critical and reflective awareness of the depth of those cultures in centuries of development is necessary. To have a real feel for contemporary modernity in England, for example, we need to appreciate the revolutionary nature of change that founded the modern form of the country in the seventeenth century and that also went on to have global effects. The latest phase of those global effects is the international policy trends to marketisation, performative culture and managerialism which this book addresses. In that seminal period in England in the late seventeenth century, a vision of society that valued trade, markets, labour power and enterprise – rather than land and territorial bonds – came to have prominence; important to note too is that that period also brought about a decisive shift towards legitimising dissent and the idea that tyrannical leaders could be resisted (Pincus 2009). Democracy and social freedom are integral – if challenged and imperfect – parts of the liberal economic philosophy, which are the roots of contemporary international trends in educational policy affecting the Nordic countries.

It should be expected, therefore, that modernity in the form of the advance of markets and performative culture meets, or even encourages in some ways, resistances and creative alternative responses of various sorts (Woods 2011). This book examines in detail what is happening at the confluence of these international trends and the responses of Nordic countries. The insights gained are hugely important for both scholarly understanding and informing policy and leadership practice since the threats to the depth and fullness of education from marketisation, performative culture and managerialism are of international concern.

What we see in the Nordic countries are cross-currents affecting schools and their leadership. There are new modes of accountability, greater expectations regarding outcomes and examples of shifts to more hierarchical and centralised controls, but also generally a lack of 'high stakes' attached to accountability measures and the persistence of room and respect for professional interpretation. School leaders being caught in cross-pressures and involved in counter-influences to marketisation and narrow performance priorities were a notable feature of the early reforms in England (Woods et al. 1998: 178–179) and still continue to be a feature as the reforms have been extended (Woods 2011). A danger, however, is what Ball (2008) calls the 'ratchet' effect, whereby gradual and small policy changes over time bring about a fundamental alteration of the nature of the education system, embedding market and performative values, practices and identities. To the extent that this is the case, room for manoeuvre and interpretation diminishes. Arguably, however, at the same time, there are counter trends: the problems and limitations of micromanagement through managerialism lead to recognition that more trust is needed in professionals and others on the ground, and the policy emphasis on forging a more entrepreneurial culture in public services like education creates more spaces for local change and the development or renewal of democratic practices (Woods 2013).

One of the consequences of the changes taking place which this book highlights is the uncertainty that is created. The future shape of things cannot be taken for granted. The point that equally needs to be grasped is that the Nordic countries have a distinctive resource from their histories and cultures as they engage with marketising and performative trends. It is the depth of this resource that the contributions to the book highlight, as well as the uncertainties and dangers. That resource includes, for example, as Moos, Hansen, Björk and Johansson put it in the Chap. 8, 'Leadership for Democracy', the 'inherited values' of participatory and deliberative democracy with a strong focus on equity and the belief that leaders should not control but should influence teachers so they have room for interpretation. The historical and cultural resource of the Nordic countries is invaluable for the conscious development of 'adaptive strategies' – that is, strategies which acknowledge the coexistence of instrumental and values-based logics, including the tensions between them, and create possibilities for superordinate values to be achieved and prioritised wherever possible (Woods 2011). An example of such a strategy is school leaders using national plans 'for our own purposes' that affirm their inherited values (the same chapter).

Moos, Johansson and Skedsmo (Chap. 10: 'Successful Nordic School Leadership') suggest that 'school leaders in looser accountability systems', like the Nordic countries, are characterised by reciprocal rather than hierarchical influences and are 'more inclined to exercise indirect and consciousness controlling forms of power – "selling" – leaving room for negotiations with staff'. A crucial issue is the nature of these reciprocal and negotiating relationships. If their nature is a form of soft but strong socialising power that in subtle ways refashions educators' identities as 'enterprising selves' imbued with the values of markets and performativity, it is still hierarchical control but in a guise that works best in the Nordic culture. On the other hand, if their nature is genuinely democratic, informed by a holistic philosophy of education and an awareness of the need to examine the effects and possibilities of

international marketising and performative trends, these leadership relationships have the possibility of sustaining and renewing the values of democracy and social justice. Achieving the latter requires a commitment to shared critical reflection in the practice and development of leadership, so that action is grounded in dialogue and critique, sober and theoretically informed analysis, a feel for history and an openness to inspiration for the greater good that motivates and sustains progressive change.

Professor at the University of Hertfordshire, UK Philip A. Woods

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Acknowledgements

The NordNet research network, *Transnational Tendencies and Nordic Education*, was established with funding from NordForsk, under the Nordic Council of Ministers, in 2009 with Lejf Moos as the Coordinator. Roughly 60 researchers from 16 different universities in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden met for three 2-day seminars over a period of 3 years. We wanted to find out if a Nordic model in education really existed or had existed prior to massive global and transnational influences. Are new expectations furthering or limiting the development of Nordic values? Are transnational influences homogenising educational politics and practices? And are traditional cultures and discourses persistent? At the seminars, we shared introductions by Nordic and international colleagues about trends and tendencies, and we formed five working groups: 'A School for All', 'Pre- and Primary Schools', 'Ambivalences and Paradoxes', 'Accountability in Higher Education' and 'Educational Leadership'.

The working group on 'Educational Leadership' decided to write this volume, but we would not have been able to meet and talk without the support from NordForsk and from our critical friend, Peter Mortimore. I would like to thank the Nordic Research Foundation, our critical friend and all the colleagues in the working group wholeheartedly for the support, inspiration and hard work.

Copenhagen — Lejf Moos

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Chapter 1
Prelude: Tuning the Instrument

Lejf Moos

1.1 New Discourses Meet Established Structures and Social Capital

A *Nordic model* of education seems to be well known internationally. In the Nordic research network: 'Transnational Tendencies and Nordic Education', we wanted to find out if such a model really existed or had existed prior to massive global and transnational influences. Are new expectations furthering or limiting the development of Nordic values? Are transnational influences homogenising educational politics and practices? And are traditional cultures and discourses persistent?

The focus of this book is therefore to explore to what extent transnational influences change national and local values and practices in the Nordic education systems and specifically in educational leadership. The transnational and global discourse on educational leadership is mostly formed according to UK/US thinking and traditions. Pivotal bases of these discourses are social division and cleavages, strong hierarchical societies/class societies with liberal democracies and clearly segregated education systems with school streaming.

The Nordic discourse describes a more equal society and flat hierarchies with participatory democracy and a comprehensive schooling with strong local community roots. The Nordic discourse also builds on a very long tradition for trust between stakeholders. The governments used to trust municipalities to be able to run good schools without demanding documentation. It has also been a tradition that government, municipal authorities and school leaders trusted teachers' professional knowledge and practices.

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_1, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

There is a strong tendency in research on educational leadership to acknowledge the importance of the context. Leadership needs to be aware of the political, societal, cultural and institutional context in which it works (Leithwood and Riehl 2003). But it may be true that we forget about the history in which leadership is embedded: the practice, structure, values and norms of the local and greater communities that have emerged over the years and are still present as a sounding board for new perceptions, impressions and influences (Bourdieu 1990).

It is very important to get a better understanding of the historical and societal background for school leadership in the Nordic systems, because leadership thinking and practices, individual and community social capital (Bourdieu 1990) are formed by the society, culture and context they are part of. They are only partially shaped by politics, discourses and literature, but primarily by national/local values, traditions, structures and practices. It is difficult to distinguish the sources for Nordic leadership thinking and practice. The reason for this could be that so much of the literature we are using in the Nordic contexts is basically of a UK/US origin, and many of the research projects we are engaged in have UK/US foundations. An example of this is the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) (Day and Leithwood 2007), in which many of the Nordic members of the network still participate.

School leadership researchers from the Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden) have for 3 years participated in a Nordic researcher network. The purpose of the network was to find out how Nordic educational politics and practice are influenced by the signals and advice of transnational agencies like the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the European Commission.

We wanted to find out if the new expectations are promoting or restraining the development of a Nordic model. To what extent are transnational influences homogenising educational politics and practices? And to what extent are traditional values, cultures and discourses persistent? To what extent are Nordic education systems similar? And to what extent is this similarity different from other systems? Here we shall restrict our analyses to comparing the Nordic system with UK/US systems.

In order to put the analyses in the chapters into perspective, we shall give outlines of the overarching transnational influences and of the cultural and structural capital they meet from 1970 and onwards: differences and similarities between UK/US and Nordic social structures and norms, because they are seen as pivotal foundations for relations and norms in schools. We also outline educational traditions in the two areas, because educational purposes, values and structures are the basis of educational leadership.

To get a clearer picture of similarities and differences, we apply two perspectives: country cases from all the Nordic countries give a rather short analysis of the state of values, practices and discourses in the five systems. These cases are produced by local researchers and thus give insights into national and even local cultures and discussions. The second part of the book consists of six thematic chapters. We have chosen themes which are important across education systems, as we see

them through the present lenses. The thematic chapters thus give comparisons and discussions that clarify where differences and similarities are found, both between Nordic systems and in relation to the international literature.

The findings and arguments are enlightening to leadership researchers, students and practitioners within as well as outside the Nordic countries, because local/Nordic findings are put into perspective by external analyses, and they in turn put the international analyses into perspective. This is mainly so, though, because they give new images – in relation to neo-liberal descriptions – of relations between global influences and Nordic participatory democracy and comprehensive education and of the ways Nordic school leaders develop their thinking and practice.

The chapters draw on economic and governance theories: neo-liberalism (e.g. Pedersen 2010), governance and new public management theories on how transnational and national agencies influence societies and institutions (e.g. Foucault 2001/1978; Moos 2009b); theories from Scandinavian neo-institutionalism on how institutions respond to pressure and influences from above (e.g. Røvik 2007); and theories on educational purposes and aims (e.g. Eisner 1996; Telhaug et al. 2006) and on educational leadership with a focus on relations and functions (e.g. Leithwood and Riehl 2003; Røvik 2007; Spillane 2006; Woods 2005, 2011). Interpretations of these theories will be unfolded here and in the chapters.

A general perspective is that many new policies are being developed and implemented at present. When they meet the educational and governance fields, they meet embedded structures, discourses, norms and values that are sounding boards for new influences. Some new ideas are implemented, others are transformed into new forms and some are ignored. There is no one-to-one transfer from one field to others (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996). We are interested in determining if the new forms of educational leadership in Nordic systems are so similar that they can be referred to collectively as a Nordic model.

1.2 Global Influences

The following description is very general, as it focuses on the relations of global and transnational agencies and national stakeholders. It does not go into detail on how national and Nordic politicians and policymakers interpret, translate, channel and use those influences. This is done in the country cases and the thematic chapters.

Governance analyses (Dean 1999; Foucault 1976/1994) have established that it is not possible to govern a nation, its institutions or even its individuals by economic and administrative regulation through legislation only (this section is adapted from Moos 2009b). This understanding is being supplemented, or perhaps even replaced, by the understanding that societies cannot be governed from one point, i.e. the government. Governments and other authorities must see themselves as 'leaders of leaders' through indirect forms of power in 'polyphonic settings' (Pedersen 2005). These forms are meant to influence the ways in which institutions and individuals perceive, interpret, understand and act. The actions themselves

become less important in this era. The values and norms behind them are more important from a governmental point of view, because indirect forms of power attempt to influence values and norms.

Paralleling that trend are supra- and transnational agencies such as the OECD and the European Commission, which are – when it comes to education and its governance and politics – not commissioned to use direct forms of power, like regulations, and therefore develop *soft forms of governance* within very general globalisation trends.

Globalisation is an intricate pattern of changes in economics and the division of labour (e.g. the emergence of more than 50,000 massive transnational companies, which are loyal to their shareholders and therefore able to force governments to shape their financial policies according to market logics), changes in communication (especially the Internet and other forms of split-second, global mass media), changes in politics (with only one global political system remaining), and changes in culture (Martin and Schumann 1997). More recent areas affected by global interdependencies are the financial market, the climate and the environment.

One can detect strong tendencies towards designing a new global marketplace with few or none barriers for cross-country operations: the free flow of finances, goods and workers (Pedersen 2010). The prime driver for this deregulation of cooperation was neo-liberal economy; hence, the core logics and theories of the new world order were economic: public choice, rational choice, principal-agent, transaction cost theory and scientific management (Pedersen 2005).

The German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (2001) writes that societies engaged in the process of financial globalisation tend to possess four characteristics:

- An anthropological view of human beings as rational instruments willing and able to make informed decisions and to offer their labour freely in the market place
- An image of a post-egalitarian society that tolerates social marginalisation, expulsion and exclusion
- An image of a democracy where citizens are reduced to consumers in a marked society and where the role of the state is redefined to that of a service agency for clients and consumers
- Finally, a view that policy should be aimed at dismantling state regulation (author's translation)

These are building bricks for a neo-liberal picture of the world, says Habermas. The latter element would seem to challenge the very basis of democracy. If Habermas is correct in his somewhat polemic and therefore crude depiction of the neo-liberal effort to transform policy-driven societies into marked-driven societies, there have to be fundamentally new conditions for institutions, citizens and democracy.

One global effect is the trend towards neo-liberal market politics (with a focus on decentralisation, output, competition and strong leadership) (Pedersen 2010) as well as accountability politics in the public sphere (with a focus on re-centralisation and centrally imposed standards and quality criteria). This trend is known as new public management (NPM) (Hood 1991; MacBeath et al. 1996; Moos 2006a).

Barriers between nations in the areas of economics, industry and trade and culture and communication have been torn down, and new relationships and new coalitions and liaisons have been formed. Some of these new relationships are ad hoc; some are more formal. Most of them have been established primarily to promote economic cooperation. The G8 (2006) (the coalition of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the USA, Canada and Russia), the World Bank, the OECD and the EU are just a few of these powerful agencies.

1.3 Supra- and Transnational Agencies

The OECD and the European Commission are two powerful players in the global field of educational politics. They have so far not been positioned to make educational policy regulation on behalf of member governments. However, this fact might change in respect to the EU due to the Lisbon Agreement. National policies are influenced by supranational EU policies 'that create, filter and convey the globalisation process' (Antunes 2006, 38). This influence is one of the purposes of the EU, but not the purpose for which it was originally intended. In the Lisbon Agreement education is defined as an aspect of social services and, therefore, within the range of commission decisions and regulations (EC 2000).

Since both agencies – and their member governments – are interested in international collaboration and inspiration, they have developed alternative methods for influencing the thinking and regulation of education in member states. The EU has developed the *open method of coordination* (Lange and Alexiadou 2007) and the OECD a method of *peer pressure* (Moos 2006b; Schuller 2006).

At the European Commission's meeting in Lisbon, participants agreed to develop a flexible method based on reflexivity and indicators. This method should include flexible governance tools that rely on *soft law*. A major feature of the open method is reflexivity; member states and institutions should inspire each other through *peer reviews* and policy learning, e.g. best practices. An important tool is a set of indicators meant to enable the identification of best practice (Lange and Alexiadou 2007).

CERI (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation), the OECD bureau that manages education and educational research, is a powerful player in the globalisation of economies and, thereby, the restructuring of nation states (Henry et al. 2001).

Both the EU and the OECD are very much in accordance with the decision of the WTO's GATS agreement (WTO 1998) to include education services in the areas of free trade, thus transforming education to a commodity (Moos 2006b; Pitman 2008).

These influences on policy and practices are not linear and straightforward. Lingard (2000) describes them as 'mutually constitutive relations' between distinctive fields or spaces. Lawn and Lingard claim that transnational organisations such as the OECD act as shapers of emerging discourses of educational policy, as 'expressed in reports, key committees, funding streams and programmes' (Lawn and Lingard 2002). The main influence comes from the OECD setting the agenda (Schuller 2006), both within the whole organisation – e.g. international comparisons

such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) (Hopman 2008) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) – and within individual member nations. If a government wants to put an issue on the national agenda, but lacks the strength to do so on its own, it can call on the OECD for help. The OECD then forms a team that reviews the state of affairs in the member state, based on a detailed and comprehensive framework designed by the OECD. The team's report often forms the basis for political action in the states. The review of educational research and development in Denmark is a relevant example (Moos 2006b).

This strategy is explicated in the OECD publication Education Catalogue (OECD 1998) as a strategy of 'peer pressure' that 'encourages countries to be transparent, to accept explanations and justification, and to become self-critical' (OECD 1998, 2).

Both agencies distinguish between *hard governance* and *soft governance*. The choice of terms is interesting, because hard law/governance stands for regulations that influence people's behaviour, while soft law/governance influences the way people perceive and think about themselves and their relationships with the outside world. Soft governance therefore influences agents in much *deeper* ways. While these methods of influence might seem softer, or more educational, the effects of soft influence are harder and more profound.

Accompanying soft governance, transnational agencies develop social technologies that national governments build on, adjust and use in their endeavour to influence public sector institutions and practitioners. Social technologies are technologies with a purpose or an aim. It can be routines, manuals, methods and tools that very often conceal the aims (Dean 1999; Foucault 1991; Moos 2009a). The social technologies used by the two transnational agencies seem to follow the same pattern, which builds on the liberal core concept of citizens' (or consumers') choice, presupposing that citizens are given a screen, a background, upon which to make their choices. Therefore, there must be comparisons between competitors and, eventually, some kinds of indicators that can function as yardsticks for making the selection the national interpretations.

Transnational influences are, as mentioned, forms of *soft governance*: advice, discourses, etc. These are to some degree taken in by the national political and administrative systems and transformed to national policies, reinventing national education. However, something central spills over. When joining international comparison programmes, like PISA or TIMSS, national governments take over international standards and let them replace national standards (Hopman 2008).

The influences are described and analysed in much more detail in the chapters of this volume. Impacts on the discourses and practices in schools and school leadership in the Nordic countries are being discussed. Do we see a homogenisation – as a kind of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) – towards a UK/US model or towards a Nordic model?

One example can illustrate the tendency. When we – Danish, Norwegian and Swedish researchers – joined the ISSPP in 2002, we agreed to observe a shared format for national research. That meant that we should follow the same set of

criteria for selecting schools. The schools should have an upward performance track on national league tables over a period of 3–4 years, very good inspection reports for the same period of years and principals with good reputations among peers. The criteria were born in the UK/US political systems and posed problems for the Nordic colleagues. We had at the time no public national testing and thus no league table, and we had no national inspection. But of course we could find school principals with a good reputation. We had to modify the criteria in different ways. In Denmark we involved superintendents and asked them to point to successful principals in their school districts (Moos et al. 2007, 104).

1.4 Different Societies, Diverse Discourses and Practices

In short, the Nordic countries are by tradition more egalitarian than the UK and the USA. This historical-sociological fact constitutes a basis for the development of local practices, relations and values. In the UK and the USA, it is part of the traditional consciousness and discourse to accept steeper hierarchies and stronger, more direct leadership than in the Nordic systems, where flatter structures and more collegial relations are expected.

Political differences contribute to this trend. The UK and the US democracies are more liberal with a deep belief in individual choice and competition, while the Nordic countries have a more social democratic history with a deep belief in community and collaboration. The Nordic welfare state is described as based on belief in a strong state, in a particular set of labour market institutions and a high rate of investment in human capital (Andersen et al. 2007). This is (only a fraction of) the background that forms the prism through which new impulses and expectations are seen and understood.

1.4.1 Social Differences

The first theme is the theme of social conditions, relations and differences. Building on materialistic, sociological theories (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), it is reasonable to take the social conditions in which education is placed as the point of departure for educational analysis. Therefore, a few figures from the UK and the USA as well as the Nordic countries are included.

Differences in equality/inequality and distribution of income (the GINI index, after taxes and transfers) show that on a scale from 0 (total equality) to 100 (total inequality), the UK and the USA score around 36–40. The Nordic countries score 22–29 (OECD 2012). This means that the gulf between poor and rich is much wider in the UK and the USA than in the Nordic countries. Over a period of 10–15 years, unfortunately the gap is widening in all these countries. The difference between the Nordic countries and the USA and the UK remains the same.

Similar results are seen in a UN report. In the Nordic countries the richest 20% of the population is approximately four times richer than the poorest 20%, while the richest 20% of the population is approximately eight times richer than the poorest 20% in the UK and the USA (UN 2006 in Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 17).

Health and social problems are closely related to social inequality, not to average incomes, as might be expected. The divide produces health and social problems (UN 2006 in Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 20).

Another effect of social inequality is the level of people who believe that *most people can be trusted*. The level is 60–70% in the Nordic countries and only 30–35% in the UK and the USA (Arbor 2005 in Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 52). A very similar picture arises, when we look at relations between social inequality and *women's status* (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 60).

These figures point to analyses and discussions on social class. Social class is a concept in social sciences and political theory, centred on models of social stratification in which people are grouped into a set of hierarchical social categories. A social class encompasses people with the same social, economic or educational status. Marxist theory tells us that class relations build on relations to means of production. So class is a sociological signifier for the distribution of wealth and thus predominantly an economic category. However, some sociologists argue that 'Class is no longer an important basis of social identity and interests […] Perhaps of more importance is the noticeable effect of education on class identity and perceptions' (Evans 1992, 251).

When it comes to the perception of social position and belonging, it is interesting to combine Evans' argument with analyses of free – state funded – access to education. The proportion of public versus private proportions of funding for education differ. For example, Norway has only 1.8% and Denmark 7.8% private funding for education, while the UK has 30.5% (Eurydice 2012, 93), which means that it is a greater challenge for families to find funding for education in the UK (and the USA) than in the Nordic countries. It is fair to argue that there is a clearer social divide – and perception of social positioning in the UK and the USA than in the Nordic countries. The gap between poor and rich is larger in the UK and the USA, and this coincides with the perception of trust: half as many people can be trusted in the UK and the USA as in the Nordic countries. There used to be a steeper hierarchy in the UK, though.

This is also evident from the traditional institutional structures. In the UK there were eight layers in schools: school leader, deputy, assisting deputy, department leader, deputy department leader, assistant deputy department leader, teacher and assisting teacher. The Nordic countries usually had a flat structure with three layers: school leader, deputy and teacher.

1.4.2 Educational Legacy

It is sometimes forgotten in political discourse that school leaders are leading the schools. Danish policymakers and administrators claim that school leadership is not different from leading other public institutions like daycare centres, elderly care or road maintenance (Klausen 2001). Therefore, there is only one formal diploma

education for all public middle leaders, with no attention to specific institutions (EVA 2012).

We do not agree with this approach. School leaders are supposed to manage schools and ensure optimal conditions for the core function of a school (student learning), the core mediator of learning (teachers' education) and the core context for education and learning (the school organisation) (Day and Leithwood 2007; Moos 2011).

As this is the basis for our analyses, we need to describe both Nordic and UK/US ways of thinking education. In order to get an idea of the traditional ways of thinking education in the UK and the USA and in the Nordic countries, we provide a short account of the history of progressivism. The US description is inspired by Blossing et al. (forthcoming 2013). Building on Dewey (1901, 1916), progressive education reconciles both individualism and community by stimulating the child to develop in her/his own way and learn from personal experience and concurrently organise the learning processes so that cooperation and social interdependence are encouraged. This is an educational ideology that is well suited for a school system that aims to embrace all societal groups and a wide variety of students. Unfortunately, Dewey's notion of democracy, as a way of life, is a part of progressivism that is being overshadowed by the recent neo-liberal and user-oriented claims for adapted teaching and effective learning for the individual child.

In the USA progressive education has from the beginning been said to be in opposition to the Herbartian subject-oriented tradition, and later on it disapproved of both the social efficiency movement and the psychological child-centred pedagogy, respectively (Kliebard 1985). According to Eisner (1996), several competing ideologies struggled for hegemony in the development of the American public school. Progressivism has incorrectly been considered the leading ideology in the USA, which it was not. It flourished in some small independent schools, but overall there was more talk about progressivism than practice.

Progressivism met many challenges in the second half of the twentieth century. The Sputnik chock in the 1960s directed attention towards programmes in mathematics and natural sciences and since the 1970s American school policy has focused on school effectiveness and high standards. National tests have had a strong position in the USA for a long time. The destiny of progressivism is summed up by Eisner in this way: 'Hence, since the late 1960s public concerns about the quality of American education have grown, and as a result, interest in progressive practices, often seen as antithetical to what is truly educationally substantive, has decreased' (1996, 321). The American preference for achievement tests can also serve as an explanation for its fate, according to Kliebard. The things that Dewey sought to promote through his curriculum were difficult to measure and therefore difficult to fit into a system that depended on 'that kind of external inspection which goes by the name of examination' (Dewey 1901 in Kliebard 1995, 74–75).

Three elements in the American curriculum tradition in particular became a challenge for progressivism: first, the American idea about curriculum objectives, originating from, among others, Franklin Bobbitt (1924); second, the conception of *learning outcomes* as an entity that can be measured objectively; and third, the technological means-end model formulated by Ralph Tyler (1949). They have all

contributed to a focus on education as an end and not as the process Dewey argued for. These three elements serve as important tools in the neo-liberal governance systems that have been developing since the 1990s, both in the USA and in the rest of the world. They are very important foundations for the emergence of global competition in education-based comparisons, transnational indicators and political demand of accountability, measured on outcomes.

In Europe the progressive pedagogy had a less ideological character than in the USA; it was directed more towards normative advice about how to organise teaching and learning programmes. Often, we find a combination of visions from several sources, partly supported by research on good practice. For many years, in the interwar period, Nordic educationalists found their main inspiration on the European continent: George Kerschensteiner and Maria Montesorri. Kerschensteiner developed the concept of the *Labour School* (*Arbeitsschule*). A key aspect of his theory was that he considered children to be physically active by nature. This characteristic should be given room and further developed in school. This is in line with psychological and philosophical trends of the time, to base education on the nature of children. Consequently, some referred to this as child-centred education (*Vom Kinde aus*). The other key aspect of Kerschensteiner's theory was that learning in schools should take place in peer groups, student communities, in order to strengthen their social education (Kerschensteiner 1928/1980).

The second major inspiration was the Italian physician and educational theorist Maria Montesorri (Montesorri 1917). In line with Kerschensteiner and psychological theories of the time, she believed that children were perfectly able to learn if they were allowed to act according to their own needs and interests. While Kerschensteiner inspired teachers of youth in lower secondary school (eighth and ninth forms), Montesorri was more inspirational to teachers in preschools and the first forms in primary school.

One strong trend in Nordic, as well as much European, educational politics from the Second World War until the 1970s and 1980s is a belief in comprehensive education, *Bildung*, and thus in education for democracy. The welfare state was emerging and needed education to support its nation-building processes in order to gain acceptance and support from all citizens (Pedersen 2010; Tjeldvoll 1997). The main aim of this education was education for active participation in a democracy; thus, it builds on a social-democratic concept of strong relations between individuals and communities, leaving many curriculum decisions to professional teachers in collaboration with students and parents. Telhaug and colleagues in an analysis of 'The Nordic Model in Education' write:

> In the golden age of Nordic social democracy, social virtues such as equal opportunity, co-operation, adaptation and solidarity were considered to be the main goals of compulsory schooling. Mainly for this reason, the ideal was that the adaptation of education to the individual should take place within the framework of the school class. The argument for the comprehensive school was made both directly and indirectly, using, in addition, a third objective to which considerable attention was paid in the post-war period. This was the political objective, or the democratic socialization of pupils. (2006, 253)

Based on theories on education from the European continent, one can describe the Nordic approach as a *Bildung* approach; the purpose of education is comprehensive

Bildung. According to this understanding children need to understand themselves as parts of bigger communities and, at the same time, as authoritative individuals by acquiring common knowledge, insight and historical, cultural and global understanding. The UK/US competitive state understanding underscores the need for acquiring competencies, readiness for action, which can be understood as tools for action. Human beings are seen as resources, and the need of education is linked with the need of developing employable students, says J.E. Kristensen from Aarhus University in a recent interview (Olsen 2012).

An important aspect of comprehensive education is the structure of the education system. Is it segregated or coherent? The Nordic countries progressed gradually from the beginning of the twentieth century from segregated schools or streaming in schools towards a comprehensive, non-streamed school and succeeded in that respect in the post-war years (Ekholm and Moos 2012). The situation in the UK and the USA is very different, as many students still attend segregated schools.

A very rough summary of different educational visions in the US and the Nordic systems in the three decades following the Second World War should include the following: the USA developed scientific curriculum thinking with focus on national/scientific goals and measurable outcomes. There is an inclination for Taylorism, i.e. scientific management (Taylor 1911) in education, building on the idea that by splitting up all processes, one may be able to manage them to perfection. These ideas often result in detailed aims, standards and quality indicators and *manualisation* of practice by prescribing it step by step. In the Nordic education systems, there was a strong belief in democratic participation, student activity and comprehensive schooling.

History illustrates that UK/US education was well prepared for the contemporary forms of accountability promoted by transnational agencies. The Nordic systems were not that well prepared. Not only did new transnationally inspired expectations meet the cultural capital outlined above: the traditions, structures, norms and values of the education systems and practitioners (Møller 2009). They also met long-standing structures: the century-old buildings with their architecture and furniture built in former times and under different conditions. In many cases, they also met learning material as well as the training and education of teachers and leaders. For economic reasons, political decisions to renew buildings, ICT and furniture are not made as quickly as decisions about educational aims and methods in the move from national education to global education. This provides for the battlefield between traditions, values and new expectations, where national stakeholders and practitioners struggle to find and agree on acceptable local interpretations, when they reinvent, restructure and re-culture their education.

1.5 The Network and the Book

The NordNet research network, Transnational Tendencies and Nordic Education, was established with funding from NordForsk in 2009. Roughly 60 researchers from 16 different universities in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden met for 32-day seminars over a period of 3 years. We shared introductions by Nordic

and international colleagues about trends and tendencies, and we formed five working groups: a school for all (Blossing et al. 2013), pre- and primary schools, ambivalences and paradoxes, accountability in higher education and educational leadership.

The educational leadership group agreed to write this volume and worked for a year on the structure of it. We agreed to have country cases make up one part of the book, because we wanted to include descriptions from within country contexts that would demonstrate both similarities and differences between Nordic systems. We also agreed on a shared frame with a contemporary history of governance and leadership, short descriptions of the education systems with facts and figures and analyses of dominant understandings of school leadership functions. These descriptions and analyses give – within the provided scope of the cases – nuanced images of the state of education and educational leadership in five countries. In order to make room for national situations and perspectives, we did not ask the authors to follow the frame rigorously.

Discussing the country cases we found a number of themes, problems and issues of common interest. They were seen as pivotal in describing the Nordic situation of educational leadership, between tradition and contemporary expectation. One theme is independent schools in different Nordic contexts – implications for school leadership (Chap. 7). It was chosen, because privatisation of schools is increasing today, and it can be seen as a new set of conditions – carried by neo-liberal trends – for educational leadership. A second theme is leadership for democracy (Chap. 8), because democracy in schools, whether deliberative or participative, is a difficult phenomenon. It is so by schools logics. Teacher-student relations are by definition asymmetric, and contemporary accountability systems seem to widen this gap. But there is still a general wish to further democratic education. The third theme is reprofessionalisation of Nordic school leadership – challenging academic teacher professionalism (Chap. 9). Here the analyses focus on professional relations between teachers and school leaders and leaders' – shrinking – need for academic subject knowledge.

The next theme is successful school leadership, which builds on the ISSPP project findings and analyses them in a Nordic light, looking at Nordic similarities and comparing them to UK/US systems to find similarities and differences (Chap. 10). Following this chapter is a chapter entitled 'Local Decisions Under Central Watch – A New Nordic Quality Assurance System' (Chap. 11). The focus of this chapter is on local decisions under central watch, meaning relations between schools, local agencies and governments with respect to quality assurance systems. The theme is central to contemporary governance in a transnational light, and it sheds light on Nordic ways of thinking and doing quality. Following the line of governance, we look at superintendents in the chapter 'The Nordic Superintendents' Leadership Roles: Cross-National Comparison' (Chap. 12). This theme was chosen to follow up on the previous theme and also as an acknowledgement of the fact that schools are now, less than ever, isolated from their contexts.

The last chapter will draw on the findings and arguments of the chapters. The chapters in this volume illustrate that leadership must be seen in relation to its

context: culture, history and traditions, as well as local, national and transnational political and governance contexts. It is important to get a better understanding of the actual background for school leadership in the Nordic systems, because leadership thinking and practices are formed by the context they are working in.

We wanted to find out if the new expectations are promoting or restraining the development of a Nordic model. Are transnational influences homogenising educational politics and practices? Or are traditional values, cultures and discourses persistent?

The country cases and thematic chapters give nuanced insights into ways in which transnational agencies influence national governance and discourses, and how they in turn influence school leadership values, culture and practice while traditional values at the same time remain the foundation.

Country reports argue that one of the main bases for contemporary school leadership thinking and practice is the construction of the *Nordic welfare state* model and the comprehensive school. Both of these have roots in nineteenth-century societal, political, cultural and educational discourses and practices. Societies were seen as basically equal, socially just and democratic and education as a means to sustain and further this kind of society. This is the case, although in different forms, in all the Nordic countries, as the balances between local and national governance differ.

The thematic chapters analyse Nordic education and school leadership from diverse perspectives: new balances between public and independent schools. Independent schools influence the position and role of school leadership in different ways. Looking at school leadership from a democratic perspective, we see that its roots in the welfare state's participatory, democratic thinking and practice are transmitted into the new, more trade-oriented business ways of thinking, disseminated by transnational agencies, among others. School leaders are not the only ones who carry culture and tradition, so do teachers. Contemporary initiatives to reprofessionalise teachers and teaching are based on neo-liberal thinking but also on a democratic, equal and compulsory school. A new analysis of ISSPP data demonstrates that underneath some of the new public management trends to homogenise school leadership concepts cultural basics remain, shaping actual practices and thinking. Comparing Nordic school superintendents also shows strong links to both ends of the continuum: from welfare state to competitive state.

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Part I
Country Cases

Chapter 2
Denmark: New Links Between Education and Economics

Lejf Moos, Klaus Kasper Kofod, Katrin Hjort, and Peter Henrik Raae

2.1 Contemporary Governance and Leadership

The Danish educational system is part of and thus influenced by transnational tendencies, but it is based on Danish structures and culture and thus also unique. Decentralised government has according to the Danish *free school* tradition been a very central part of the Danish educational self-understanding and, to some extent, of educational practice (Raae 2008). Each *Folkeskole* (primary and lower secondary school) has a school board with parental majority, and less formal parental meetings are held at class level. In *gymnasium* (upper secondary school) students have a student council, where no parents are represented. However, today decentralisation is combined with new forms of recentralisation, and centralised and decentralised forms of government are interwoven in a new way (Rose 1999/1989).

The Danish process of modernising or restructuring the public sector and thus the educational sector is characterised by a concurrent loosening and tightening of connections (Weick 1976, 2001) between central agencies and local agents. On the one hand, fewer instructions are produced by the central government for the municipal and school levels with regard to finance and day-to-day administration. On the other hand, central demands of a fixed curriculum and pupil testing have increased. Similar processes can be observed in schools where leadership is decentralised: from the school leader to teacher teams and individual teachers (Moos and Kofod 2009). Teacher teams inserted as a permanent link between the leadership and individual

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_2, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

teachers are a new phenomenon. New tasks and duties are being distributed, thereby loosening organisational connections (e.g. annually and weekly planning of lessons, parts of finance management), while other tasks are being recentralised (e.g. target setting and evaluation of instruction and learning), thereby simultaneously tightening organisational connections.

In 2007 a structural reform reduced the number of Danish municipalities from 271 to 98, because parliament wanted at least 30,000 inhabitants in each municipality (Ministry of Health 2005). This has brought about new relations and positions as well as governance chains, as many new municipalities are structured as concerns/groups with a steep hierarchy and a unified string of leadership. This means that the distance between politicians on municipal boards and the institutions/schools has increased. In many municipalities, new layers of middle leaders, district leaders, etc. emerge. Also in 2007 Danish *gymnasiums* were restructured. They used to be governed by regional councils; today they are self-governed institutions with direct links to the ministry (Moos 2013 [forthcoming]).

The relations between the central level and the local and school levels have in this way changed rather profoundly over the past 8–10 years, as demands for national standards and accountability have moved from political discussions and discourses into administrative practices. National testing is gradually being implemented in all forms in the Danish *Folkeskole*, as is regular testing of pedagogical curricula, language screening and environment assessments of nurseries and day care centres (Andersen 2010). Danish children's school years have in this way been prolonged into day care (Kofod 2007). Another ministry initiative has been to make annual individual student plans compulsory in all subjects (Moos and Kofod 2009). This tendency is accompanied by the move to describe and prescribe the subject content of education in greater detail than previously. This is the case at all levels, from day care centres to university. Although the tendency to increase the centralisation of demands for educational planning has been visible for 10–15 years, it is becoming much more visible and influential in everyday life today, with the introduction of evaluations and planning technologies, and thus much more decisive in school and day care leadership and in relations between leaders and *teachers*.

In continuation, or as a precondition, hereof new systems of quality development and documenting, the so-called quality reports, have been introduced and implemented through the past 5 years. The act on this particular contract form has identified three areas for evaluation and development (evaluation of the educational level; how the local authorities have responded to the former report; and a comprehensive report of the frames, processes and outcomes in the given school district). In 2011 the quality reports were supplemented by an official publication on the ranking of schools according to the test results of the students in order to facilitate the parents' free choice of schools.

2.1.1 From Welfare States to Competitive States

Denmark and most other Western states have changed from welfare states primarily to competitive states (Pedersen 2010) over the past 30–40 years. In some countries one would find that these changes occurred earlier or later, but in Europe the trend

is universal. This is not because such a development is 'natural' or inherent in the social forces, but because global and transnational influences are becoming more extensive. There has been an isomorphic tendency in which coercive (laws), mimetic (benchmarking) and normative (values) forces have played prominent roles (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

In the post-war years, we saw the emergence of welfare states, where parts of civil society were taken over by the state in order to protect its citizens and thus further social justice, political and economic equality. Full employment was a main goal, and the public sector was seen primarily as serving citizens. For example, citizens were supported in case of unemployment or illness.

Transnational agencies were driving forces behind the opening of national economies towards a global competition from the 1970s and onwards, picking up more speed from the mid-1990s. Economic aims shifted from growth through full employment and increased productivity (of the labour force and technology) towards growth through international trade and investment. National governments increasingly worked through their memberships of international organisations on the regional markets.

In the 1970s governments began to turn national economies in a neo-liberal direction that built on rational choice, increasing market influence and minimal state influence (e.g. deregulation, privatisation and outsourcing). Citizens were to a greater extent seen as members of the labour force, with full responsibility of their own situation, and as consumers. The public sector was now seen primarily as a body serving production and trade in the national, innovative system. The state influenced the availability and competences of the labour force and of the capital available.

This competitive state is characterised (Pedersen 2010, 72) by regulation – by displaying best practices and budgets and by framing – of the availability of the labour force, capital and raw material. And it is an active state, encouraging individual citizens to enter the labour market. Ove K. Pedersen argues that on the basis of a number of decisions concerning the labour market and Danish membership of the EU made in 1993, this became a turning point in the country's development from a welfare state to a competitive state.

2.1.2 Changes of Educational Aims

The values underpinning the two kinds of societies are different: equality and participatory democracy are core values in the welfare state, and competition and job readiness are central to the competitive state. The Folkeskole Act of 1993 (Education 1993; Consolidation Act on Folkeskolen 1993) states that the purpose of schooling is enlightenment and participation in a democracy. Therefore, it has been argued that students should be included in the 'normal' community and the classes in the basic, comprehensive and non-streamed school.

The Folkeskole Act of 2006 turned the purpose of schooling away from participatory democracy and education for all towards education for an excellent, talented workforce as indicated by the participation in the international comparison systems

for schooling results – PIRL (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), TIMMS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) – which have been important levers for the development.

Pedersen (2010) illustrates the development of states and education in three phases:

1. The period from 1864 to the Second World War was the nation-building period. In 1864 Denmark was defeated by Prussia and Austria and reduced from being a medium-sized power in Europe to a very small and indifferent nation. At the same time, the agricultural sector experienced a major economic crisis. Thus, we needed to make the next generations individuals who would build a new, national community.
2. The period from the Second World War to the 1990s was the welfare state and democracy-building period. Politicians wanted to prevent another war by raising democrats in school. Therefore, democratic participation became a key value in schooling.
3. The present epoch: The state is competing for survival in the global competition; thus, schools must make sure that children grow up to be able and willing workers. Schools therefore need to focus on basic skills and knowledge and on accountability through tests.

Ramirez and Boli (1987) claim that a relative weakening of the state or military defeats often lead to educational reforms in order to enhance the country's chances of survival. In the above-mentioned three periods a relative weakening of the Danish nation-state is evident, serving as a possible explanation for the development in the education system.

The values of all epochs are still to be found in a complex political and educational situation, but priorities are shifting and subject to political fights, creating new contradictions and dilemmas.

It is ironic that politicians and governments have promoted the educational policy of the competitive state on the grounds that the state must be able to face and survive global competition, thereby linking economic competition (European Commission 2010) and educational competition (e.g. the then Danish Prime Minister stated in 2010 that the aim of the educational system is to be one of the five highest ranking countries in PISA).

At the same time, we see representatives from the business community and from the European Commission advocate strongly for the need of educating young people with competences in innovation and entrepreneurship (Geoghegan-Quinn 2010). Thus, education for creativity is pushed in the direction of innovation, which is now turning into a basic set of competences relevant for the labour market (Bovbjerg 2009).

The emergence of new forms of public sector management is in agreement with neo-liberal economic politics: new public management (NPM) (Hood 1991). Fundamentals to this very broad and diverse tendency are notions of the marketplace and leadership: the idea that the best way to lead public sectors is to copy the private sector, considering competition and consumer choice as well as transparent

management. A sign hereof is the free choice of school, both across day care institutions and school districts and municipalities and the augmentation of autonomous schools and day care institutions.

Another key logic of this version of NPM is leadership. In order for national politicians and administrators to be able to tell the public, the voters, that money spent has been spent wisely and in accordance with political decisions, a number of bureaucratic procedures are created at the national level and continuously made more detailed and sophisticated. Goals and aims are transformed into standards, and evaluation of the outcomes is transformed into more or less tight top-down accountability systems and contracts. Most of these systems are constructed by the Ministry of Finance and then spread to all areas and sectors, ensuring that accountability, accreditation, certification, etc. follow the same set of logics. This is again used as an explanation for educating or training middle leaders and institutional heads in the same way and in the same subjects and procedures as they are supposed to lead.

2.2 Differences Within the Educational System

One distinct feature of the Danish educational system needs to be mentioned here. There is an existing, long-lasting deep divide between day care, *Folkeskole*, including preschool, and *gymnasiums* and vocational schools.

The split can be illustrated with a number of structural and cultural aspects:

- Ownership structures differ. The *gymnasium* and vocational education are self-governing organisations that report directly to the Ministry of Children and Education, while day care centres and primary and lower secondary schools are *owned* by the municipalities or are autonomous and run by *private actors*. Around 80% of the funding of autonomous institutions comes from the municipalities, though.
- Different acts govern schools and day care centres and therefore the objectives and aims used to be different. The *gymnasium* was very subject-oriented, aiming at further education. Vocational schools were aiming at the given professions, and the *Folkeskole* had broad, comprehensive aims, whereas day care centres only recently began to develop specific goals for their work. This has, amongst other things, meant that the culture in schools and the self-perception of its teachers, pedagogues and leaders differed in many respects. Contemporary reforms are homogenising the purpose and aims of these school and day care forms.
- The restructuring of public sectors (also called modernisation) has changed both the content and purpose of schools. All schools are being transformed into cross-curricular, collaborative and self-governing entities. The *Folkeskole* started this process of transformation more than 20 years ago. Vocational school reforms were introduced in 1991 and 2000, the law on day care centre curricula was launched in 2004, and the *gymnasium* reforms took place in 2005 and 2007.

- The governance of schools has also changed. Finances, management and internal direction were decentralised from ministry to municipality to *Folkeskole* in 1992. Vocational schools became self-governing in 1991 and in 2007 *gymnasiums* followed in their footsteps. The municipalities are still in charge of day care services.
- The education of teachers is different. *Gymnasium* teachers must have a master's degree from a university. Vocational school teachers are trained in the professions they specialise in and receive professional postgraduate teacher training. Teachers in *Folkeskole* and day care centres are educated outside universities. Until 2000 they were educated in teacher training colleges (seminaries). These merged in CVUs (Centres of Continuous Education) in 2000, and the CVUs again merged in university colleges in 2007. Since 2004 teacher training in Denmark has resulted in a professional bachelor degree, following the Bologna process.
- The education of heads of school has also been diverse. Until 2006 *Folkeskole* headmasters had to have a diploma in leadership. Heads of vocational schools and *gymnasiums* were not required to have a formal leadership degree. Traditionally, *Folkeskole* headmasters were teachers, who received professional postgraduate teacher training, usually in the form of leadership courses in university colleges. Heads of *gymnasiums* were also teachers, who had taken separate courses or had a master's degree in education from a university. Vocational and preschool heads attended short leadership courses.

2.3 Dominant Discourses, Politics and Practice

Traditionally, and by law, the main purposes of the *Folkeskole* was comprehensive *democratic Bildung* and social justice. In the Act of 2006 this was narrowed down to preparation for further education, and in practice and discourses it is argued that schools need to go *back to basics*.

There is a tense relation between at least four competing discourses: (1) a canonical discourse, (2) a Bildung discourse, (3) an innovation discourse and (4) an effectiveness discourse (Raae 2008). These discourses stress, to some extent, the overall purpose or ethic of the welfare state (enlightening citizens to ensure democracy and create social justice and welfare/wealth), but they disagree on questions concerning national state identity versus international or global identity, knowledge creation versus testing predefined skills and, most importantly, measurability versus the lack hereof. From a political and administrative point of view, measurability is very desirable, because it makes it possible to supervise schools by output control and install completion through ranking, hoping to consequently heighten the quality.

The Danish *Folkeskole* has over the past decades – the last decade more than ever – been dragged into political focus alongside immigration politics: so-called values politics. One reason for this is the way the negative PISA results have been used to reshape the dominant discourse on schools and schooling in Denmark. The press is very helpful in that respect. The *Folkeskole* has been expected to produce

competent adults, citizens, workforce etc., but is now, in line with general tendencies, included in the concept of *lifelong learning*, where learning is a means for adapting to the shifting needs in production and services. Schools are therefore a stepping stone to the next level of education. However, there has been a shift in political views of the state, from welfare state to a neo-liberal, competitive state, and this has brought about a shift in the basic aim of the educational system: from educating for participatory democracy to educating for employability.

Danish *gymnasiums* have, compared to other parts of the educational system, for many years lived a relatively isolated or projected existence. The reforms that affected primary schools, vocational education and universities left *gymnasiums* untouched. To some extent, *gymnasiums* have been unaffected by the modernisation processes that lasted from 1904 to 2005. This is, of course, not correct; there has been a range of minor reforms in the period, but no substantial or structural reforms equivalent to the reforms that have taken place in the Norwegian and Swedish school systems since the 1960s. It can be argued that the most important change has been the transformation from elite to mass schooling (10% in 1970 to 50% today).

The media do not focus on *gymnasiums* in the same that they focus on the *Folkeskole*. However, the 2005 *gymnasium* reform has been the focus of great attention in Weekendavisen (cultural conservative, well-educated readers). The elements of *reformpædagogik* (radical liberal didactics inspired by the continental enlightenment movement and implemented by the 1968 generation) have been heavily criticised for destroying the canonical *gymnasium* tradition. However, the new elements of NPM and accountability (state control by numbers) and their impact on schooling and school organisation are largely overlooked. This situation is radically and rapidly changing at the moment. The competence discourse of the substantial 2005 *gymnasium* reform and self-ownership (NPM – contract and commercial government) introduced with the structural reform of 2007 make the conditions for Danish upper secondary education more and more aligned with other parts of the Danish, Nordic and European educational enterprises.

The day care and preschool area was essentially established during the 1960s as a means of introducing women to the general labour market. Day care centres did not have to comply with specific political demands concerning the pedagogical content, and preschool teachers had considerable discretion. During the 2000s and particularly with the 2004 Act, conditions and demands for the contents of day care centres were gradually introduced; one can argue that the development of schools was thus prolonged *downwards* into the day care centres. Today day care centres are turning into preschools, and the debate on day care politics is questioning the importance of *free play* to facilitate children's learning and competence development.

2.3.1 Social Contracts at Multiple Levels

One very important contemporary tool of public governance is social contracts (Andersen 2003; Dean 1999). There is a wide range of such contracts. For example, we see quality contracts between schools, local educational authorities and the

Ministry of Children and Education. Contracts also exist within schools in the form of annual plans, developed by teacher teams, individual teachers or the school leadership, and individual student plans between students, parents and teachers; and in day care centres we begin to see curricula and evaluations of children's environments.

Specific contracts have been developed in public governance and organisational leadership over the past 20 years. They are part of public governance and thus part of the relationship between governments (and transnational agencies), municipalities and organisations and individuals. They are special in that the superior level defines the frame of resources, the values and the indicators, while the acting level produces the contract in order to thus live up to these expectations and indicators. The plans, areas of focus and methods are left to the practitioners, as long as they stay within the overall framework. An aspect of self-evaluation is often included in the contract.

These contracts leave many decisions to the practice level, where individuals can lead their own work, provided that they remain within the given framework and observe the given values. This type of leadership means that organisations and individuals must adopt the values and norms laid out by the superior level. They must do so to such a degree that they make these values their own. A set of frameworks, values and indicators are available to the practitioners alongside a set of choices concerning the effectiveness of their performance. The contracts constitute technologies for constructing premises based on value decisions made at the superior level with assistance from the dominant discourses.

A subcategory of the technology of agency is relational technologies, i.e. specialised ways of conducting meetings, interviews, school-parent communication and leadership of, e.g. teacher teams and classrooms. Standards for such meetings, interviews and leadership are often developed over time in practice, while authorities prescribe or advice practitioners to establish more effective, appreciative communication. Frameworks and templates might seem to the practitioners to work well, but they always contain a hidden set of values and norms that change the relationship between the parties who participate in meetings and interviews (Moos 2011).

Self-technology, i.e. a wide range of technologies, is a concept that encourages agents to think and act as leaders of their own lives, professional or not. As described earlier in this chapter, this kind of governance influences agents to think and act within sets of values and norms agreed upon by politicians and society.

2.3.2 An Example of a Self-Government Contract

Michel Foucault (1991, 2001/1978) presented the concept of governmentality in order to describe the tendency for organisational techniques to merge with the personal features of employees and clients. In school terms this means that individuals

are increasingly expected to lead professional challenges and developments. Teaching staff and students must express their personal commitment through their engagement in the organisation in ways that manifest personal competences, collaboration, involvement, initiative and pleasure. As subjects they are expected to allow themselves to be subsumed in the visions and targets of the organisation.

When it comes to participation, teachers in schools involved in the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) find that they have many options, amongst at school, team and classroom levels. Participation is not an option, though; it is a requirement. The school wants them, body and soul. Seen through the lens of governmentality, the conduct of conduct can be said to be omnipresent in strategies in all the Danish case study schools (Dean 1999). Teaching and administrative staff participates in educational days that help to create a mutually shared language about the objectives and aims of the school and to foster a framework for interpreting the vision in the *right* ways to move forward.

Many schools and day care centres are organised as learning organisations with considerable self-governance. There seems to be a general tendency to delegate the leadership of teacher or pedagogue teams or teams of pedagogues to the teachers or pedagogues. In some cases, this leadership concerns mostly the implementation of a curriculum of specific subjects. In other cases, there are examples of extensive self-governance amongst teachers within self-governing teams. Here decision-making powers are distributed to the teacher or pedagogue teams, which not only plan their own teaching but also manage their budgets, which are usually more or less decentralised to departments, except for the appointment of substitute teachers and administration wages. This structure is an example of a departmentalised school, where students typically feel that they have influence through the student council.

These schools have action plans with school values and key priority. At a team level meetings are held regularly to create shared ways of translating vision into practice. The heads of school keep up-to-date with team plans through group appraisal interviews, from which they get feedback, listen, give their approval and enter into dialogue with teams in order to be part of the process. At an individual level the heads of school make sure that their employees are committed by conducting individual appraisal interviews with each employee, usually following a detailed interview schedule that both parties partake in. The main focus here is on development. The appraisal interview is an opportunity for the head of school and the employee to evaluate the preceding period and to express expectations and wishes for the time to come. It is also an opportunity for the head to monitor whether employees are committed to the vision of the school, as employees are obliged to justify how they operationalise that vision (Krejsler 2007).

Obviously, there are certain differences in the ways these structures of governmentality are implemented. However, the tendency for organisational structures and the personal qualities of staff to be increasingly interwoven is evident across schools in Denmark.

2.3.3 *Influence from a Leadership Perspective*

In leadership theory there is near consensus on the need for distributed leadership. It is believed that the school leader cannot be sufficiently informed to make all the decisions in a school or a day care centre, nor can she/he be present in all places and situations where decisions need to be made. This is eminently the case in classrooms, where teachers and pedagogues have to interpret demands, goals and situations and make many decisions during each lesson. It is also the case in teacher teams that meet to plan and evaluate their instruction or engage in professional development. If the head of school is not present, she/he is excluded from making decisions (of course, she/he can construct the frameworks in which teams can manoeuvre). This is possible because the teachers and pedagogues are professionals, in the sense that they *know better*, they are educated to know their profession (Laursen et al. 2005).

However, as Spillane and Orlina (2005) and Woods et al. (2004) note, distributed leadership can take many forms. At the core of their concept of leadership is the notion that leadership does not comprise the actions of the school leaders per se, but the interaction and communication between leaders and other agents. Leadership is therefore an *influencing relation* between leaders and followers, which takes place in situations (that can be described by their tools, routines and structures). Leadership is about interactions that influence or are believed to influence other persons.

One important aspect of school or day care leadership tasks can be summed up in this way: leadership establishes and negotiates directions, making sense. Even though schools and day care centres in some systems are lead, to some extent, at a higher level with regard to outcomes (standards, inspections and tests), they have to find the ways to achieve these outcomes themselves (Moos et al. 2011). They have to interpret external demands and signals and choose ways of responding to them. It is a major challenge of school leadership to interpret signals and turn them into narratives, communications about differences, which form the premises for the next decisions in the community (Thyssen 2003; Weick 1995, 2001).

2.4 Facts and Figures

- The Danish *Folkeskole* and freestanding schools are primary and lower secondary schools with pupils at the age of 6–16.
- In 2011 there were 1,317 primary and lower secondary state schools in Denmark (in 1996 the number was 1,708, i.e. a decrease of 391 schools or 23%) and 509 freestanding schools (in 1996 the number was 429, i.e. an increase of 80 schools or 18%).
- In 2011 580,000 pupils attended *Folkeskole* and 9,600 attended a freestanding school (i.e. 14.2%. It is worth mentioning that the average in big cities is 30–31%).

- Ten per cent of *Folkeskole* pupils are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, distributed very unevenly across the country (the number of considerably higher for big cities than small towns).
- Twelve per cent of all pupils in *Folkeskole* receive special needs education, either in their home school or in special schools.
- On average, there are 380 pupils in each *Folkeskole*.
- There are 55,000 *Folkeskole* teachers in Denmark and approximately 36 teachers per school. Most of them have been educated at a teacher training college.
- Denmark has approximately 1,500 heads of school, plus deputies and middle leaders.
- Each *Folkeskole* receives a lump sum from its municipality and has to lead within this budget. The detail financial management is left to the schools and school leadership (the school board and head of school). In comparison, *gymnasiums* are funded directly by the ministry.
- The number of municipalities was reduced from 271 to 98 in 2004. Up to one fourth of all primary and lower secondary schools are affected by mergers or closings.
- Curricula aims are established in legislation with some room for municipal discretion on educational principles and school discretion on methods.

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Chapter 3
Educational Leadership in Finland or Building a Nation with *Bildung*

Michael Uljens and Cilla Nyman

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the Finnish model of educational leadership interpreted. The main emphasis is on the post-war period, especially the past 40 years (1972–2012). The intention is to reveal how previous periods have influenced later developments by framing them, resulting in a multilayered contemporary context. The approach of this chapter is that a fruitful, but not decisive, point of departure in analysing a country's educational leadership models and policies is to acknowledge the task and function education has had in each period (Uljens 2007a). By a critical-hermeneutic interpretation of educational leadership, in relation to its culture-historical context, we may see how solutions correspond to experienced needs and aspirations of each period (Table 3.1). In addition, such a perspective allows us to better identify how practices and experiences in one context may be transferred as insights to another. This is an important aspect of comparative leadership research.

The aim is thus to point to how the ongoing shift in European and global educational policy, which concerns and covers all levels and areas of the Western education system, is reflected, interpreted and expressed in a unique way in what may be called the *Finnish model*. We will try to validate in what ways the Finnish model represents a fruitful combination of equality and excellence, a model where principles are put into practice in a creative way and where trust on the part of politicians and commitment on the part of practitioners play a crucial role. The discussion is limited to leadership in the nine-year compulsory education system, thus leaving preschools, vocational education, upper secondary education and universities out.

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_3, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

Table 3.1 Six periods in educational policy and leadership in Finland (1808–2012)

A. Early formation of the education system in Sweden-Finland (−1808)
Establishment of a university (1640); First curriculum 1649
B. Building the nation with *Bildung* – Finland as Grand Duchy of Russia (1809–1917)
Aiming at autonomy (laws, religion, school, administration, monetary and political system)
First professor in education (1852); teacher education moved to universities
National board of education and matriculation examination (est. 1860s)
Strong Hegelian but non-teleological tradition in education
Building the nation by *Bildung*, from inside out
C. The independent nation-state (1917–1945)
School for all (1921)
D. The social democratic welfare state (1945–1990)
The nine-year comprehensive school introduced (1972)
Teacher education to the universities, part two (1974)
Soviet falls apart; Germany reunited; end of the Cold War (1989)
E. The social-liberal market state (1990–2008)
Finland joins the European Union (1995)
Decentralisation of curriculum planning
National regulation of principal education (1992)
Post-industrial knowledge economy and information society
Weak forms of neo-liberal policy in compulsory education, stronger in higher education
F. Towards a sustainable state? (2009–)
Recentralised policy oriented strategic leadership
On school level steps towards knowledge based educational leadership by monitoring results and procedures
New forms of school development emerging

3.2 Administration and Leadership of Schools and Education

Before we move on to the analysis envisioned above, some words about the contemporary situation are in order. In Finland the education system has since 1972 been built on a nine-year basic education, celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2012. This basic education is compulsory and free of charge for all children. Basic education is provided by comprehensive schools, mainly run by the municipalities. The child enters compulsory basic education the year she/he turns seven and does not leave school until after 10 years or when she/he has completed basic education. The school levels (e.g. preschool, primary and secondary school) are well linked through the curriculum. Preschool, basic (includes primary and lower secondary education) and upper secondary education are provided free of charge by the municipalities, which are the financial owners of these institutions. The municipalities and the state finance half of the basic education cost each as the municipalities receive funds per student from the state. Students and their parents are given voice in basic secondary school issues through participation in student unions and home-school

clubs. The number of persons holding an upper secondary, vocational, polytechnic or university exam has steadily grown. Before the late 1970s, only one fourth of Finland's population aged 15 or more had completed a degree after finishing comprehensive school, and by 2010 this number had changed to two thirds of the adult population (Statistics Finland 2011a).

In 2011 there were 2,870 active comprehensive schools in the 19 school regions of Finland, which were 82 less than the year before. The number of schools is rapidly decreasing, as small schools are being shut down. The number of pupils in comprehensive schools was 541,900 in 2011 (out of a population of 5.4 million people). Only 2% of basic education pupils attend private or state-run schools. The local authorities also provide one-year preschool education before the child starts primary school. Preschool education is voluntary, but more than 96% of the age cohort takes part in it. In 2011 12,600 children were enrolled in pre-primary education and 46,200 in day care (Association of Finnish and Regional Authorities 2012a; Statistics Finland 2011b).

Finland is officially a bilingual country. The public authorities are obligated to meet the educational needs of both the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking population, as both language groups have the right to take part in education in their mother tongue. The Province of Åland, which is entirely Swedish-speaking, has its own educational legislation. Education in the Sámi language is offered to residents in Sámi-speaking regions. Also Romani people, other minorities, persons using sign language or persons in need of translation or interpretation aids are guaranteed participation in education (The Finnish National Board of Education 2011).

3.2.1 A Three-Level Model of School Administration

The educational administration operates on three levels – or four, if the EU is included. The Ministry of Education and Culture together with the National Board of Education form the education system at the central national government level. Implementing education policy is one of the responsibilities of these two organs. The ministry supervises the provision of publicly subsidised education and training, from primary and secondary general education and vocational training to polytechnic, university and adult education. Finnish pre-primary and basic education and upper secondary general and vocational education are governed by legislation and by national core curricula. Although the national core curriculum is the basis for locally designed curricula, there are still many matters in which the education and training providers, such as local authorities and their consortia, can decide for themselves (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a, 2011c).

On the regional level, there are in Finland six regional state administrative agencies that have been operating since 1 January 2010. The tasks of the agencies, which cooperate closely with local authorities, are more or less those of the former provincial offices. These citizen- and customer-oriented agencies execute regional

legislation implementation, steering and supervision functions. For instance, the agencies are concerned with the implementation of basic rights, access to basic public services and legal protection – also when it comes to matters of the education sector (Regional State Administrative Agencies 2011).

On the municipal level, the ways of organising educational administration vary along with, for example, the size of the municipality and whether the municipality is bilingual or not (Hargreaves et al. 2007). Municipalities are seen as the providers of basic education. At the moment the Finnish municipalities are undergoing a major process of change, which most likely will result in a drastic drop in the number of municipalities. How this change in the structure of local authorities will affect Finnish school administration and school leadership remains to be seen (Ministry of Education 2007; Association of Finnish and Regional Authorities 2012b).

Education providers and schools are themselves on the municipality level responsible for their policy lines, focus areas, school network solutions and the way instruction is organised. Educational leadership and administration in the municipalities is distributed between educational boards, chief education officers (superintendents) and principals. The municipalities' chief education officers (superintendents) create and maintain, in cooperation with educational boards, structural frames for the local schooling and are also the employers and superiors of the principals. Every school is required to have a principal, who is responsible for all operations of the school (Risku and Kanervio 2011; Pyhältö et al. 2011; (Decree 986/1998, 865/2005).

The strong tradition of what may be called the doctrine of educational autonomy in Finland, apparent in teacher education and administration, obviously concerns principals' job descriptions. National legislation is simply saying that the principal is in charge of the school (Decree 986/1998, 865/2005). The only other requirement of the principal is that she/he must continue to work as a teacher for 4–20 h weekly. Otherwise, the job descriptions are in the hands of the local school authorities. The wages of school leaders are not linked to school performance. For staff in basic education, working conditions and wages are regulated by common agreements between the union and the municipality. The principal serves the education provider, which in most, but not all, cases is a municipality.

The fact that the situations in Finnish municipalities differ from each other, including how leadership is practised, is something that must be taken into account when dealing with questions concerning the development of educational leadership in the municipalities. When it comes to school development, there is a demand for a wider systemic approach, uniting members of all levels of educational administration, including both general aims and local factors, into the development process. Leadership has already been distributed at different levels of the education system, but there is still a need for building a shared working theory for how to work with reforms and innovations in the Finnish education system (Pyhältö et al. 2011). Compared to other countries, Finland has invested heavily in basic education for teachers, and school development is moving forwards now.

3.2.2 Building the Nation with Bildung: Grand Duchy of Finland (1809–1917)

In order to understand the Finnish contemporary situation, we may in fact take a step back – all the way back to the Napoleonic wars. This may appear to be a rather unusual or unexpected move. Yet these developments resulted in a redefinition of all central European states at the time being. The establishment of the new university in Berlin in 1810 may stand as a reminder of the implications and consequences of these developments for the education system in Prussia, reflecting the renewed role that education was expected to play in society, as explicated by leading persons at the university like Fichte and Schleiermacher, who were also important educational thinkers. Especially for Finland the geopolitical changes in the beginning of the nineteenth century were crucial, as their result was that Finland established itself as a semi-independent nation. It is in this process that education indeed develops its rather strong position in Finland. The nation was built by *Bildung*.

The short version of the story begins when Finland, after the Finnish war between Sweden and Russia war (1808–1809), was separated from Sweden after having formed the eastern part of the kingdom for hundreds of years. Finland became a Grand Duchy under the Russian Tsar Alexander. The exclusion of Finland had dramatic consequences for both Sweden and Finland. In Finland, for the time being, Hegelian ideas led influential young intellectuals at Åbo Akademi to develop nationalist ideas based on a new role for the Finnish language, as Swedish had been and at the time still was the dominant language of the administration. There was a strong interest in developing Finnish culture, including languages and religion, in relation to the Russian empire. Accordingly, the church and school were seen as important cultural institutions. The interest in finding ways to develop the country in the shadow of the Russian empire is also the reason why one of the world's oldest chairs in education can be found at the University of Helsinki. The chair was established in 1852 in connection with a larger university reform and had teacher education as its main responsibility (Iisalo 1988; Uljens 2002). Thus, Finnish teacher education has a tradition of being university based with a chair of its own since 1852. The first textbook in education, called *School Pedagogics*, authored by Hegelian Zacharias Joachim Cleve (1820–1900), who held the chair for 20 years, covered both the task, organisation and administration of the schools before he touched upon teaching (Cleve 1884). Following Cleve's conceptualisation, teaching and leadership, organisation and structure, personality and reflection, task and educational philosophy are all parts of 'school pedagogics'. The school was given an independent role in relation to the state and the homes, that is, not subordinated to either of them. Cleve also established the first scientific journal of education and was active in the establishment of the National Board of Education as well as the matriculation exam. The establishment of the National Board of Education in 1869 symbolises the movement of national school leadership away from the church to the state. Cleve was a disciple of the Hegelian Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881),

the national Finnish philosopher. Snellman, in his influential 1861 lectures in education, argued that the country had to be built up from the inside with the means of *Bildung* (Snellman 1898). This, in essence, is a crucial part of the historical explanation of why Finland esteems education so highly – the very birth of the nation is interwoven with the concept of *Bildung and the rise of the finnish language.* This journey of *Bildung* and schooling is also a story of the stepwise development of the Finnish language into the main language in Finland, in addition to Swedish, which today are the national languages of this bilingual country.

3.2.3 The Independent Nation-State (1917–1945)

The following crucial step was taken in connection with the Russian revolution and the Second World War, when Finland declared itself independent in 1917. The Compulsory School Attendance Act, which would assure basic education for all children, was soon enacted (1921). Prior to this, not least during the nineteenth century, there had been strong efforts to guarantee equality in education, first by introduction of the *folkskola* or *kansakoulu* in 1866, built on the Proposals by Uno Cygnaeus, and later by a decision concerning school districts in 1898. This decision stipulated that the maximum distance to a school should be no more than 5 km – a simple decision that had significant consequences for the establishment of new schools throughout the country. This period is only paralleled by the development of the past decade, but in the opposite direction, when approximately two schools have been closed weekly. In the course of 10 years, 1,000 schools have shut their doors. This explosion and implosion have clear implications for how we think about school leadership. When the act entered into force in 1921, Finnish compulsory education comprised of a six-grade primary school, intended for all children between the ages of 7 and 13. The number of children attending primary school increased steadily, and in the mid-1930s, some 90% of all children between the ages of 7 and 15 were receiving primary education (Statistics Finland 2007).

A possible interpretation of the Finnish pathway to the present-day situation is thus that several external challenges have over the years forced the country to act as a united country. Modern Finnish historical consciousness is thus formed, first, by two strong breaks: from Sweden in 1809 and Russia in 1917. In addition, the country was forced to defend its autonomy during the Second World War. The difficult post-war years represented a fourth societal challenge, as the country relocated 400,000 persons who had lost their homes in Carelia. Furthermore, many people emmigrated; 300,000 alone to Sweden until the mid-1980s. This partly explains why Finland has, in comparison, quite lately experienced the kinds of multicultural developments that most other European countries went through at an earlier stage, partly as a result of rapid economic progress in the 1960s and 1970s, requiring an external workforce. This may also have provided Finland with a prolonged form of nation-based conception of the state. Such a national, ethnos-based conceptualisation of identity was strong, as the language question has been important to both Finnish- and

Swedish-speaking Finns. However, the external challenges provided the society with a certain form of discourse, keeping it together. Maybe sharing the same ideals concerning the nation, beyond politics, developed a trusting but demanding ethos?

3.2.4 The Social Democratic Welfare State (1945–1990)

The 1950s saw a dramatic rise in the number of pupils, due to the high post-war birth rates, and the number of primary schools grew in rural areas as well as in the cities. In the late 1950s, two more years were added to the six-grade primary school, and the discussion of a possible nine-year comprehensive school started.

The period from 1945 to the late 1980s focused, as in most European countries, on educational expansion, solidarity, equal basic education for all, equal opportunities, regional balance and education for the civil society. In a word, it was the educational doctrine of the welfare state, assuming mutual positive effects of economic growth, welfare and political participation (see, e.g. Siljander 2007). This tradition grew strong in Finland, maybe because of the historical developments.

In 1968 the comprehensive school was established, but the law was not implemented until 1972. Implementation began in the northern parts of the country and was finally completed in 1977 when the last southern municipality switched to the comprehensive school system. As the former parallel school system was to change into the new unified comprehensive school, a national curriculum was created in the years 1965–1970 (OECD 2010; Statistics Finland 2007). In 2012 Finland celebrates 40 years of comprehensive education.

After having introduced the nine-year compulsory school in 1970s, a significant reform concerning the principal profession was launched in 1978: all schools were to be led by principals, appointed specifically to the task (Lahtero 2011). The principal profession was established, although smaller schools continued to be managed by the teachers. Since 1980 specific introductory education was arranged for newly appointed principals, also reflecting a change towards educational leadership (Alava 2008).

All Finnish teacher education, except for that of the vocational field, was moved into the universities in 1974, when the faculties of education were established. This may be called the second phase of academisation of Finnish teacher education – the first phase, often forgot, occurred some 122 years before in 1852. The point is that the development of teacher education in the universities with the new chair in 1852 was a response to certain *global* changes at the time. Similarly, the foundation of the faculties of education in 1974 was a correlate of the nine-year compulsory school established in the late 1960s. The educational expansion from the 1960s and onwards also reflected the new role of education for the economy and democratic politics.

Thus, when all the Nordic countries moved towards a curriculum emphasising citizenship education, democratic and social learning, Finland took a specific direction and created faculties of education for teacher education, heavily emphasizing teaching

and learning specific subjects. A specific feature of this reform was the introduction of associate professorships in subject teaching, influenced by the German way of structuring the science of education. In the tradition of Didaktik, teaching is always centred around a content. Subject matter didactics was later discovered by Lee Schulman and colleagues in the 1980s. In this sense, teacher education and the educational sciences in Finland have been much more geared towards the German tradition especially, compared to Norway and Sweden, who were more obviously oriented towards the USA, especially after 1945. The subject-centred teacher education strategy was attractive to the rest of the university, as this policy confirmed the need of deep insights in content matter for teaching in lower and upper secondary schools.

A further step was taken in 1979, a historical year in Finland, when two new masters programmes in education were established – a teacher-oriented and a educational leadership (HRD)-oriented masters exam (both 300 ects). The HRD and educational leadership educated Masters act since 1979, for example, as superintendents, with regional and national school administration and more generally in the public and private sector with HRD. However, despite their extensive studies in educational leadership, these university-educated specialists are not formally qualified for working as principals in schools, unless they receive an additional teacher's qualification (60 ects). In other respects their position on the labour market is strong. This may be contrasted with subject teachers who are qualified teachers with a one-year (60 ects) teacher education and further for acting as principals with an addition of only 25 ects in educational leadership.

The second type of masters of education (300 ects) established in 1979 was teacher education for grades 1–6 (children 7–12). From then all teachers in the comprehensive school hold a five-year master's degree. The new masters of education entering the labour market in the early 1980s were expected to handle more freedom: a product of the decentralisation of the curriculum work. Centralistic control was also diminished in other cultural areas, partly due to ideological-political changes and partly due to the technological development. The 1979 reform also maintained the one-year subject teacher education for lower and upper secondary schools – business as usual – thus not challenging the university departments offering studies in the teaching subjects.

3.2.5 An Analytical Model for Educational Leadership Policy Changes

In Fig. 3.1 some of the major changes during the past 40 years in educational policy, leadership and administration are analytically pointed out. The main dimensions in the figure are (a) planning and (b) evaluation of education. First, in Finland the 1972 curriculum is generally considered a product of the heyday of directing schools with laws, inspection and curricula (Position 1: Management by objectives and rules). This period also emphasises the teacher's responsibility concerning evaluation of

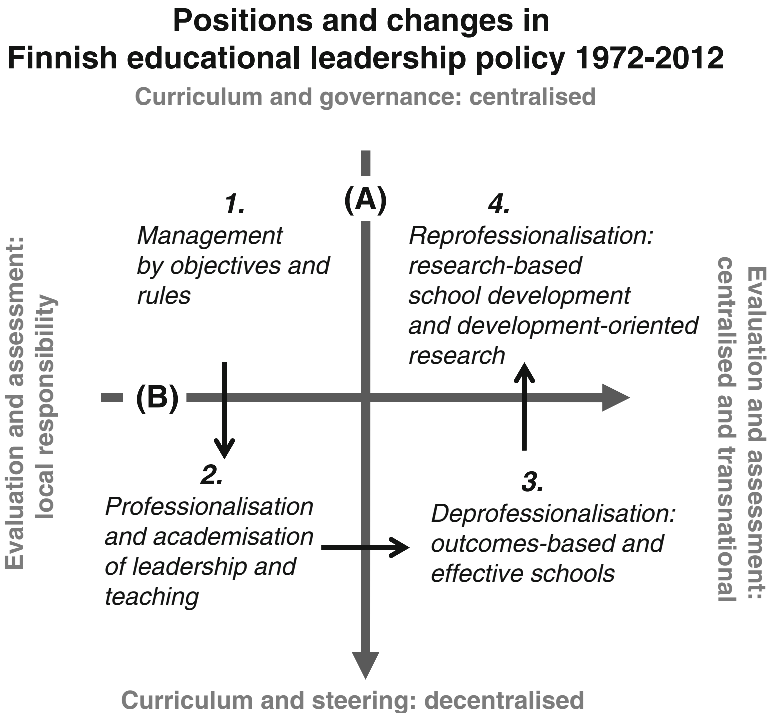

Fig. 3.1 Positions and changes in Finnish educational leadership and policy 1972–2012 or 1989 ±20 years

students' learning achievement. Central tests were carried out already in the 1960s, but they were not systematically related to teachers' marking.

The movement from position 1 to position 2 (A) indicates a decentralisation of curricular work in 1980s, alongside a professionalisation of the teacher education Uljens (1998). From the late 1970s, Finland started to move from a traditional administration-centred to a qualification-oriented and decentralised way of governing schools. The point made is simple: parallel to this process of liberalisation and decentralisation, teachers' vocation was stepwise being professionalised by *academisation*. Already at this stage, confidence in the professionalism and capabilities of teachers – all with master's degrees – went hand in hand with diminishing state control over schools and teaching.

More generally, the large university reform in the late 1970s reflected a quite dramatic curricular change at the universities. There was a shift from a discipline-centred to a qualification- and profession-centred way of thinking about the university curriculum. The movement aimed at unifying theory and practice within university education in general. However, it is disputed among Finnish scholars whether this change – the stepwise development of teacher education into a master's exam – was the result of a rational intentional developmental line or whether it reflects a development according to which contingent explanations have to be accepted, that is, that

teacher education happened to be in a lucky situation due to certain circumstances. Decentralisation also meant a redefinition of the principal's tasks. A movement from principalship as management to pedagogical leadership is evident in the new school law 1983. The principal's tasks and responsibilities were defined in great detail, following the still dominant tradition of governing by rules and regulations. The main observation is however that a new form of professionalism was outlined corresponding to a decentralisation built on the ethos of trust.

In many respects position 2 may be considered a period of strong professionalism. It should be noted that both positions 1 and 2 in Fig. 3.1 are located within the frames of the welfare state model. It may also be observed that while curricular work was decentralised in Finland, an opposite movement, increasing control and steering by objectives and curriculum, occurred elsewhere.

3.3 The Social-Liberal Market State (1990–2008)

The educational mentality of the past two decades has to a growing extent reflected a stronger discourse on excellence, efficiency, productivity, competition, internationalisation, increased individual freedom and responsibility as well as deregulation in all societal areas (e.g. communication, healthcare, infrastructure), including the educational sector (education law, curriculum planning and educational administration). This change is indicated in Fig. 3.1 by an arrow from position 2 to position 3. As Varjo (2007) demonstrates, the direction was manifested in the governmental programme in Finland after the 1990 elections. The keywords in Finnish educational policy today are still, according to Ministry of Education and Culture (2011a), quality, efficiency, equity and internationalisation (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011d). Education is here mentioned as a factor for competitiveness. The priorities in educational development are the following, again according to the Ministry of Education and Culture: (a) to raise the level of education and upgrade the competencies of the population and the workforce; (b) to improve the efficiency of the education system; (c) to prevent exclusion among children and young people; (d) to increase adult learning opportunities; (e) quality enhancement and impact in education, training and research; and (f) internationalisation (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a, 2011c, 2011d).

During this period the relation between the state, market and education changed (Uljens 2007b). Generally, the development in Finland since 1989 could be called the creation of the educational policy of the global post-industrial knowledge economy and information society. The idea of lifelong education was established as early as the 1970s, and new public management ideas were introduced in the late 1980s and onwards. The so-called agency theoretic approach expanded, according to which the role of the state has changed from producing services to buying services. The model included, as we know, the lowering of taxes as well as techniques for *quality assurance*. The attention also turned towards profiling individual schools and institutions and on increased flexibility, for example, in educational career planning.

Decentralisation and deregulation continued throughout the 1990s. Parents were included in school boards, and the idea of school-based curricula was introduced. Salaries according to achievements were later introduced in the public sector. This mentality has supported a kind of commodification of knowledge, a light form of *marketisation* of schooling as well as a stronger view of national education as a vehicle for international competition. The connotation of internalisation changed from global solidarity to global competition. In the early 1990s, school inspections still took place regularly in order to monitor the quality of education activities (Jakku-Sihvonen 2001, 11), but this practice was soon ended. By the mid-1990s, the national authorities had decentralised curriculum planning, which complemented the national curriculum; there were no school inspections, no control of school books and no international measurements intervening the national agenda. Parallel to this decentralization of responsibilities and freedom to the local level within the country, an opposite movement occurred in that transnational influences grew stronger. In the case of Finland, joining EU 1995 obviously demonstrates this. Indeed, this may be seen as a kind of crisis for the nation-state construction.

3.3.1 Implications for Leadership

The 1990s represents a significant step in the professionalisation of principals in Finland. Due to greater expectations of the school with regard to planning and development, the role of the principal was strengthened in the 1990s. In 1992 the first ever official national regulations concerning qualifications for principals were accepted. Principals' certificate education focused on educational leadership, legislation, administration and economy. Deregulation of laws, more freedom and stronger focus on profiling each school by constructing an individualised curriculum for each school in the 1994 reform obviously strengthened the role of the principals. Curriculum reform was thus closely connected to the reform of school leadership.

Since 1999 all principals in lower and upper secondary schools in Finland are required to hold a five-year master's degree from a university, be qualified teachers, have sufficient teaching experience, have received a national educational leadership certificate provided by the National Board of Education or an equivalent 25 ECTS credits in educational leadership offered by the Faculties of Education at the universities. Allowing universities to provide the obligatory education in educational leadership may be interpreted both as a result of a change in the role of the state and as a form of academisation or reprofessionalisation of educational leadership.

The principal's education has expanded and changed from emphasising administrative management to emphasising educational leadership for school development, following distributive leadership principles. As legislation has developed from being institutional to being functional, the local authorities have during the past 10 years been allowed to delegate power to the schools concerning, for example, appointment of teachers and economic decisions. Also, schools' relations with external actors have increased.

Today it is discussed whether the education of principals should be extended by in-service training programmes. An effort in this direction was made by extensive professional development programmes (PD) in the 1990s, but they were too expensive. Today pressures to expand principal education exist partly due to the fact that the low formal requirements (only 25 ECTS credits) for principals may appear to be an anomaly when compared to the extensive Finnish teacher education system.

The job descriptions of school principals today are generally rather open – they are in charge of the schools, it is said (Decree 986/1998, 865/2005). These job descriptions are in the hands of the local school authorities. The open descriptions naturally allow for both management and leadership as well as for cooperative, distributed and developmental forms of leadership (Kanervio and Risku 2009). Also the decentralisation of curricular work to schools requires space for action. Working with the school's activity plans and local curricula in relation to the municipal strategies is an important tool for the principal. The activity plans of the schools are, ultimately, connected to the government's five-year development plans for education and research (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2011b). It should be observed, however, that these activity plans do not follow the logic of the contract model emanated within the NLP paradigm. Rather, they are tools in self-evaluative developmental work. However, the crucial change concerning the principal's tasks from the law of 1983 to the law of 1998 is not related to the tasks as such – educational leadership is still at the fore. What changes is the job description from being very detailed to being open. This change indicates very clearly the change from government to governance. Since the end of 1990s the principals must continuously live with the question of to what extent indeed one lives up to expectations.

In Fig. 3.1 there is a change (b) from positions 2 to 3 along a dimension called *evaluation*. The intention is to indicate the establishment of the regime of accountability. Generally, Fig. 3.1 demonstrates that evaluation as a tool traditionally controlled, and still, by teachers has evolved into a tool not only for controlling the result of teaching, but also to interpret learning results as an indicators of successful teaching. Traditional, moral and intellectual, accountability interested in the ambitions and rational arguments behind teaching is thus still highly valued in Finland, compared to many other countries having moved towards a performance centered accountability. In this light, it is reasonable to claim that the absence of a testing culture is a key to understanding the Finnish success (Sahlberg 2011). Educational leadership is carried out in cooperation with teachers, recognizing their professionalism and ambitions, not by controlling them.

In Finland central testing of school performance is familiar in the form of national surveys of school performance, which have been conducted since the 1960s, but the results of these surveys have not been used in a competition-increasing manner. In 1968 a Finnish Institute for Educational Research was established to support national authorities with relevant data for developmental work. Its primary task was to monitor the progress in schools and at the same time supported curricular work (Jakku-Sihvonen 2001). Today, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council serves as an expert body for educational evaluation in connection with the Ministry of Education and Culture, operating as a separate institute within the University of

Jyväskylä. This demonstrates a clear tendency in the country to move towards models for supporting not only national authorities but also local actors in their efforts with regard to educational development on student, teacher and school levels.

Yet, in claiming that Finland does not use evaluation in an evaluative manner, one should observe that national tests for measuring the performance of upper secondary schools have been used in Finland since the mid-nineteenth century in the form of the Matriculation Examination. This system has also been defended with justice-oriented arguments – a similar test for all schools guaranteed a similar level of teaching in all schools and all parts of the country. The national authorities do not use the results to rank schools, but as the information is public, large newspapers in the country rank the upper secondary schools according to their results. In this public ranking, no attention is paid to, for example, the sociocultural composition of the school or students' previous achievement levels.

However, even though the evaluation system does not monitor the effects of teaching, teachers do so themselves. Finnish teachers demonstrate high expectations towards the students. Simultaneously, weaker students are taken care of by special education. From the historical analysis presented above, we can see that this mentality or orientation towards results and performance in a way suits the Finnish education tradition quite well – the country had, from the very beginning and from inside, to be constructed by education and *Bildung*. In 1974 reform teacher education, alongside subject teaching and learning, was central.

For obvious reasons, transnational evaluation results like PISA have not had dramatic consequences in Finland, although it has been a huge national learning experience, changing the self-concept of the country. The paradox of PISA in Finland is, however, that while Finnish teacher and principal education is viewed as an explanation of the success, the accountability ideology operating behind the PISA project differs from the ideology of the morally responsible and academic teacher ideal in Finland. In addition, PISA itself does not provide any empirical insights into how success in teacher education could be connected to later teacher behaviour, assumed to result in good learning achievements. The accountability ideology points to limiting the agenda for educational politics in a specific country. Instead, instrumental policy issues, that is, means for how things should be carried out effectively, turn out to be a major topic. Educational leadership and teachers' work in Finland are, in contrast, rather tuned towards the ideal of the reflective practitioner, including reflection on the aims and not just effective methods for education and schooling. Educational leadership in Finland is, and is evolving towards, a research-based, not an evidence-based, practice (position 4 in Fig. 3.1).

3.4 Discussion

In many countries the answer of educational policymakers to the increasing challenges facing Western knowledge economies has been increasing control of leadership and teacher education. But is this the right way of doing it? How

should, for example, educational testing be organised so that these efforts do not have counterproductive consequences for schooling? From the case of Finland we may learn that control, surveys, evaluation and the like are not the problem as such; but problems may be caused by how these are used. The Finnish model has consequently emphasised a certain independent status for the school as an institution, both in relation to the homes and the state. As the schools are not privatized, they are not seen as prolonged instruments for the homes, and as they operate with considerable degrees of freedom without sanctions, schools are not considered as a main vehicle for politically driven development of society. This explains also the low pace for reforming teacher education in Finland. The country has continuously demonstrated its trust in the education sector, thus upholding its self-esteem, rather than questioning the morals of the teachers and principals by, for example, externalising evaluation, which may have a demoralising effect. Paradoxically perhaps, there is a risk that the new international competition-oriented trend may not only question but also challenge the unique Finnish model, which has been so successful in combining the idea of a school for all with high standards.

The neo-liberal education policy can be said to partly operate through a pedagogy of fear, rather than through a pedagogy of trust, which has been the Finnish model (Uljens 2009). The principle of free choice is by some considered a threat to the Finnish equity principle, as qualitative differences between schools might increase due to the possible division of schools into *good* and *bad* (Aho et al. 2006). Privatisation of, for example, school choice and other customised solutions requires a less regulative education law. Together with looking at education as an individual good, rather than a public good, diminished regulation creates uncertainty about who is responsible for what. Also in Finland this has resulted in jurisprudence, and laws have turned out to be much more important than before for educational leaders. Paradoxically, many laws lead to few cases in court, few laws to more work for lawyers in the education sector.

From a Finnish perspective, the neo-Taylorian view that dominates in many countries may, when applied to committed and well-educated professionals, very well turn out to be counterproductive, not achieving the qualities aimed for. Using evaluation as an external control instrument, rather than a tool for school development and monitoring, may instead be seen as disqualifying teachers and leaders.

It should also be observed that accountability in general is not new in education, but it can mean different things. In Schleiermacher's (1994) view, the need of a discipline of education itself emanates from the fact that the public school teacher is expected to argue for, explain and clarify the principles of her/his educational undertakings. In order to do so, a language is needed, and such a language is to be provided by a science of education. Thus, it is important to remember that the reason for identifying education as a university discipline, among others, is partly related to a view of teachers as accountable. But this form of accountability defends teachers' rights and obligations to develop such a language. An autonomous discipline providing professional practitioners with a relevant and independent knowledge base constitutes such a tool. Apparently countries where education is a strong university discipline, which is the case in Finland, seem to be more reluctant to adopt an accountability-oriented regime.

A mentality accepting a never-ending competition is deceptive, as one can never reach the goal or certainty. The only thing that is clear is that one has to struggle to maintain or improve one's position. Expressed in the terminology of Michel Foucault, the accountability paradigm can be viewed as an example of how evaluation operates not by governing behaviour directly but by governing the self-government or self-conduct of individuals. In such a climate, it is important that principals and superintendents participate in research-based developmental work, supported by university researchers carrying out developmentally oriented research. By participating in school based developmental work that is simultaneously related to educational research and being aware of current policies, school leaders can maintain and expand their academic professionalism. Such a change also partly requires a redefinition of educational research moving towards intervention oriented methodology. New models of organizing developmentally oriented cooperation between municipalities and between schools are now emerging. These developments pay due respect to experiential learning in developing leadership, but also acknowledge that knowledge increase also may serve others on a more systemic level. Thus the problems of pure apprentice based models in leadership will be avoided. In Fig. 3.1 the movement from position 3 to 4 indicates such a change, which is under development in Finland.

An additional insight emanating from the analysis of the Finnish case is that when teacher and principal education is turned into a research-based academic profession, a mature political culture that pays due respect to the education sector is required, allowing the sector to develop a research-based knowledge base of its own. This is exactly what has happened in Finland, maybe not due to a rational and intentional educational policy but as a result of historical developments: the early government of the Grand Duchy of Finland and later the state realised that it had something to gain by protecting the school from too direct state control. This view reflects a nonhierarchical way of relating to politics, economy and education; in a working democracy, none of these can be totally subsumed under another.

This consensus in Finland, uniting ambition, freedom and control, is largely shared by parents and also reflected in legislation. In Finland students have since 1921 been obliged, by law, to learn (swe. *läroplikt* or fi. *oppivelvollisuus*), while parents and caretakers have, by law, been responsible for facilitating this. In contrast, there is no law in Finland that says that the child has to go to a school (swe. *skolplikt* or fi. *kouluvelvollisuus*). So, Finnish children are not obliged to attend school, but they are obliged to learn. This also clearly points to the role of caretakers: outspoken responsibility for the child's learning. On the other hand, the parents can choose to educate their children at home. Few do so, though.

From a school leadership perspective, it should be observed that insights in educational thinking vary strongly between different categories of teachers. While Education is the major subject (180 ects) of the five-year master's programme (totally 300 ets) for teachers for the first to sixth forms, the major subject of upper secondary school teachers is a teaching subject (160 ects) and only 60 ects in Education. These two categories of teachers receive the very same principal education despite the huge

difference in knowledge of education. As principals today are expected to work more actively as educational developers and leaders in all schools, they may be differently prepared for the task due to the differences in their studies in education. In the future different categories of teachers might benefit of receiving differentiated programmes in educational leadership.

It is worth observing that Finnish teacher education has gone through only a smaller reform in the last 30 years. In fact, the last large reform was that of 1979. From a Nordic and European perspective, this is quite unique. The simultaneous and continuing professionalisation of educational leadership and principal education in Finland still reflect that school reform is slow business requiring persistence. Small real changes are more important than large words. Also worth observing is the relatively strong and independent national Finnish educational administration. Typically, many other countries, parliament elections imply a turnover in the administrative staff, but this not the case in Finland. In other words, politics engage with the education sector in a quite reflected way recognising professional experience and opinion. This is also evident in the way national curriculum development is carried out.

Two explanations for such a policy in Finland may be offered here. Historically, schools as well as the church were seen as important cultural institutions that had to be protected against political influence during the Russian period. Second, in this connection Finnish politics have been characterised by consensus-oriented coalition governments, in contrast to the rest of the Nordic countries. In other words, Finnish politicians learned early on that schools can indeed operate and develop according to high standards without strong political steering. The matriculation exam may be seen as a vehicle for controlling the quality and for compensating for the absence of direct political steering. Demonstrating a kind of solidarity on the part of the schools and a corresponding trust on the part of the politicians, this model is quite unique in a global context.

Today new forms of partnerships are being established between schools, administration and universities. This occurs partly due to economic challenges, yet primarily due to an obvious interest, on different levels and among all involved actors, to take a qualitative step towards a research-based and developmentally oriented reflective practice aiming at new forms of educational leadership and teaching practices on the national, municipal and school level making use of existing degrees of freedom. Collaborations between schools, national and regional institutions and universities arise, aiming at combining the professional development of teachers and principals with research-based and data-informed school development. This development is encouraged by the national authorities, but in dialogue with the municipalities. The process is about producing new programmes of site-based school development, in-service training for principals and teachers, supported by development-oriented educational research. In this process "competition" appears primarily as an orientation towards moving beyond the current state of affairs in one's own school and municipality rather than to compete with others, defining accountability in terms of responsibility, trust, critique and commitment.

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Chapter 4
Transnational Influence and Educational Policy in Iceland

Börkur Hansen

4.1 Context

Jónasson (2008) observes that the shaping of the Icelandic educational system has been continuous since the enactment of the laws on compulsory schooling in 1907. Kjartansson (2008) observes that OECD statistics and research began to influence the development of the educational system in Iceland in the late 1960s, enhancing its role of preparing a skilled workforce for economic growth. The current organisation of the educational system in Iceland dates back to 1974, when the Law on the Structure of the Educational System (Lög um skólakerfi 55/1974) and the Law on Basic Schools (Lög um grunnskóla 63/1974) were passed in parliament. The previous elementary and lower secondary schools were restructured and defined as a unified whole, exemplified by the term *grunnskóli* or basic school. The system was divided into three major levels: the compulsory level, the upper secondary level and the university level. Twenty years later in 1994, a Law on Preschools was enacted, stating that the preschool level was the first level in the Icelandic educational system (Lög um leikskóla 78/1994). Before 1994, the preschool level was not defined as a formal part of the educational system. The emphasis in the 1974 Basic School Law was primarily to further enhance the policy of education for all, irrespective of student learning capacities and location in the country.

The governance of schools at these four levels varies somewhat. In general, preschools and basic schools are operated by the municipalities, upper secondary schools and universities by the state. Independent or private schools are primarily funded by the municipalities at the preschool and basic school levels, while the state funds the upper secondary school and the university levels.

The policy development in Iceland during the last few decades has emphasised decentralisation and the empowerment of schools. This emphasis was stipulated in

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_4, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

the 1994 policy document report on educational policy formation (Skýrsla nefndar um mótun menntastefnu 1994). The emphasis on decentralisation is supported with references to ministerial evaluation reports, OECD documents and laws and regulations from neighbouring countries. This report has to a large extent guided the development of changes in educational laws and regulations concerning basic schools and upper secondary schools.

The governance of basic schools was transferred from the state to the municipalities with the 1995 Basic School Act (Lög um grunnskóla 66/1995). This law, and subsequent laws at other school levels, contained more articulate provisions for the establishment of independent or private schools in comparison to older laws and regulations. Educational management and school development are also emphasised, along with strategic parental linkages. All these elements are reinforced in the 1998 Basic School Law (Lög um grunnskóla 91/2008).

Curriculum guides are produced by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for all school levels, except the university level. The status of curriculum guides is that of regulations outlining the official educational policy for the school levels. The purpose of the curriculum guides is to inform headmasters, teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders about educational goals and operation of schools. Another major goal of the curriculum guides is to ensure equality of opportunity for students. The curriculum guides also stipulate policy ends concerning internal and external evaluations of schools, with the rationale of enhancing quality and accountability. The main curriculum guides are to be adapted by the schools, based on their priorities.

Námsmatsstofnun, the Educational Testing Institute of Iceland, is an independent institute established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. Its main task is to create and administer national tests in the basic schools in forth, seventh and tenth forms in selected subjects. The test scores of individual basic schools are listed by the institute on their home page. Another task of the institute is to engage in various research projects, national and international. International research projects such as PISA, TALIS, PIRLS, SITES and TIMSS are managed by the institute. The institute produces research reports based on all these studies. Its reports often stimulate public discussions and provide a basis for national and international comparisons and benchmarking.

The structural arrangement of the compulsory level in Iceland is accordingly based on the general ideology of empowering and decentralising the operation of basic schools, while the state stipulates centralised curriculum guides and manages accountability and quality checks.

4.2 Issues: Basic Schools

The shaping of the Icelandic educational system is an ongoing process, as observed by Jónasson (2008). The educational discourse is variable, depending on the context at each given time. The discourse is, on the one hand, guided by contextual knowledge

and relevance and, on the other, by external forces. Both these discourses contribute to the shaping of the educational system. PISA results are always discussed in the public media, particularly in relation to scores in other Nordic countries. Results on standardised tests in basic schools also stimulate public discussions, but the results are usually published in the major newspapers. Open access and school choice are also topics of discussion. Inclusion is an issue, both in terms of teaching pupils with special needs and pupils with multicultural backgrounds. At the present, public discussions are very focused on finance and the small size of schools, but the fiscal crisis in Iceland has left many municipalities in a critical financial situation. The development of the role of headmasters is also of concern in this context. This is only to mention a few of the issues that receive the attention of educators and the general media and influence schools and school leaders and have apparent linkages to transnational policies and tendencies.

4.2.1 Accountability: Tests

Accountability has been an issue regarding basic schools in Iceland for long periods of time. Standardised tests in basic schools have since 1977 been administered by the Educational Testing Institute of Iceland in order to determine access to upper secondary schools, but in 2008, the emphasis was changed to use the tests more diagnostically. Based on the 1995 Law on Basic Schools, in 1996, standardised tests were also administered in the fourth and seventh forms. The rationale for these tests is to ensure that schools are accountable for their practices. Value-added figures are calculated for all schools, and the final scores for the different forms are published in the form of league tables for the country as a whole. Outcomes on standardised tests often create public discussion and are used by municipal authorities to rationalise the quality of their schools or to influence reorganisation of their practices.

PISA tests have been conducted in Iceland since 2000. All basic schools in Iceland participate in the PISA surveys, but in most PISA countries, the participation of schools is based on sampling. The PISA findings usually gain considerable public attention in Iceland. Moreover, due to the participation of all basic schools with tenth form pupils, PISA findings can be disseminated on a school level and contain analytical information that can be useful to the individual schools. Primarily, however, the PISA findings generate discussions about the benchmarking of schools, particularly in relation to other Nordic countries and countries in Western Europe. Furthermore, the PISA findings influence public policy, for example, concerning pupils' literacy levels. Policy elements concerning literacy have, for example, been included in major curriculum guides and, to some extent, elements in science and mathematics.

The TALIS results have also gained public attention, but not in the same manner as PISA. In Iceland, all basic schools participated in the TALIS surveys, but TALIS has only been administered once. In other partaking countries, participation was delimited to lower secondary schools (ISCED-2 schools). In the future, TALIS

findings have the potential of having significant influence on management practices in schools by benchmarking various administrative elements in schools in Iceland as well as in the participating countries.

4.2.2 Accountability: Evaluation

School evaluation was stipulated in the 1995 Basic School Law (Lög um grunnskóla 66/1995). The law states that every basic school must conduct self-evaluation that focuses on teaching and learning, management, staff communication and relations with stakeholders. The law also stipulates that the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture administers external evaluations of basic schools every 5 years. This emphasis on evaluation was highlighted in the policy document report on educational policy formation (Skýrsla nefndar um mótun menntastefnu 1994) in order to enhance school development and accountability. It also says in the report that in many of Iceland's neighbouring countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, the consumer orientation of schools had increased. The report accordingly highlights the importance of decentralisation and the significance of increasing evaluation practices in schools. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of enhancing site-based management and control, stating that the role of the ministry should be delimited to making curriculum guides and administering external evaluations of schools. An OECD report from 1987 on the educational system in Iceland is used as a reference point in the report on educational policy formation as well as the 1992 OECD report on International Educational Indicators: A Framework for Analysis.

This evaluation policy, with minor changes, has been a part of the formal educational policy in Iceland at all school levels during the last decades. Basic schools have, for example, engaged in self-evaluations on a regular basis since the enactment of the 1995 Law, and they have participated in the external evaluation programme administered by the ministry. During the period of 2001–2003, the ministry conducted evaluations of self-evaluation practices in all basic schools in the country. The ministry's 2004 report states that there was a great difference between schools, but does not provide information on why there is such a difference or of what nature. A study was conducted by Hansen et al. (2005) to examine the views of headmasters and teachers in six basic schools on the implementation of self-evaluation practices. The findings showed a considerable difference amongst the schools regarding self-evaluation activities. The findings indicate that the critical factors are the knowledge and skills of headmasters and teachers of self-evaluation methods, clear leadership within schools and the attitudes of headmasters and teachers towards self-evaluation as a means for change and development.

It seems as though this situation has not changed radically, but the latest ministerial report on the conduct of self-evaluation in basic schools states that it was satisfactory in less than half of the schools studied (Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið 2008). The report states that during the autumn of 2008, 39 schools were studied, and only 16 of them or 41% engaged in systematic self-evaluation activities. A group established by the Ministry of Education, Science

and Culture and the Association of Municipalities released a report in 2011, stating a reinforcement of the evaluation policies with various practical ramifications concerning the role of the schools as well as the ministry (Ytra mat á grunnskólum: Tillögur til mennta- og menningarmálaráðherra og skólamálanefndar Sambands íslenskra sveitarfélaga um tilhögun á ytra mati í grunnskólum 2011). Based on this development, it is likely that the conduct of evaluation will be further enhanced in the near future.

4.3 Open Access and School Choice

The value of independent schools is often discussed in the public media in Iceland. These discussions are usually centred on the value of free choice for parents when selecting schools for their children. The most recognised of the independent schools is the organisation Hjallastefnan. On its website, it says that the organisation's schools are devoted to the 'Hjalli pedagogy', which is primarily based on the method of 'segregating girls and boys in preschool classes and by this trying to liberate the children from traditional sex-roles and stereotypic behaviors' (Hjallamiðstöðin 2011a). This organisation runs ten preschools and three basic schools for children up to 11 years of age. There are in total around 1,400 students in Hjallastefnan schools, with approximately 490 pupils at the elementary basic school level (Hjallamiðstöðin 2011b).

The Hjallastefnan basic schools, as well as other independent basic schools, are funded by the municipalities based on the provisions in the subsequent school laws. The 2008 Law on Basic School states, for example, that independent schools can be established by groups or individuals but in cooperation with a given municipality. Based on an agreement (contract/charter) with the municipality, the school can be accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as a formal institution with a permit for operation. Independent schools can claim funding from the participating municipality. The minimum is 75% of the total cost per basic school student as calculated by Hagstofan or Statistics Iceland. In practice, independent basic schools get 100% funding from the given municipalities and charge no tuition fees.

Open access can be seen as a subissue of the free choice ideology. When the governance of basic schools was transferred from the state to the municipalities in 1995, open access became an issue. On the one hand, this was an issue for students who wanted to attend basic schools run by municipalities other than where they had their legal addresses. This was solved by most municipalities with contracts concerning individual students. On the other hand, open access is an issue in municipalities that have more than one school. In the 1995 Law on Basic Schools, as well as in newer basic school laws, it is stated that it is up to the municipalities to decide how they determine access to their schools. Traditionally, municipalities are divided into catchment areas, and access to schools is determined on the basis of that structure. In the municipality of Garðabær, a suburb area in the outskirts of Reykjavík, open access for students became the guiding policy. Garðabær abandoned the catchment area structure and emphasised that all their schools were open to students

irrespective of where they lived in the municipality. A recent study shows that the vast majority of parents are very pleased with this policy of open access. The study also showed, however, that most of the parents choose schools near their homes (Sigurðardóttir 2011). In other municipalities, placement of students outside a given catchment area is decided upon in cooperation with parents, schools and municipal education authorities.

4.4 Inclusion: Students with Special Needs

The Salamanca statement and framework for action accepted at the world conference on special needs education in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994 was well received in Iceland. The statement focuses on special needs, access and quality. It states, for example, that 'those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs' (UNESCO 1994, viii). The framework influenced the 1999 Special Education Regulation in Iceland, the 2002 Municipality of Reykjavík Education Policy and the 2006 Main Curriculum Guide for Basic Schools. Most of the specialised schools or divisions within regular schools for students with special needs, like the blind, deaf or handicapped, were abandoned and their functions included in regular basic schools with the teaching of regular classes. In these cases, students with special needs of this kind were taught in regular classes with the aid of specialised teachers.

The implementation of this inclusion policy created public discussion about the status of specialised schools and divisions within regular schools. Many parents and teachers were in favour of their existence, while others favoured the inclusion approach. These discussions have died down, and a general acceptance of the inclusion approach seems to be taking place. However, there are sometimes critical public discussions about the abandoning of specialised schools.

The Salamanca statement also implies that the needs of students with learning difficulties should be met with inclusive practices in regular classes. Mixed-ability teaching has been a guiding value in Icelandic basic schools for a long time but was reinforced by the Salamanca statement. Many schools have, however, during the last few years, been developing more individualised teaching practices, and the phrases *school for all* and *individualised learning* are frequently used in this context. The municipality of Reykjavík, for example, put forth an official policy of individualising instruction to be implemented in all its schools. Cooperative practices like team-teaching are becoming common, particularly in lower forms, where a team of experts in the schools teach the classes.

In this context, Jóhannesson (2006) says, when studying changes in the work of teachers, 'we see that "different children" and cooperation concerning inclusion are the areas that Icelandic primary school teachers talk about as having the greatest impact on their working lives'. Björnsdóttir (2009) concludes in her study on mixed-ability teaching that teachers are very conscious of trying to change their practices but feel a lack of necessary support from headmasters and educational authorities. Similarly,

Gunnþórsdóttir (2010) says in her study on the inclusive practices of Icelandic and Dutch teachers that the teachers ‘don’t get the necessary support they need’.

4.4.1 Inclusion: Immigrant Students

Despite the isolation of Iceland and its homogenous population, immigration has been in the increase during the last decade. In 2000, there were 1,039 pupils in basic schools with a different mother tongue than Icelandic, and in 2010, the number was 2,318 or 5.4% of the total number of basic school pupils. These pupils had more than 43 different mother tongues, but the specific mother tongues of these pupils are not specified in the Statistics Iceland databank (Hagstofan 2011).

When the number of immigrant pupils began to increase, specific immigrant reception and learning centres were established in a few basic schools. In the city of Reykjavík, such centres were established in four basic schools. The purpose of these centres was to adapt immigrant children to Icelandic society, particularly by teaching them Icelandic as a second language. With the 2006 Main Basic School Curriculum Guide, the policy of inclusion of immigrant children was reinforced. This policy stipulated that all children, including immigrant children, should be able to attend schools near their home – their home schools (Mennta- og menningamálaráðuneytið 2006). Accordingly, funding arrangements were changed and money allocated directly to schools with immigrant students based on their number.

The implementation of this policy and the restructuring or abandoning of reception and learning centres are gradually taking place. They are, however, in operation to some extent in a number of basic schools in Reykjavík. The majority of immigrant children in Reykjavík, however, are enrolled in two basic schools. Ólafsdóttir (2011) says that considerable experience has been accumulated in these two schools that can be of use to other schools with less experience in working with immigrant children. Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Börkur Hansen (in press) see one of these schools as a leading school in multicultural education in Reykjavík and claim that multicultural working practices are embedded in its organisational culture: ‘Many aspects of the school, such as its organization, leadership, teaching and home-school collaboration bear witness to an educational setting which openly values diversity’. Accordingly, experience in multicultural teaching may be lost if successful practices are not disseminated effectively to other schools with less experience in working with immigrant children. Furthermore, despite extensive research, support and guidance, there is still a lot to be learned in most schools with immigrant children.

4.4.2 Consolidation and the Size of Schools

The fiscal crisis in Iceland has left many municipalities in a critical financial situation. In the municipality of Reykjavík, several amalgamations of preschools, basic schools and afterschool sport and recreational centres are being established. Several

other efficiency procedures are in the process. The plan is to save money in the management of schools and use of facilities and establish more harmony in policy-making and the operation of preschools, basic schools and afterschool sport and recreational centres. The estimated accumulated savings in operational and capital cost in facilities according to the report prepared by Reykjavík central office is around 2,000 million Icelandic kroner in 2014 (Reykjavíkurborg 2011). In 2010, Reykjavík had 50 regular and independent/private basic schools and 95 regular and independent/private preschools.

The rationale for these steps is based on the fact that schools in Reykjavík are relatively small, but many basic schools in Reykjavík enrol between 200 and 350 pupils. The same accounts for preschools. The stated purpose is to save money and create a richer learning environment for the pupils by using existing resources (housing, equipment, staff, etc.) more effectively. The report was presented to the public, and official feedback came from various stakeholders. One of the criticisms made reference to an Icelandic PISA report by Halldórsson et al. (2010) about the small size of Icelandic basic schools; their average size is approximately half of the average OECD size. Another critique was based on references to the report on consolidation of schools by Hawley et al. (2011). Their report states that the merging of schools and school districts is contextual, but the '[f]inancial claims about widespread benefits of consolidation are unsubstantiated by contemporary research about cost savings' (2011, 11). Despite critical discussions in the public media, Reykjavík central office is continuing with its plan on the merger of preschools, basic schools and afterschool sport and recreational centres. Similar steps, although smaller in scope, have been taken in other municipalities.

4.5 Role of Basic School Headmasters: Prospective Changes

The decentralisation of basic schools, when their control was moved from the state to the municipalities in 1995, changed the working environment of basic school headmasters. The 1995 Basic School Law prescribes considerable power to headmasters as directors and educational leaders of their schools. The role of basic school headmasters in the previous legal framework was considered unclear in the basic school hierarchy, and they were believed to have little decision-making authority (Jónasson 1992). In an extensive survey from 2001 amongst basic school headmasters, Hansen et al. (2002a, b) examined their views concerning the transfer to municipal control and how the working environment that followed affected their role. The majority of headmasters were very positive towards their new environment. This study revealed that the task areas they spent most of their time on had changed considerably since 1991, when a similar study on their role was conducted by the same research team (Hansen et al. 1997).

The findings of the 1991 and 2001 studies show that the ideal rankings of their major task areas are similar. The actual ranking, on the other hand, had changed considerably during this period. Also, the gap between the actual and the ideal rankings

of these tasks had widened. Hansen et al. (2002a, b) concluded that the headmasters were drifting away from their ideal rank emphasis by engaging in more and more managerial tasks and duties at the expense of educational or pedagogical tasks.

A third study was conducted in 2006 by the same team. Again, the same framework was used concerning the tasks areas as in the previous studies in 1991 and 2001 (Hansen et al. 2008). The findings suggested that the headmaster's role has stabilised somewhat, the gap between their actual and preferred rank orderings of tasks had narrowed since the 2001 study and they did not seem as overwhelmed by managerial duties as in 2001. However, the study showed an increase in the time headmasters were spending on personnel issues. However, the ideal ranking of task areas remained similar to the rankings in 1991 and 2001. This can be seen as a representation of ambitious pedagogical values which they have difficulty realising due to managerial tasks. Also, the increased time headmasters seem to spend on personnel can be seen as a result of the strengthening of their role as leaders and directors of their schools.

The fiscal crisis has reduced most municipal schools' budgets considerably. In most basic schools, the cutbacks have led to a considerable reduction of the number of middle managers. Generally, middle managers, such as assistant headmasters and division leaders for age groups (e.g. 1–4, 5–7, 8–10), were active in managing change and development for the units they were responsible for. The abandoning of these positions has obviously increased the workload of headmasters and homeroom teachers, that is, teachers responsible for curriculum planning and coordination of parent liaisons for individual classes. It will be interesting to explore how this environment changes the role of headmasters: Will it give them more managerial duties? How will it affect their role as educational leaders? In private discussions, many headmasters claim that they are drifting away from their ideal rank ordering of tasks.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

It may be concluded that the emphasis on decentralisation and accountability has influenced the shaping of education policy in Iceland quite extensively and influenced the role of schools and their leaders. Discussions of PISA results and outcomes on standardised tests can be seen as part of the accountability movement stimulated by the OECD and other forces. The same applies for internal and external school evaluation policies. This emphasis is reinforced with new public management ideologies of increased consumer control. Open access and school choice can be seen as a part of that ideology. Inclusion was reinforced by the Salamanca statement and framework developed by the UNESCO in 1994. The implementation of this policy in Iceland is an ongoing task, both in terms of teaching students with special needs and students with multicultural backgrounds. Iceland is sparsely populated with many relatively small schools. The fiscal crisis has stimulated the amalgamation of schools, facilitating discussions about the ideal size of schools.

The present situation also seems to be influencing the role of school headmasters as educational leaders.

4.7 Facts and Figures

- The total number of people living in Iceland in 2010 was approximately 320,000.
- In 2010, there were 76 municipalities in the country; in 1950, there were 229. For a long time, there has been political pressure to amalgamate and enlarge municipalities in order to enhance their capacity and efficiency.
- The size of the municipalities is quite variable: 42 municipalities have less than 1,000 inhabitants, 27 have between 1,000 and 10,000 inhabitants and only six municipalities have more than 10,000 inhabitants. Reykjavík is far the largest municipality with around 118,000 inhabitants.
- In 2010, Iceland had 277 preschools (ages 1–6), 172 basic schools (ages 6–16) and 32 upper secondary schools (ages 16–20). Out of these schools, 39 preschools, 10 basic schools and four upper secondary schools were independent.
- The total number of basic school pupils in Iceland today is 42,539.
- There is an average of 247 pupils in each basic school. Fifty-eight basic schools have 100 pupils or less. Only one school has more than 700 pupils.
- The number of pupils varies considerably between regions. The Reykjavík region is the largest with 13,797 pupils, and the Vestfjord region is the smallest with 942 pupils.
- The ratio of foreign citizens was 2.6% of the population in 2000 and 6.8% in 2010. The number of basic school pupils with another mother tongue than Icelandic was 1,039 in 2000 and 2,318 in 2010.
- The number of basic school headmasters and teachers has declined a little during the last few years, primarily due to amalgamations of schools in sparsely populated areas. In 2005, there were 180 headmasters, 136 assistant headmasters and 4,065 teachers in Iceland, but in 2010, the numbers had dropped to 178, 123 and 3,814, respectively.
- The majority of basic school teachers hold B.Ed. degrees from the Iceland University of Education, which merged with the University of Iceland in 2008.

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Chapter 5
Norway: Centralisation and Decentralisation as Twin Reform Strategies

Jorunn Møller and Guri Skedsmo

5.1 The History of the Norwegian Education System

Equity, participation, and welfare state are recognised as the distinguishing features of the Norwegian education model, while social democracy, both as a political movement and as a broader ideology, has also had a crucial impact. There has been a strong ideological tradition in Norway for emphasising the role of educational institutions in the making of civic society. In addition to preparing children to become able employees, the schools should prepare children to play constructive roles in a democratic society. Throughout history, regional policies have been essential in shaping the education system, and decisions at the regional and municipal levels have played a strong role alongside a tradition of national policies (for more facts about the structure of the Norwegian education system, see Appendix.

In the late nineteenth century, Norway was a poor country, and, compared to Sweden and Denmark, it did not have traditional aristocracy and economic elites. A special form of popular resistance constituted by antielitist lay religious movements became important in the nineteenth century. People learned to argue against the rulers and stand up for their beliefs by participating in these movements, and it implied a broad public involvement in both economic and educational developments (Stugu 2001). In these movements the local teachers often became agents of the civic society. They had the cultural and social capital to act on a trans-local level and to mobilise people. The teacher was involved in a variety of activities. She/he managed the local youth club, sport activities, mission society and other charities.

Even though the role of teachers as tenets of civic society declined after the Second World War, the images of activist teachers continued to influence public expectations of teachers, particularly in the rural areas. So, as a basis for understanding the conceptualisation of teaching and school leadership within the education sector, one

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_5, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

has to know that the schools and their teachers played a crucial role in the processes of nation-building and in the shaping of national identities. Also, educational institutions have been, and still are, important for ensuring the vitality of the many small communities in a country where the population is widely dispersed.

Moreover, the development of the comprehensive school system in Norway may be seen in connection with the unique tradition of consensus-seeking politics in education. Both the right- and left-wing parties have sought compromises and agreements in educational reforms. This has its historical roots in the political mobilisation of, and the alliance between, farmers and workers. This has not led to an absence of conflicts, but traditionally there has been a political will in Norway to base decisions in education on consensus. The farmers organised themselves in the Liberal Party, and many took positions in the government. Their political involvement was based on social-liberal values and was also closely linked to the labour movement. The Social Democratic Party was not rooted in radical socialism, and after the Second World War the workers allied themselves with the growing white-collar middle class, and the state played a vital role, due to the expanding public sector.

The period from 1945 to about 1970 is often referred to as the *golden era* of social democracy (Telhaug et al. 2006). The cornerstones of this period were the citizens' equal rights, the responsibility of the state for the welfare of all citizens, and the struggles to narrow the gaps in income between classes and between men and women. This model was, and still is, supported by the labour market model, which includes collective bargaining and developing legislation with cooperation between governments and labour organisations. School access for children from all socioeconomic groups is considered very important. In addition, nurturing a national identity has played an important role in the construction of national curricula. However, the model includes some gaps. For instance, the concept of *nation-building* leads to the exclusion of ethnic minorities. The Sámi people and the Kvens, for example, have historically been excluded (Stugu 2001).

5.1.1 A Short Description of the Education System Today

The Norwegian education system is predominantly public, which means that most schools and universities are run by public authorities. More than 95% of Norwegian students are enrolled in ordinary classes in public schools, and education at all levels is free. The Education Act (1998, amended 2008, sec. 1-1) stipulates:

> Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights. […] Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking. […] The pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness. They shall have joint responsibility to participate. (Education Act of 1998, amended 2008, sec. 1-1)

The structure of the school system entails 10 years of compulsory primary and lower secondary education and 3 years of optional upper secondary education. Children start attending school at age 6, and 90% of all students stay in school until at least age 18. The educational policy has intended to create both equal and equitable life conditions for all social groups, regardless of social background, gender, ethnicity and geographical location. Findings based on a national representative survey, which included Norwegian headmasters' perceptions of student background and attainment, showed that the headmasters rated 78.1% of their students' socioeconomic backgrounds as medium (middle class) and noted that 69.5% had a supportive home educational environment. Only 9.1% of the students were characterised as having a low socioeconomic background (Møller et al. 2006).

The concept of *equity* in elementary Norwegian education has at least three meanings: The first is equal access to the education system; *fairness* is understood as the education system's ability to distribute financial and economic resources in order to meet the needs of all the users in a way that provides equal opportunities. The second aspect concerns equity at the individual level. This addresses the diversity of students and, therefore, the necessity for individualised treatment in order to meet individual learning abilities (e.g. greater resources for greater needs). The third aspect concerns equity at the group level. For instance, minority language students have the collective right to receive additional language instruction.

Due to recent migration, the student population in Norwegian schools is changing and becoming more multicultural and multilingual. The immigrant population is a heterogeneous group. Norway has had immigration from 208 different nations, and almost half of all immigrants come from Asia, Africa or Latin America. Primary reasons for immigration are work, family reunion or seeking refuge. In primary and lower secondary education, the term *students from language minorities* is used. This term refers to students who, for the short or long term, need personalised instruction in Norwegian in order to participate in regular classes.

The Knowledge Promotion is the latest reform in compulsory education in Norway, and it took effect in August 2006. In the Quality Framework, formulated in connection with this reform, democracy and diversity are important concepts:

> [C]lear value base and a broad understanding are fundamental elements of an inclusive social community and of a learning community where diversity is acknowledged and respected. Such a learning environment encourages cooperation, dialogue and differences in opinion. The pupils shall participate in democratic processes, thus developing their democratic ideals and understanding the importance of active and committed participation in a multicultural society. (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006, 3)

This underscores that giving equal access to knowledge and education in schools through recognition of differences within the school community is crucial, as is the development and practice of a democratic spirit. Moreover, the policy documents stress that schools ought to reflect the students' cultural backgrounds. While democracy is seen in relation to Christian and humanistic values in the Core Curriculum and the Education Act, the Quality Framework emphasises human rights and the processual side of creating democracy. Since these documents are a basis for the governing of schools, this can be seen as a tension in the policy documents. The content of these

aims is a matter of continuous debate and may be interpreted differently from school to school and again lead to differences in discourses and practices (Johnson et al. 2011).

5.1.2 Centralisation and Decentralisation as Twin Reform Strategies

While central regulation was important in building up the comprehensive education system after the Second World War, decentralisation has been more dominant as a reform strategy in the public sector from the 1980s onwards and has been framed as a quality improvement strategy. At the same time, national curriculum reforms were used as a central strategy. This shows that the relationship between the state, the municipalities and the schools is rather complex. Historically, the national curriculum can be seen as a *contract* between the state and the teachers, which in practice means that the schools are still governed by the state (Gundem 1993). This contract implied a division of labour between curriculum making at the national level and local curriculum work, with regard to planning instruction practices. On the one hand, the teachers were responsible for following up decisions made by the state regarding national aims and the content formulated in the curriculum guidelines. On the other hand, within these national frames, teachers had considerable leeway to develop locally adapted teaching programmes based on their professional judgements (Sivesind 2008).

Some researchers have argued that despite attempts to decentralise tasks as well as the authority of the state, the municipalities' influence on schools has been rather limited (Askheim et al. 1993; Engeland 2000; Karlsen 1993). Others, including Karlsen (1993) and Weiler (1990), have emphasised that centralisation and decentralisation are interdependent processes occurring at the same time. As such, distributing tasks to the local level is often combined with state regulation, and decentralisation even seems to legitimise centralisation. For more information about primary and secondary education in Norway, see Appendix.

5.2 The Framing of School Leadership

Norway has a long history of framing school leadership as *first among equals*. The term has been used to refer to the most senior member of a group of equals (peers). It also indicates that the person so described is technically equal, but is looked upon as an authority of special importance by his peers. This has led not only to a flat hierarchy in schools but also to uniform teacher training, and little or no formal distinction exists among members of the teaching staff. For many years there was no specific training for school headmasters, only sporadic courses offered in in-service education. Therefore, school leadership was interpreted as dependent upon the inherent organisational talent of each individual headmaster. The choice of

candidates for leading positions in the education system was in general adjusted towards formal measurable criteria, such as the number of years in professional service. As a consequence, school headmasters have long regarded their administrative functions mostly as being an exact appliance of the rules and laws that were set down. Many headmasters continued to look upon themselves as teachers with some administrative duties in addition to teaching.

Since the early 1970s national and regional authorities have encouraged in-service training for headmasters. In the period from 1980 to 2000, broad national in-service programmes supported such efforts. During that period the dominant teacher unions strongly contested the need for formal, university-based preparation programmes for school leaders. According to the unions, earlier experience as a teacher was a sufficient and a substantial qualification for a position as headmaster. Furthermore, the unions argued for keeping this as a career path option for teachers. At the start of the new millennium, however, the situation changed completely, and the unions began to argue for formal education programmes in leadership and management. In addition, several universities and colleges began to offer master's programmes incorporating educational leadership (Møller and Ottesen 2011).

This change of view can be related to the role of transnational policy-making agencies and the impact of international assessment systems (e.g. PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS). Over the last decades, educational policy and reforms in the public sector in general have raised expectations of schools, especially concerning the output of the schools, and the headmasters are challenged to respond to these concerns. PISA findings have received huge attention in Norway, because of the relatively low international rankings in reading, science and mathematics seen in relation to the country's high financial investments in education. New national evaluation procedures have been introduced to produce data of the level of student performance. While teachers have long been trusted to do a good job, other stakeholders now want to define educational quality and ask for more external regulation of teachers' work. New strategies for reinventing government by establishing new public management (NPM) both at the central and the municipal levels have emerged. It is argued that introducing new public management has been motivated by concerns about reducing disparities in educational outcomes across different social groups. The strengthening of state responsibility in terms of monitoring is believed to offer an instrument for efficient service production, governed by a performance-oriented culture with a focus on results and efficiency (Olsen 2002). Both arguments are closely connected to the practice of holding schools accountable for outcomes that meet the predefined criteria, and this is why leadership has become a main focus in education policy recently. In 2009, the Norwegian Minister of Education and Research, influenced by the international OECD project Improving School Leadership, launched a national education programme for newly appointed school headmasters. However, the programme is not a mandatory requirement for any leadership qualification. The local municipalities have retained their right to choose among programmes offered by higher education institutions, and they play a key role in providing in-service training for teachers and school leaders (Møller and Ottesen 2011).

Hence, local municipalities and counties may have a strong role in school governance. Leadership responsibility at municipal and county levels is shared between professional administrators and elected politicians. Through this bond education is connected to broader community affairs. Today municipalities are portrayed as the *owners* of the majority of schools; they finance schools and employ teachers. In many municipalities teachers still enjoy considerable trust and autonomy and, in practice, relationships are not very hierarchical (Møller 2009).

The intention of the latest curriculum reform, called Knowledge Promotion and launched in 2006, is to strengthen the power and autonomy of municipalities and provide higher degrees of autonomy with appropriate support for headmasters and teachers. At the same time, there is an increased focus on measurement of achieved outcomes, and the state regulates the national quality assessment system.

5.3 The Use of Evaluation and Performance Data as Improvement Strategy

Until the launch of the second PISA findings in 2003, there was no focus on testing student performance and evaluating outcomes according to indicators of educational quality or standards. Instead, there was a qualification system that was based on the examination system and overall assessment grades. These tools served as a sorting mechanism for further education and working life (Hopmann 2003; Lundgren 1990; Werler and Sivesind 2007).

The introduction of the national quality assessment system, which was introduced in concert with the curriculum reform Knowledge Promotion, can be described as a shift in Norwegian educational policy from input-oriented policy instruments to a more output-oriented policy. This means that the national quality assessment system implies increased central regulation, since it can enable national authorities to retain some kind of control of the output through measuring and evaluating educational outcomes and, thereby, lay down premises for future improvement and development. As such, information provided by the national quality assessment system offers a foundation for policy development, coordination and management.

The way the overall aims of the national evaluation system is formulated, the main intention is to provide information for quality development and improvement at all levels of compulsory education (Skedsmo 2009, 2011). Furthermore, this information is meant to be used in ways that contribute to openness, transparency and dialogue about school practice. The system is, however, still in development, and several critical points have been put forward with respect to the overall system and the functions of individual tools included in the system. First, it has been pointed out that the dominant discourse of the national quality assessment system centres on the use of such information for further development and improvement. At the same time, monitoring aspects are concealed, and little attention is paid to the concrete processes of data gathering, interpretation and construction of meaning in order to come up with actions for improvement (Skedsmo 2009). Moreover, regarding the

stated purposes of the different tools, the system does not clearly differentiate between the needs of the individual student and the needs of the system in order to improve. The focus on comparisons of student performance across schools, municipalities, counties, education systems and country boundaries emphasises benchmarking as an important part of assessments of educational quality. The results of national tests are not discussed in relation to the competency aims in the national curriculum, although this has been an explicit aim since the discussion of the establishment of a national quality assessment system started in the early 1990s (Skedsmo 2009). Furthermore, the current national tests have been criticised for not providing results that can be compared over years.

5.3.1 Aligning Input Governing to Output Measures?

Although formally introduced, the national quality assessment system in Norway is, in many ways, still in the trial phase. With the latest Knowledge Promotion reform, input-oriented methods of governing schools seem to be aligned to the use of tools included in the national quality assessment system. Here the aims of the national curriculum were reformulated into aims of competencies. This reform was, however, also influenced by the results of PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS (Bergersen 2006). As a result of participation in all these international studies, the Knowledge Promotion contains all the important strategic areas, such as developing basic skills in literacy, writing, mathematics and the use of information communication technology (ICT). In addition, the focus on what type of knowledge the students are supposed to obtain has strengthened. The formulation of aims for competencies in the curriculum guidelines is also part of an international movement, according to the European qualification framework (Engelsen and Karseth 2007; Sivesind 2008).

The increased focus on educational outcomes in terms of student performance implies concepts of educational quality that, in form, seem to be defined by expectations about specific outcomes. This also indicates a belief that any divergence between the expected outcomes and the performance level can be identified. As such, performance measurement becomes a key part of the evaluation processes. Along with this development, schools are increasingly being perceived as the unit of measurement, and there is an emerging need to make such actors as headmasters and teachers accountable. Accountability can be seen as an aspect of the evaluation processes (Skedsmo 2009). This is due to the underlying idea that no change or improvement of practice can happen unless central actors are held accountable for the results achieved (Ranson 2003; Strathern 2000). However, compared to the ways in which accountability practices in relation to high-stake testing are implemented in other countries (e.g. England or the US), there is little pressure put on key actors in the Norwegian education context.

The use of test-based tools, however, represents a disruption of the traditional input-oriented education system in Norway, not to mention Norwegian comprehensive education as we know it (Hopmann 2007). On the whole, the results of such

testing are still seen as a limited indicator of the quality of education, which has to be embedded into a wider understanding of school programmes and contexts. After the third round of standardised testing, the role the results play in policy-making and school governance, both nationally and locally, is still developing. How the schools perceive and respond to the new expectations from the municipalities and the state differs. Case studies of schools and municipalities have shown that schools respond by planning and coordinating development projects and reporting on the local level, with nothing really at stake for the municipalities (Elstad 2009; Engeland et al. 2008). The current central government argues against a publication of test results in the media. However, the press has placed the spotlight on the schools that performed badly in the national tests. Based on public sources, each year the press constructs a *league table* of schools. And while national authorities try to prevent this information from reaching the public, some local municipalities do the opposite. Oslo, for instance, publishes school performance on a local web portal (Elstad 2009).

5.4 Future Trends

Recent developments must be viewed in relation to the larger picture, which is influenced by policies and recommendations made by international and transnational bodies such as the OECD, the EU and the UNESCO. These ideas are not just implemented in the national context as such; they are going through a process of adaptation influenced by culture and traditions and locally defined needs (see Ozga and Jones 2006). Although formally introduced, the national quality assessment system in Norway is, in many ways, still in the trial phase. It is uncertain how the different elements included in the system will be used. It is also uncertain how the assessment system, which includes state monitoring elements, will interact with more traditional policy instruments. Increased emphasis on national monitoring of educational outcomes as a part of the process of developing and securing educational quality will probably have consequences for all actors involved: key leaders in the municipalities, headmasters, teachers and students. It has been argued that new expectations are being posed on these different actors and schools are faced with increased accountability pressures (Elstad 2009; Møller 2009; Sivesind 2008). However, what kinds of forms these accountability pressures will take is also yet uncertain.

To sum up, we live in a time of evidence and data, and data may act as a powerful tool in education. It can be used for good or bad. Social media, Wikipedia and WikiLeaks are signs of a time when it is almost impossible to control how data are and will be used (Sahlberg 2011). In Norway, as in many other countries, school headmasters are increasingly experiencing a work environment in which benchmarking and test scores are taking centre stage. Their time is characterised by unpredictability, lots of uncertainty and deregulation, leading to an environment where economic interests or efficiency demands often overshadow collective interests. However, the current climate of managerial accountability does not seem to influence the Norwegian headmasters' work to a large degree. One reason for this

may be that the headmasters, so far, have had the *option* of paying little attention to managerial accountability, because they run no risk by adopting this approach (Møller 2012).

At the same time, it may be equally risky to continue to *let a thousand flowers bloom* or turn to micromanaging everything in detail. In many ways, we are at a turning point in history. Understanding educational change and what is at stake in our public education system seems crucial in developing our democracy (Hargreaves and Shirley 2009). The process of becoming a successful leader involves a constant reinvention of self while responding to external demands of accountability (Blackmore and Sachs 2007) as well as internal expectations. The way school headmasters respond to this shift in demands may be dependent on their capacity for professionalism. It is reasonable to assume that the less preparation headmasters have, the more likely they are to fall back on their lay theories of leadership, which are often informed by a narrow experiential base of prior experience as a teacher. Likewise, how school leaders locate themselves in relation to accountability will reflect both the socially sanctioned dominance of certain ideologies and the subjugation of others. It will be more important than ever to understand the legacies of past injustices and be realistic about the possibilities (Blackmore 2011), and it is important not to lose the aspects of leadership that maintain ethical practices and the capability of sustainable and deep-rooted change.

Appendix

The Norwegian education system is predominantly public, which means that most schools and universities are run by public authorities. Education at all levels is free. In the autumn 2010 there were 2,997 mainstream primary and lower secondary schools and 71 special schools. A total of 614,020 students were enrolled in compulsory education, and 1,881 students were registered in special schools. One hundred sixty schools were private, approved in accordance with the Private Education Act and, thereby, entitled to state funding. The number of private schools increased rapidly during the former conservative coalition government; however, since 2006 the increase has levelled off. Among the 437 upper secondary schools, 83 are private, and the average number of students is 443. Young people who have completed primary and lower secondary school or the equivalent have the right to 3 years of continuous upper secondary education and training.

The number of schools with less than 100 students has decreased during the last 5 years, and the number of schools with more than 300 students has increased. In the autumn 2010 31% of all schools had less than 100 students and 28% had more than 300 students; and in 2010–2011 54% of all students were enrolled in schools with more than 300 students, and less than 7% attended schools with less than 100 students. The same trend can be identified in upper secondary education. During the last 2 years, 58 mainstream compulsory schools and 60 upper secondary schools have been closed. Low enrolment, a poor municipal economy and a desire

to improve resource utilisation are listed as the main reasons why schools have closed. More often, it is a combination of a poor municipal economy and low enrolment (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2011).

Regarding the structure of the Norwegian education system, the National Assembly determines the basic pattern of education by legislating the aims and structure of the education system. The Ministry of Education and Research is in turn responsible for formulating the national educational policy. The main tasks of the National Directorate for Education and Training are to implement the national educational policy, to develop subject curricula and to ensure quality. The overall responsibility for the supervision of schools is delegated to the Regional Educational Offices, and one office is located in each county.

The 430 municipalities in Norway are responsible for the 10 years of compulsory education at the primary and lower secondary school levels. The municipalities vary in size as well as in the level of welfare. About 40% of the national budget goes to the municipalities, who in turn provide public services, comprising compulsory education, healthcare and social services. In educational policy documents published after 2004, the municipalities are defined as *school owners*. Their main responsibilities in the area of education are defined in terms of adapting the national curriculum to local needs, running in-service training for teachers and school leaders and ensuring the quality of schooling. The municipalities are required to establish a system for evaluating and following up on the results of the schools.

Norway has had immigration from 208 different nations, and almost half of all immigrants come from Asia, Africa or Latin America. There are 500,000 immigrants and 100,000 Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents living in Norway. Together these two groups represent 12.2% of Norway's population. Oslo has the largest proportion at 28% of the population. Two in ten immigrants have lived in Norway for more than 20 years, and four in ten have lived here for 4 years or less (Statistics Norway 2011).

In primary and lower secondary education, the term *students from language minorities* is used to describe these immigrant populations. This term excludes the indigenous population of Norway, the Sámi and national minorities such as the Arctic Finns (an older West Finnish immigrant group) and the Roma. For the Sámi there is an adapted Sámi curriculum, and both the Sámi and the Arctic Finns have the right to tuition in the Sámi language or in Finnish. The Roma people have no such rights.

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Chapter 6
Sweden: Centralisation and Decentralisation as Implementation Strategies

Mikael Holmgren, Olof Johansson, and Elisabet Nihlfors

6.1 Introduction

In the post-war period, the Swedish social democrats established what has later come to be referred to as the *Nordic model* of welfare provision. Where many other affluent democracies put their faith in the market or the family, Sweden was committed to an expansive state, comprehensive social citizenship and universal, egalitarian and impartial welfare institutions (Esping-Andersen 1990). Policy was to be formulated at the national level through negotiation between leading politicians and representatives of major organised interests, implemented by neutral, rule-following civil servants and carried out by local authorities and professionals in the municipalities. In education, the social democratic project was translated into a comprehensive school system for all children up to the age of 16, formally introduced in 1962 along with compulsory school attendance. Where the municipalities had previously had a great deal of leeway, they now had to observe detailed laws and regulations. With common standards and the state as a financial backer, education for everyone was to pave the way to a more equal society (Lindensjö and Lundgren 1986).

The national directives would prove more difficult to implement than initially anticipated. In response, the 1970s saw the beginning of a gradual unloading of decision-making authority from the national to the local level, leading to revised curricula in 1980 and a new education act in 1985. Securing equality in education remained a

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_6, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

primary objective and key justification for preserving central control over resource allocation, but emphasis had shifted from detailed regulations to frameworks and goals. Although many of the reforms that followed in the 1990s were modelled after the market and aimed at inviting private interests and competition, the social democrats typically offered little resistance (Englund 1996; Blomqvist and Rothstein 2000; Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Pierre 2007; Jarl and Rönnberg 2010). The political discourse that emerged was a mixture of economic, democratic and pedagogical ideas, especially focused on the promotion of freedom of choice, increased citizen participation and further transfer of authority from the national to the local level. In Hirschman's (1970) classic terms, ambitious reformers were now intent to see the last remains of centralised planning replaced with a system where stakeholders had ample opportunities to both *exit* the system and to *voice* their concerns. To this end, there were three especially significant developments (Holmgren et al. 2012): the decision to allow parents and students to select a school of their own choice; the heavy promotion of independent schools, that is, schools free of local political control but financed through tax money; and the introduction of local school boards with parent participation in traditional public schools. All three regulations were mandated by the national parliament but, crucially, layered on top of a core structure of local government largely controlled by local branches of the established political parties.

The restructuring of education and several other core policy areas that occurred in Sweden throughout the 1980s and 1990s has led some observers to declare 'the fall of the strong state' (Lindvall and Rothstein 2006). However, the past decade of educational reforms has seen both social democratic and liberal-conservative government coalitions hard at work on bringing the state back in. Equality in education is once again invoked to justify national regulations and state interventions; new procedures for screening, contract design, reporting requirements and monitoring have been enacted; and inventive exercise of soft power is coupled with traditional strategies for command-and-control. Whereas the 1990s saw considerable efforts to promote marketisation and network governance, recent reforms have in large part been aimed at clarifying and strengthening hierarchical relations.

The chapter develops in four parts. First, we provide an overview of the formal governing structure at the local level, focusing on how authority previously held by the state has been delegated to the municipalities and independent schools. Second, we examine some of the steering mechanisms enacted at the national level to control the performance of local actors. Third, we consider the role of educational leadership in the current system. Fourth, and finally, we assess the implications of the reforms for the distribution of power between the state, the municipalities and the schools.

6.2 The Municipalities and Independent Schools

Swedish education currently consists of five parts: (1) preschool, (2) one-year preschool class, (3) nine years of compulsory and comprehensive school, (4) three years of upper secondary school and (5) adult education. In all five parts, the state

now governs partly through goals and partly through detailed regulations, but also by scrutinising both inputs and outputs. The municipalities and independent schools, meanwhile, are expected to follow regulations and fulfil the national goals but also to individually adapt to local conditions and provide schools with support for improved student performance. Curricula are developed at the national level, but decisions concerning areas such as administrative organisation, recruitment, resource allocation and school profiles are to a considerable extent left to the discretion of politicians and professionals at the local level, although with the important caveat that local objectives must not conflict with national objectives.

In practice, the Swedish state has of course always been dependent on decisions made at the local level to carry out and implement national policy (Lindensjö and Lundgren 2000), and historically, the expansive Nordic welfare states have also typically come equipped with quite expansive systems of local government (Sellers and Lidström 2007). But in contrast to the post-war period, the local level is now formally expected to not just implement policy but also to formulate policy. Several arenas and actors are involved in the process, the most central of which are the municipal boards with their appointed politicians; the independent schools and staff with their own boards and appointees; and the public schools and staff, who also have the opportunity of establishing their own school boards with local stakeholders. From a simplified macro-perspective, the state thus delegates decision-making authority through two subsystems: one where individual schools are accountable to a municipality, which in turn is accountable to the state, and another where individual schools are accountable to an independent school board, which in turn is accountable to the state.

6.2.1 The Municipalities

Swedish municipalities generally follow similar design principles as the parliamentary system found at the national level. As a consequence, they also enjoy quite high levels of discretion in comparison to many other countries (Lidström 2011). The governing of public schools begins with the citizens of a municipality electing a local assembly, *Kommunfullmäktige*, which controls the municipality budget, sets local tax levels and appoints the municipal executive committee, *Kommunstyrelsen*. The executive committee is typically assisted by a number of municipal boards, *Kommunnämnder*, that cover most of the day-to-day activities; although some municipalities have instead opted to have working groups that are under more direct control of the executive. Some board functions, including education, are mandatory, but it is also possible for the assembly to establish optional functions based on local needs. The municipal boards are responsible for ensuring that all national goals are met and that everything operates in accordance with the decisions of the local assembly. The boards are comprised of politicians appointed by the assembly, though they need not be elected, and thus generally reflect the relative strength of the local political parties.

All municipal boards are attached to an administrative unit and thereby serve as the primary local policy-making arena. In the case of school boards, the unit is typically termed the school office and led by one or more superintendents, although the same function can also be covered by a more general office. The superintendent has traditionally been a central function of the local administration, but following the reforms of the 1990s the role has become more diffuse in virtue of being deregulated (Johansson and Lundberg 2002; Nihlfors 2003). The school office serves as the link between the municipal board and local schools but also generally acts as a representative in relation to independent schools and other external actors. Professionals in the administration are responsible for directing board policies to school headmasters, who in turn are responsible for ensuring that the individual school performs in accordance with the expectations of the municipal boards.

The municipalities are responsible for financing individual schools, but the actual funds come from taxes levied at both the national and municipal level. The amount of redistributed funding a municipality receives from the state is dependent on factors, for example, how many pupils they currently service. Each municipality is expected to tailor their resource distribution according to school needs, but in practice it often occurs through a lump sum based on student enrolment, and school headmasters must then make a case for why their school may require additional funding. Having to support and advertise their schools in competition with both independent schools and other public schools is a new experience for school leaders. The state can also redistribute means by launching directed national programmes aimed at, for example, skill development, computers or integration initiatives. These means can be directed to all or select schools. In such cases the state can intervene more directly in loc.l school governance, which might not always be supported by the school districts.

6.2.2 The Independent Schools

In the early 1980s, there were only some 35 independent schools in the entire country, with even fewer receiving official financial support and following the same regulations as municipal schools. The early 1990s saw the situation change drastically. The social democratic government had already proposed an agenda for reform in the 1980s but was reluctant to make any sweeping changes; independent schools were to remain a complement to municipal schools, rather than become a full-fledged alternative. When the Social Democratic Party lost hold of the government cabinet in 1991, however, the liberal and conservative parties mounted a vigorous campaign for freedom of choice, insisting that parents ought to have the right to choose the school their children attended (Schüllerqvist 1996; Green-Pedersen 2002). Today, all independent schools receive financial support and follow the same national regulations as public schools, making them *independent* only in organisational structures and fiscal operations. They are otherwise similar to public schools in terms of state regulations, curricula and standards of school inspections (Lundqvist 2010).

Striking the right balance between funding for independent and public schools has been a matter of ongoing debate and reform, however, and it has recently been changed by more specific regulation regarding the basic amount for each child and added means for children in need of special support. Although there are national guidelines concerning how to calculate the sum, the actual decision is still made on the municipal level. As a consequence, there are differences both in the processes leading up to local decisions and in the funding levels between municipalities. Independent school owners are currently allowed to make profit, but potential reform has been debated for some time, the central issue being whether it is reasonable to allow private organisations to profit from tax money.

The municipal school boards must be allowed insight into operations that fall within their municipality, but they have no formal authority to close or otherwise sanction individual independent schools. All independent schools must nonetheless fall under the jurisdiction of a board with functions equivalent to the municipal boards: that is, a board responsible for ensuring that all national goals are met. However, due to the large variety of possible association forms, these can differ greatly in structure, some a local and consist of parents or school staff, while others are external to the school itself.

6.3 How the State Steers Education

Although many decisions that were previously handled at the national level are now made by the municipalities, independent schools and school leaders, this should not be misunderstood as implying that the state has necessarily given up control over the operation (Lundahl 2005; Hudson 2007; Segerholm 2009). Indeed, while the initial launch and development of the new governance system throughout the 1980s and 1990s were accompanied by a strong rhetoric emphasising decentralisation, the state still retains the right to define the standards against which the operation is to be held, to pass judgement on whether the standards have been met and to impose sanctions if the standards are deemed unfulfilled. During the post-war period, formal accountability was mainly considered a concern for the politicians at the national level. The parliament represented the very will of the people, and the governing political parties deserved to both claim credit for success but also – through general elections – to receive the blame for failures. As decision-making authority was unloaded to the local level, however, so too were demands for accountability (Bergman and Strøm 2011). The need to balance increased separation of powers in education with increased centralised quality control was raised by a government-commissioned taskforce as early as the 1970s (Orring et al. 1974), and this balancing act has been central to much of the subsequent public sector reform.

Today, the Swedish government primarily relies on two central agencies to steer education: the School Inspectorate and the National Agency for Education, both populated by professionals but with politically appointed directors. In broad terms, the School Inspectorate is mostly tasked with oversight responsibilities, whereas the

National Agency for Education is mostly tasked with development responsibilities. For example, while the School Inspectorate performs site visits to individual municipalities and schools to determine whether conduct and ambitions are in accordance with national standards, the National Agency for Education oversees the development of curricula, national tests, grading criteria, legal prescriptions, teacher and school leader education, while also coordinating various networks and arranging national conferences on current research, political developments and *best practices*. In practice, however, the division of labour between the two agencies is more complex. The National Agency for Education is also expected to evaluate the efficacy of its instruments and oversee the collection and analysis of national statistics. The School Inspectorate, meanwhile, has increasingly adopted the role of consultant, following criticisms from local politicians and educational practitioners that too much focus was placed on areas in need of improvement, while too little advice was offered on how to improve these areas.

There are now a variety of mechanisms through which the state learns about the characteristics and behaviour of the actors acting on its behalf, including procedures for screening, contract design, reporting requirements and oversight.

Screening: Teacher education has historically been viewed as an important means of securing the quality of education. The current system of university-level teacher education has its roots in the 1970s but has been subjected to numerous reforms with the aim of keeping the skills and values of the profession aligned with the more general restructuring of education (Jarl and Rönnberg 2010). School leadership training in Sweden started in the 1970s and was developed into a 3-year programme within the National Agency for Education. In 1993, the programme was transferred to eight universities, but the programme was not allowed to give academic credits. This right was given to six universities in 2009. Today, headmasters are required to enrol in the national head teacher training programme within 1 year of being appointed. The headmaster training programme is divided into three 10-credit courses, focusing on school law, quality work and leadership, respectively. In contrast, teacher education is the de facto standard but not legally mandatory for being hired as a teacher. However, the new education act has introduced a teaching certificate required for grading students, which demands that teachers spend at least 1 year in service under mentorship and receive a written recommendation from the responsible school headmaster before being eligible.

Contract Design: Employer responsibility represents one of the areas where the state has most clearly retreated, with municipalities and independent school owners now technically holding the right to hire and fire staff. During the post-war period, wage negotiation was a matter between teacher unions and representatives of the state. Despite union resistance, the total responsibility for teachers was transferred to the municipalities in 1991, which meant that the central negotiations were moved to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. Later, individual agreements between employer and employee were also introduced. However, while municipalities and independent school owners have the right to organise their own administration and establish voluntary functions, such as the superintendent, other functions, like the school headmaster, are mandatory and entail regulated responsibilities and

qualifications. In practice, part of the contract has thus already been formulated at the national level prior to any local negotiation.

Reporting Requirements: Sweden has a long tradition of self-evaluation in the public services. Initially, the accelerated decentralisation of education in the 1990s was coupled with demands for locally developed school plans and yearly quality reports, detailing how the plans had been enacted. However, the plans were unimplemented in many municipalities (Johansson and Lundberg 2002), and in contrast the new education act only demands that local quality assurance takes place and is documented; it does not specify how. Schools and municipalities are still legally obliged to provide information regarding results and finance when requested, however, and the National Agency for Education collects yearly statistics on a number of measures that are made available for public scrutiny. Additionally, schools must administer standardised national tests in English, mathematics, Swedish and Swedish as second language in school years 3, 5 and 9.

Monitoring: Through most of the twentieth century, state inspections were handled by a single central education agency, tasked with both oversight and development responsibilities. The past two decades have seen an increase in the frequency and authority of inspections, however, and whereas these were previously typically performed after complaints, inspections are now also performed for pre-emptive purposes. Current inspection duties are handled by a dedicated agency, the School Inspectorate, through scheduled site visits to all municipalities and schools every 3 years and with written reports, which are made available for public scrutiny (Rönnberg and Segerholm 2011). Additionally, Sweden makes frequent use of external third party evaluators, perhaps most notably through long-standing memberships in transnational collaborations such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, but also by financing research centres, doctoral students and other academic projects. Since the 1990s, attempts have also been made at promoting more decentralised forms of oversight, that is, 'fire alarms' as opposed to 'police patrols' (see McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). The most politically prominent example is the establishment of local school boards populated by parents and other stakeholders, but the new education act also awards individual citizens expanded rights to appeal decisions made by local authorities to the School Inspectorate.

If deviance is either discovered or anticipated, the state has the legal right to veto certain courses of action, before they are pursued, to punish behaviour which it finds undesirable ex post as well as to de-authorise municipalities and independent school owners alike. For example, applications to establish independent schools are screened by the School Inspectorate and can be denied if deemed inadequate, but permission to operate may also be fully revoked once granted following unsatisfactory inspection results. In contrast, the state has lost many of its direct veto powers in relation to the municipalities and has instead mainly relied on agenda control and earmarked allocation of resources. Until recently, the state could only withhold resources that would otherwise have been delivered, but the new education act also awards the School Inspectorate the right to impose fines on both independent school owners and municipalities. Moreover, the state does hold the right to seize full control of individual public schools for up to 6 months since the early 2000s. It remains to

be seen whether the latter is a credible threat, however, because unlike the closing of independent schools it is a right that has yet to be exercised.

6.4 Cross-Pressures and Challenges for Educational Leadership

As a governance function, the Swedish school headmaster has arguably been strengthened in recent years. One example is the increased formalisation of school leader responsibilities in national legislation, where the school headmaster has gone from being addressed 20 times in the Education Act of 1985 to 114 times in the new Education Act of 2010. We can see that the political elites expect headmasters to drive national policy into improved teaching and learning. But importantly, as defined by law, the role of the school leader is not a passive one: school leaders are to interpret the law and make authoritative decisions based on regulations and good professional judgement. The state wants democratic leaders who can involve teachers, parents and children in running the school as a democratic organisation. In that sense the importance of the function has been elevated to a higher level than in the past. On the other hand, Swedish school leaders are also by design expected to respond to multiple interests that may not always be in agreement with one another. The tensions between globalisation, nationalisation and localisation position schools of today in increasingly challenging situations, where the principles and practices of education are constantly under scrutiny. With the decentralisation of financial management and greater focus on quality control, Swedish school leaders have come to face an increased emphasis on performance and accountability (Moos et al. 2011; Gu and Johansson 2012). In order to successfully navigate in their role, headmasters must understand and act on at least three different arenas: the political arena, the arena of discourses and the arena of the future.

It is widely held that the policy stream from the national political arena has intensified during the past decade. However, quantitatively speaking the pace at which new reforms have been introduced by the Swedish parliament has been fairly constant since the 1980s. The main difference is rather the advent of international league tables and performance comparisons between countries, municipalities and schools. To be a credible alternative, a given policy must not only pass certain normative ideological checks within the ruling political elites but also demonstrably contribute to improving the nation's standing on the global market. It is in light of this new comparative context that the new control regime has been enacted – as a tool to measure reform impact and to steer the lower levels of administration towards improved results. In our surveys, school headmasters report that they need to work more with implementation of reforms and with pedagogical leadership in relation to teaching in order to improve student outcomes. They also generally feel more pressure from the state than from the municipality to manage and improve the organisation (Johansson and Nihlfors 2012). Survey evidence also indicates that the work of both the School Inspectorate and the National Agency for Education is

appreciated by most school leaders, and attitudes towards state inspections generally echo international experiences, where it is seen as legitimate and supportive rather than as oppressive and coercive (De Wolf and Janssens 2007).

On the arena of discourses, school leaders have to balance politicians, administrators and researchers and adjust to the different theories for success that are put forward. Some of the ideas are conflicting, and one trend is that they should be evidence-based in relation to effective learning outcomes. Our interviews show that superintendents and school headmasters' primary goal is stability and incremental improvement over time, not changes or processes that create turbulence and conflict. This leadership style has prospered in the past, but now it faces discourses that demand instant success. This focus creates a tension for the school leader in relation to the school culture among the teachers. One such very clear tension during the last decade has been the change in focus of what is characteristic of a successful school. During the Social Democratic Party administration, the focus was mainly on social goals, whereas the current liberal-conservative coalition has been vocal in its desire to refocus education towards good academic knowledge. These changes have been sought in relation to international discourses.

The last arena for the headmaster to work on is the arena of the future. Here, one obvious conflict for school leaders is the organisational focus on stability in order to provide good learning opportunities and, at the same time, work for adapting the organisation to expectations and demands of future challenges. One challenge is the drive for evidence-based learning, based on the idea that there is a right method of teaching and learning. Introducing, for instance, evidence-based learning or other methods of learning that are not familiar to the school staff can sometimes create unrest and threaten the stability of the organisation for the school leader. Another problem for the headmaster is that in a political organisation, the highest level, that is, the parliament and government, has the right and responsibility to develop and implement future visions for the country's schools. Sometimes, these visions are driven not by country-specific challenges but by theoretical ideas from abroad, which are often grounded in other cultures; one example of this is the present teacher legitimation. It has been a demand of the teacher trade unions for at least two decades, but now that it has been decided, it also fits nicely with international trends in education. School leaders have to relate to all these changes and decide how to implement them in an already established and often complacent education culture that does not always see the need or sensibility in the reform.

6.5 Discussion: Centralisation and Decentralisation as Implementation Strategies to Improve Swedish Education Governance?

From the mid-1980s to today, a great number of governance-related reforms have been decided by the Swedish parliament. There are different explanations for why this has taken place. Earlier, it was common that the central level made the plans,

negotiated with different stakeholders and reached a conclusion. The local level has always been responsible for executing these decisions. The earlier reforms have had some success in giving a new social and geographical distribution to education, but social background was and still remains the best predictor of educational attainment (Lundgren 2007; Gustafsson and Myrberg 2009). Previously, new reforms were financed by economic growth. From the beginning of the 1990s, the economic situation made this impossible, and the solution was to shift focus to efficiency, productivity and quality. The Swedish model of social welfare was undergoing a transformation.

One of the answers to this situation of economic constraints was decentralisation and more competition. At the same time, the national level put forward demands for more evaluation and control. This happened in a time when superintendents, who had played a central role for a number of years, were no longer regulated by the national level. Since 1990, the municipalities have made their own decisions regarding organisation and administration.

During the 1990s, the superintendents balanced between government and municipal interests and between political and professional responsibilities. This could be done by formulating their own tasks, firmly establishing them with the chairperson of the education committee and drawing up a strategy with the trade unions (Nihlfors 2003; Johansson and Nihlfors 2012).

Both superintendents and headmasters consider themselves to have a double assignment: one based on national regulations and the other on their employer, the municipality and the school board.

The words decentralisation, deregulation and an increase in loc.l independence had positive overtones in the beginning of the 1990s. These were joined by recentralisation, increased control and school development contracts that play a role in formulating goals for the fulfilment of the school sector's objectives to improve teaching and learning.

The changeover from control to administration presupposes a sender and a receiver. The government is the sender, and it has appointed receivers on different levels. The education system can be described as a loosely coupled system, where municipalities, schools and professional groups have been allowed relative autonomy in relation to the state (Weick 1976). On the national level the most important actors are the National Agency for Education and the School Inspectorate. The next level includes the school owners: municipalities and independent schools. Their boards are the responsible components, but the school law regulates the responsibility of the school headmaster. Most municipalities also include a special school board and a superintendent. This creates a special situation of power and control between the school board, the superintendent and the headmasters. We find that systematic evaluations and systemic feedback do not seem to be the effective control measures they were meant to be in the system. This may partly depend on a lack of knowledge and competence, but also on a lack of interest in making the most of the knowledge that is generated in individual schools.

As a final point we would like to suggest that there is a need for improvement in the relation between national and local levels concerning responsibility for the quality

of teaching and learning; this is so, because the quality of local Swedish schools is questioned from a national political level.

6.6 Facts and Figures

- Sweden has more than 9.5 million inhabitants in 290 municipalities, 15% of which are born outside Sweden.
- Schools are financed by taxes from both state and local levels.
- The Swedish *Riksdag* (parliament) and government establish the goals and guidelines for preschools and schools through i.a. the education act and the curricula.
- The education system contains preschool (1–5 years old), preschool class (6 years old), leisure time centres, compulsory school (7–16 years old), upper secondary school (duration: 3–4 years), adult education, folk high schools (independent adult education colleges), higher vocational education and universities and university colleges. They all have their own curricula or regulation by law.
- Parents and pupils can choose between municipal schools and independent schools. Schooling in independent schools should have the same goals as the municipal schools but may, for example, have an ethnic or educational profile. They are all financed by tax money and free of charge.
- There are more than 10,000 preschools (of which 27% are independent), 4,600 compulsory schools (16% independent) and 1,000 upper secondary schools (50% independent). Each school has, by regulation in the education act, a leader called a preschool leader or headmaster.
- In Sweden, there are 98,000 preschool employees (54% with academic training), 86,000 compulsory school employees (87% with academic training), 36,000 employees in upper secondary school (77% with academic training) and around 5,000 employees in adult education (74% with academic training).

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Part II
Thematic Chapters

Chapter 7
Independent Schools in Different Nordic Contexts: Implications for School Leadership?

Pia Skott and Klaus Kasper Kofod

7.1 Introduction

Although national education systems are to some degree very stable, we know from earlier country descriptions that the Nordic countries do experience changes, affected by transnational influences. Many educational policy questions are recurrent over time. It is like a shuttle moving between different potential solutions, where international tendencies interact in the move towards new policy directions. One example is how the strong focus on student outcomes is spreading, shifting the focus from classroom processes to individual results. Another example is the changes in the governing system. All Nordic countries have experienced how strong national states were the prerequisite for organising national compulsory public school systems. There have however, parallel to the national responsibility, existed a local municipality responsibility for the organising of schools. The shared responsibility between different society levels has meant that over time the shuttle has shifted between centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation. In all these changes international trends interact with the national context.

In this chapter we focus on a third change: the move towards a stronger combination of public and private school actors, and how these changes can be understood in relation to other simultaneous changes. What we notice is that the former focus on one strong public school, including the heterogeneity of students, has been challenged by ideas about school markets, where competition is seen as a way to raise efficiency and where private alternatives are seen as a possible way to manage the heterogeneity among children and parents. The traditional dividing line between the private and public spheres is blurred, where governments for one thing finance

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_7, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

education arranged by private alternatives. This is, as we will return to later, an international trend. But is it something completely new in the Nordic education systems? Does it take the same form in different countries, changing the reality for local school leaders in a similar way? Or is it similar to the previous examples, where new trends meet old national structures, affecting what becomes the national outcome?

The starting point for this chapter is that we have noticed a difference between the Nordic countries in how far they have moved towards privatisation and marketisation. To deepen the understanding of what happens when international tendencies meet national contexts, we use two country-specific examples to be able to discuss in more detail if and how the changes frame the work of school leaders. The chapter is divided into four parts:

The first part deals with transnational tendencies relating to markets and privatisation. We focus on the history of the market concept in relation to schools and how the notion of pure markets was replaced with the hybrid form, including public funding of private schools. This part includes a definition of what we mean by independent schools and school leaders.

In the second part we focus on national regulations regarding independent schools in the Nordic countries. An identification of a main dividing line between Denmark and Sweden, as the most liberal regarding independent schools, leads to a closer comparison between the two.

The third part consists of a more detailed analysis of the intersection between international trends and national contexts. We use country-specific data presented in earlier chapters, adding various kinds of research findings, including newly collected data, to be able to comment on the implications for local school leaders.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the importance of adding the country-specific, historical context in analyses of transnational trends.

7.2 Transnational Tendencies: Independent Schools as Phenomenon and Concept

To understand why the question about marketisation and privatisation is dealt with here and otherwise in contemporary times, it is important to note that for more than 100 years the most common approach globally has been that schools are a government issue. Brewer and Hentschke describe the basic construction in most systems:

> Government agencies – a ministry of education, a local governmental jurisdiction, an agency wholly owned and operated by the state – buy and develop land, hire teachers and staffs, purchase books and materials, set the curriculum, assess students and so on. Most often children in the geographic vicinity of a school are eligible to attend, and schooling is provided at no direct cost to the families. In many countries, in fact, this is the only form of public support from education, with a monopoly granted to the government agencies that operate schools. If parents wish to exercise choices, they must use their own resources. (2009, 228)

Even though there can be differences between nations regarding the system level on which the responsibility for regulation and finance is placed, the described model includes a worldwide public responsibility for arranging education – without costs for the students

or the parents. In this basic model there is also a sharp and clear dividing line between the public and the private. The reason why governments engage in schools is, to put it simply, to invest in the coming generation – preparing them for society life and production. They do it through what Brewer and Hentschke call 'the three-legged stool of regulation, finance and operation', compared to what Lindensjö and Lundgren (1986, 2000) and others identify as different means within the governing system of schools.

The three legs are important to be able to analyse what has happened globally the last decades, as the official monopoly has been questioned. The changes started at a point in time when actors in several countries more or less simultaneously started to ask the same questions: Is government monopoly the most effective way to organise schools? Is it in line with the heterogeneity of society to have one model for all children? And is it possible to combine a strong public responsibility with private operations? One question that seems to have been crucial in many countries is whether society-financed schools provide education in line with parents' religious beliefs. If not, there will be a lack of legitimacy in support from the surrounding society. Parents will then stop sending their children to public schools and start teaching their children privately. Since governments live in interplay with the surrounding society, they cannot neglect parents' or other society actors' opinions.

The last decades the whole idea of a public school in the vertically integrated, hierarchically organised public sector has been questioned globally (Brewer and Hentschke 2009, 230). It started already in the 1950s, when the economist Milton Friedman questioned the existing monopoly model and in theory launched a system built on vouchers, which would create school markets which in turn would enhance the quality. Friedman's ideas were not accepted by his contemporaries, but they were a core element of the ideas that came to be more widely accepted some decades later, spreading then from the USA to the rest of the world. Many national and regional governments – across the geographical and economic development spectrum – have sought to introduce various elements of market-based resource allocation schemes into their compulsory systems (Brewer and Hentschke 2009, 230). These included Canada, the UK, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, France and Sweden among developed countries and Tanzania, Nicaragua, and Pakistan among developing countries. Governments in newly emerging economies have also introduced market-based resource allocation; examples include Qatar, Singapore, Chile, Argentina and parts of China (Brewer and Hentschke 2009, 230–231). It is no exaggeration to summarise that the breaking up of the pubic financial monopoly is a transnational phenomenon (Ball 2007).

While identifying a common denominator, we also notice that different countries have different models for how the changes are arranged. The starting point, that a voucher programme is 'an intervention in which the government provides financial support for students to attend private schools' (Barrera-Osorio and Patrinos 2009, 340 ff), notes that programmes can have different designs in terms of distribution. They can be support- or supply-driven programmes, given directly to the students or schools. They can also differ in extent of the intervention: universal (e.g. Denmark and Sweden); universal, but where schools choose to participate (e.g. Chile); targeted to certain areas or cities (e.g. the Czech Republic and Hungary); or targeted to certain populations (e.g. Colombia, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Pakistan). The authors note especially that some European countries have universal programmes (e.g. Sweden), and some of them

also have a long and established history (e.g. Denmark). There can also be different models in the same country over time or parallel models in a large federal system. Viteritti (2009) shows, for example, how the American system has experienced several voucher generations, leading up to the voucher system(s) that now exists. There is thus no such thing as an all-embracing national system in the USA.

Vouchers are thus an important part of the financial *leg* identified above. When it comes to differences in the other legs, regulation and operation, Brewer and Hentschke argue that regulations can take different forms, 'like setting safety standards, mandating curriculum or student assessments, and requiring teacher credentials' (2009, 230). They also specify that differences in operation mean that 'the delivery units are embedded within a larger governmental infrastructure controlled by political mechanisms' (2009, 230). There seem, however, to be less international comparisons concerning these two dimensions of the new hybrid forms. What have so far been produced are predominately individual country descriptions of how the exact balance turns out in single cases (as in a special issue of the *Journal of School Choice* Hentschke and Brewer (2010)). Perhaps this must be the case, since the complexity of the two categories makes comparisons difficult, or perhaps research is just lagging behind. What speaks in favour of the latter is that there has been a lack of concepts making comparisons possible. Two concepts, however, are emerging. One is PPP (Public Private Partnerships in Education) (see e.g. Robertson et al. 2012). Another is *independent schools*. The latter concept will be employed here.

In December 2010, the *Journal of School Choice* presented Forum on the Global Phenomenon of Publicly Financed, Privately Operated Schools: Common policy Issues Among Differing Nation States? This was a special issue where the journal identified a new category of schools, 'in which government bodies provide oversight and partial funding, and private parties create, operate, and market schools services'. The authors note that these kinds of schools operate under different names, such as charter schools, contract schools, foundation schools, independent schools and others, but that it is possible to identify a common core of interests, making it possible to ask the same questions to enable comparisons. The authors chose the concept *independent schools*, since it, apart from being convenient, indicates a kind of autonomy of these schools, compared to public schools. The exact degree of this autonomy varies between different countries.

We have here chosen to use the concept *independent schools* when we focus on the fact that the Danish and Swedish systems include interaction between the public and private spheres. But national regulation does not give the whole picture. Within a specific country local variations can exist, making the situation for local school leaders complex. This means that descriptions on the national system level must be combined with a local actor perspective. On the one hand, a national voucher system means that there are some structures that are common to all local school actors, but how does the combination of financial systems and other kinds of regulations and differences in operation affect local school leadership? Is there a great difference between being a school leader in a public school or in a private school? Does the voucher system equal the mission?

From earlier research on what matters in the work of a school leader we know that governance structures are of importance. Portin et al. have compared what it means to be a school leader in different kinds of schools. They write:

> In short, governance matters. Traditional public school leaders are profoundly affected by the actions of superintendents, district-wide school boards, and central offices. The actions of these groups are, in turn, influenced by federal, state, county, or city government policies and by collective bargaining agreements. While charter and independent school leaders are not immune from external influence, their schools' lean governance structure (generally built around boards of trustees) sets them apart from the weight of a larger system. And though charter and independent schools must be licensed by the state, and abide by basic state, city, and county regulations, they are less directly affected by those parties. Some had teacher unions, but their labour relations were generally local and not defined by contracts negotiated far from the school. (2003, 31)

Thus, from a governance perspective we can expect school leaders to act within similar, but different, frames (Roddy 2010), affecting the character of their work. We will later discuss if this is the case in Denmark and Sweden. To be able to do so, however, it is important to specify the school leader concept. The importance of superintendents and other local actors indicates that we must distinguish between leadership at different local levels, with middle management as an important level in public schools, but possibly also in independent schools (which was made evident by the National Association of Independent Schools' publication in the summer 2012). This wider meaning of the concept will to some extent be used in what follows, although we focus mainly on the principal at the school level.

7.3 Independent Schools in Nordic Countries

7.3.1 Is There a Nordic Model?

From the country descriptions in this volume, we know that there are differences regarding the existence of independent schools. Sweden and Denmark stand out as the most liberal countries, where independent schools are more or less integrated with the public school system, while they are a more marginal phenomenon in Norway, Finland and Iceland. Before moving on to the more liberal nations, we would like to comment briefly on the other country cases.

The Norwegian model is predominantly public. In Chap. 5, Møller and Skedsmo write that 'More than 95 percent of Norwegian students are enrolled in ordinary classes in public schools, and education at all levels is free'. Most schools and universities are run by public authorities, although independent actors do exist. This might, however, change in the future. Solhaug (2011) shows that there are important political dividing lines within the country. With focus on New Public Management, he points to different coexisting standpoints. One is represented by the Centre Conservatives (a liberal one) and one is represented by the red-greens (a communitarian). The differences include disagreements over

independent schools and markets in education. The existing political restrictiveness can thus be changed, depending on future governments. So far it is however a limited phenomenon.

Finland is also a country with a strong focus on the public system. In Chap. 3, Uljens and Nyman describe how students in Finland since 1921 have been obliged to learn, but that there is no regulation that forces parents to send their children to school; there is both freedom and responsibility concerning children's learning. When students go to school, however, they do so mainly in public schools, although students and parents in Finland have a right to choose what school the children should attend. Seppänen describes the Finnish system in more detail:

> Private schools, in the sense of those with financial, organizational, and substance autonomy, or even public schools that would be notably independent of the national core curriculum, do not exist in any substantial amount in Finland. The few international and ideological schools are located mainly in the capital city. (2010, 514)

Despite predominantly public ownership of schools in Finland, the Finnish compulsory education system has thus developed a market system, which Seppänen refers to as *public school markets* or *comprehensive school markets*. This phenomenon refers to the situation in cities where parents can choose between different public schools for their children, meaning that 'there is a market-like situation inside the publicly maintained school system' (Seppänen 2010, 514). Although school markets do exist, independent schools are a limited phenomenon in Finland though.

Hansen's descriptions in Chap. 4 on Iceland show that independent schools and freedom of choice are part of the country's education system, similar to the Swedish and Danish examples. Independent schools can receive permits for operation and be funded by municipalities with as much as 100%, and freedom of choice is, at least in the cities, a reality. However, the small size of the Hjallastefnan and other independent schools places the country within the group of Nordic countries which still build on the traditional structures of public school operation.

In our final discussion we will come back to the fact that school leaders in all Nordic countries seem to be affected by the new market trends, including freedom of choice, although there are two countries, Denmark and Sweden, where school leaders are working within more complex governing structures and hybrid school forms exist parallel to public schools. In the next section we compare Denmark and Sweden in more detail, asking whether the countries' regulation looks the same and builds on the same traditions. Are there differences between what seems to be similar?

7.3.2 Denmark Versus Sweden: Differences Between What Appears to Be Similar

So far we have used the concept independent schools to identify the kinds of schools that in some ways have incorporated private and public interests. In Sweden, the concept is easy to apply. According to the new national school Act of 2010, all schools with a private owner receiving public support (primary and secondary schools) are labelled independent schools (*fristående skolor*) (Skollagen 2010).

Through public statistics we know that the number of independent primary schools has increased during the 1990s and early 2000s. Today, there are 741 independent primary schools (where 9% are confessional and 5% are Steiner schools), educating close to 100,000 students. The geographical spread is widening, which means that 66% of the 290 municipalities today have independent primary schools, although the concentration is larger in city areas. Fifty six percent of the independent secondary schools are located close to the largest cities, although they occur in 41% of the municipalities (Skolverket [the Swedish National Agency for Education] n.d.).

The rise in the total number of independent schools depends on the more generous financial conditions installed in the beginning of the 1990s. Before that only a limited number of private actors established and ran schools, and in general these kinds of schools were mainly privately financed, although this was linked to certain exceptions. Historically, Sweden has thus, until recent decades, focused on the common public school. When the independent schools were integrated with the public schools, it started with a voucher system, making schools' financial conditions equal. Successively, regulation has also become more equal, meaning that today there is basically no difference between the two kind of schools; the only difference is that independent schools have private owners and their own local school boards (Skott 2011). This will be commented on in detail in what follows.

Denmark's history is quite the opposite; its tradition of self-government was legalised in the first Danish constitution in 1849. Here, it was stated that it was the parents' obligation to ensure that their children were educated, in schools or at home (Danmarks Riges Grundlov [the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark] 1849, section 90). This still holds true in the present constitution (Grundloven af 5. juni 1953 [the Constitution of June 5, 1953] 1953, section 76). In Denmark, it is thus not compulsory to go to school but to receive education (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 34). The tradition of independent schools is linked to this basic foundation and goes back a long time. The first law on independent schools was passed in 1855 (Larsen 1984–1985) and laid the tracks for the development and regulation of independent schools in Denmark.

In Denmark, two concepts for these schools are used: independent and private schools. Both kinds of schools are established according to the law on independent and private primary schools (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011). They comprise, on the one hand, the traditional *Grundtvig-Koldske* independent schools and, on the other, the bigger private schools in the cities, which are typically established as secondary schools (*realskoler*), progressive free schools (*lilleskoler*), Christian schools, Catholic schools, Muslim schools, German minority schools, Steiner schools, Freinet schools etc.

There is no difference between private and independent schools if one looks at the law regulating these school types, which states that 'Independent and private primary schools (independent primary schools) may […] give instruction that is in accordance with the schools' own conviction and plan the instruction in accordance with this conviction' ('Friskoleloven' [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 1). In a report from the Ministry of Children and Education, it is stated that 'schools that are not run by the public are called private schools, independent primary schools or private primary schools', and that 'a common trait for those schools

SE	DK
Finance	**Finance**
100% public	70% public
No fees	30% fees
Profit allowed	No profit allowed
Regulation	**Regulation**
National school law	National law on independent and private primary schools
National curriculum and tests	No test voluntary
Principal education	No principal education
Control/accountability	**Control/accountability**
Mandatory national inspection	Locally appointed inspector
Local systematic quality work	School self-evaluation
Open results/media ranking	

Fig. 7.1 Differences between Sweden and Denmark regarding the regulation of independent schools

is that parents pay for their children's attendance at the school' (Bang 2003). The independent and private schools teach students at the same age level as the public primary schools but are independent institutions with their own boards (Bang 2003). Approximately 90,000 students attend independent and private schools. Around 14% of Danish students attend an independent or a private school (Molsgaard 2012).

If we compare the countries more systematically regarding finance, regulation and accountability, the results can be presented as follows (Fig. 7.1):

Despite the obvious similarities between the two countries, several discrepancies can be found within each area. To begin with there are different rules on how independent schools are financed. While Sweden has 100% funding by official means and fees are forbidden, the Danish independent schools have a larger private funding base. Around 70% come from the public, while 30% are student fees. What makes the comparison complicated, however, is that the Swedish system allows the owners of independent schools to make profits with no claims for reinvesting it in the schools. The line between private and public means is therefore not easy to draw. It can be concluded, though, that independent schools in both countries are more (Sweden) or less (Denmark) run by public means. This is important when relating the Nordic model to a wider international school context and what is previously classified as all-inclusive national voucher systems.

The next area we will compare concerns content and goal regulation. Here, Sweden again seems to have more strict regulation than Denmark, as the New School Act from 2010 equates the regulation of different school owners. This means in practice that all schools in Sweden must follow the same national law and the same national curricula. Independent schools must employ educated teachers, and teachers in private and public schools are, with a few exceptions, educated together in national teacher programmes. The law also stipulates that all

newly appointed principals must attend the national principal programme, which also has a national curriculum. Thus, while the number of private owners is increasing, making the school landscape more diverse, a conformity process is taking place regarding regulation within the system, with the intention of making schools more equal.

In Denmark, independent and private schools are not covered by the general law on public primary schools; they have their own law (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011). They have broad rights to self-determination regarding curriculum and work methods, but since 2005, independent and private primary schools have had to define the goals for their instruction in selected subjects (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 1a, subsections 3 and 4), just like public primary schools. Danish upper secondary schools, which were transferred to a so-called state self-ownership in 2007 (Larsen 2005), are like previously regulated and supervised under the Act on the Upper Secondary School (Gymnasieloven [the Act on the Upper Secondary School] 2010). This also holds true for private upper secondary schools.

In Denmark, all public leaders must at least hold a diploma in general leadership, but there is no specific school leader education, neither for public nor for independent or private schools. The only regulation of school leaders is that 'The [school] leader must command Danish in writing and speech', except for leaders in 'the schools of the German minority schools or of schools that have had an approval for another teaching language than Danish' (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 6). When it comes to demands on teacher education, teachers in independent schools do not have to have a teacher education. Teachers in independent schools may be educated at a teacher training college, pedagogy training college or another background. In private schools most of the teachers, however, are educated at teacher training colleges or have another higher education (Borger.dk n.d.).

The third compared area concerns national and local control. In Sweden, the new law draws a line between national and local control of schools. The state performs national inspections (supervisions) of all schools, regardless of owner form. There are also mandatory national tests in selected school subjects in the third, sixth and ninth forms and in upper secondary schools. The local control system of independent schools is linked to the local accountability system, where mandatory quality reports to the national state level (which have been part of the system for more than a decade) have been replaced with a demand for local systematic quality work. This is also the case for independent schools. The municipalities have a special role when it comes to the supervision of independent preschools, but each municipality decides how much they wish to involve the independent schools in their quality work. The law gives the municipality the right to *look into* (*insyn i*) the independent schools. In Sweden, there is also a strong tradition of making official documents available to the media and the public. This means that school results and reports are official, making it possible for parents to take these reports into consideration when choosing a school. Overall, the nation-state has strengthened its control instruments during the last decades (Skollagen 2010; Forsberg and Wallin 2006).

In Denmark, control of independent and private primary schools rests on self-evaluation. 'The school must regularly make evaluation of the school's total instruction and make a plan for the follow up on the evaluation' (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 1b, subsection 3). In addition to self-evaluation, parents are expected to supervise the school's work: 'It rests with the parents to supervise the school's general activity. The parents decides in which way the supervision is effectuated' (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 9). The parents and the school board shall appoint a supervisor to supervise certain school subjects (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 9a). The evaluation by all parts must include the school's total instruction and professional educational work. The ministry has no direct supervision duties towards private and independent schools, except regarding the schools' evaluation processes, curricula and whether the schools live up to their goals (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, sections 9e and 9f). These areas of supervision are all indirect, meaning that the schools have to report to the ministry on these matters. Supervision of Danish independent and private schools has traditionally been rather modest, but rules have been intensified from 2011, among other things, because of independent and private schools with a religious (Muslim) profile.

In 2009, national tests were implemented in Denmark (Folkeskoleloven [the Act on the Primary School] 2010, sections 13 and 13a). Private and independent schools may conduct national tests 'unless the school has communicated to the Ministry for Children and Education that it does not wish to hold the tests' (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 8a). Thus, tests in independent and private schools are voluntary in Denmark. If students in independent and private schools wish to continue in upper secondary school, they can choose to take the national test on their own initiative.

The publication of the tests results, as a ranking of the schools, is a matter of political debate in Denmark. The first figures were released, but now, the figures have been withdrawn by the present centre-left government. The figures are, however, published by CEPOS, a private think tank (CEPOS 2007). A general difference compared to Sweden is that Denmark has final exams. Although independent schools do not have to offer the primary school final examination, most independent schools choose to do so. All private schools offer the primary school final examination.

To sum up, although there are similarities between the Swedish and the Danish models, it is obvious that there are differences between what at first glance appears to be similar. How can these differences be explained? What do the identified differences mean for school leaders working within each national context? And what can be said about transnational tendencies meeting different national contexts?

7.4 Transnational Trends Versus National Contexts: The Importance for School Leaders

The descriptions above are general and reflect national regulation. When we compare the descriptions to the transnational tendencies described earlier, similarities spring to mind. The voucher system is of a universal kind; consequently, one can expect school

markets to develop and change, affecting the work of school leaders. This will be discussed further in what follows, as will the importance of governing structures. We start, however, with a brief description of how markets and independent schools interact with other changes in the national contexts. In this way, we aim to lay the foundation for commenting on the intersection between the national, the global and the local.

7.5 Sweden

The land descriptions on Sweden is based on studies of the major government bills presented from the 1960s and onwards (1962a, b, 1982, 1983, 1991, 1992). For a more in depth description about the emergence of independent upper secondary schools in Sweden see Erixon Arreman & Holm (2011) and for more general analyses of the phenomenon independent school, see Vlachos (2011).

7.5.1 The National Context

It is impossible to understand what it means to be a school leader in Sweden today if one does not consider the fact that the country is now experiencing major changes in basic school and governing structures. This is not most obvious in the New School Act (2010), which, as previously mentioned, as far as possible equates regulation of municipality and independent schools. It also strengthens the national demands on all kinds of education, highlighting the role of principals within the governing chain in general (Skollagen 2010).

It is important to notice that the new law does not the only change initiated on the national level. The law is part of a larger reform package, including more or less all school forms, with new curricula, syllabi and marking systems. In the light of these changes, school leaders in Sweden do not merely act in relation to questions within the independent school sphere (symbolised by the circle in Fig. 7.2 below) but work in a much more complex setting, where multiple structures are framing their work. A principal is not merely a principal in a municipality or in an independent school but also principal for a certain school form (from preschools to upper secondary schools).

The figure illustrates that much of Sweden's school history is related to the early efforts of trying to build a strong comprehensive school for all children (which to some extent started already in 1842). What is here called the *compulsory school* was decided upon in 1962, and it resulted in a replacement of the then parallel school system – different schools for different social groups – with a nine-year common school with compulsory education from the age of seven.

After the big reform in 1962, the focus on a democratic, compulsory and inclusive school has been stretched out in both system ends. Preschools as well as secondary schools have been subject to large reform packages, trying to include them in the larger concept *one school for all*. Parallel to the expansion of the compulsory school system, the effects of the early reforms were evaluated. The results showed

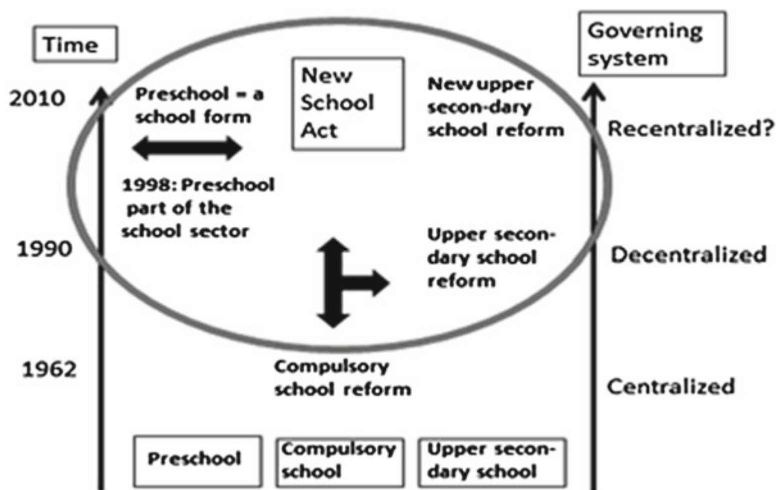

Fig. 7.2 The complexity of reforms in Sweden

that it was more difficult to change the schools' internal work than expected. It was also difficult to govern such a massive system. Thus, changes were needed on several system levels (Skott 2009).

One change concerned the centralised governing system, which had been an important prerequisite for creating the compulsory system. Decentralisation was an international trend, but it was also seen as a local necessity, if differences among students were to be met and handled. In the beginning of the 1990s, the strong focus on national regulation and rules was replaced with an overarching goal steering system combined with decentralisation. Thus, it is still the nation-state that sets the goals (focusing especially on national equivalence), but it is the local actors in the municipalities and schools who are responsible for the realisation hereof. Even though we see strong tendencies that the shuttle is again turning towards centralisation, the official system is still stressing local responsibility, especially that of principals regarding student results.

What has been described above constitutes a basis for understanding how the development in the last 20 years has continued, including in new school markets and independent schools.

7.5.2 *Vouchers, Markets and School Leaders*

The reason why independent schools are common in the Swedish school landscape today goes back to the 1980s. Interlinked with the ideas of the compulsory school system was the principle that each child automatically belonged to a certain municipal school, depending on her/his residential address (the proximity principle). The freedom of choice reform was not a change that hit the system suddenly, but a change that was successively prepared during the decade leading up to 1991, when it was manifested in

a more thorough way, after a regime change from a social democratic government to a right-wing coalition (Enegren 2011; Lundgren and Lindskog forthcoming). The reform package consisted of two important elements: the chance to choose another school than the one closest to one's place of residence (independent or municipal school) and the voucher system (where the money follows the student, meaning that the independent schools became true alternatives to municipal schools).

These changes were ideological in nature, and when the right-wing coalition came into power, it furthered the development regarding freedom of choice. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the basics for the development were prepared by the previous social democratic government and later accepted by the new government. The international trend described earlier, which occurred at the same time, can provide one possible explanation for the changes. It is important, however, to note that Sweden has had a more than 100 year-long history of private alternatives receiving official means for fulfilling educational tasks that the public system could not manage (Enegren 2011). The investiture of the compulsory school was therefore a critical point in the history of private alternatives in the system. Strong voices in the 1960s claimed that these alternatives should be excluded from the public zone. Otherwise, the objective of the reform would not be met. Other voices claimed that the right of the parents to send their children to an alternative school, built either on a religious ground or a different pedagogy than the one in public schools, was a human right. The later alternative won. As a result, the independent schools remained. When the compulsory school did not live up to its expectations and new financial models appeared, which made it possible to combine a strong public interest with private operation, the path was prepared for the growth of independent schools.

For several years the meaning of the concept was related to the fact that these schools provided something different than public schools. Their difference was thus the main reason why these schools received public funding, but there was no legal certainty within the system. Different schools with the same basic foundation for existence did not necessarily receive the same amount of money. On the contrary, similarity to another existing school would most certainly disqualify them from receiving public means. The new rules of the 1990s changed this. From then on independent schools were to be treated equally. This was the start of the *new market era*.

When the structure changed, permission to establish a new school became synonymous with the right to receive financial support. This was important for parents' choices. The two decisions about finance and freedom of choice thus came to be interrelated aspects of the system development. The changes have resulted in competition between schools in general and between upper secondary schools in particular. A recently finished project reports that only a few actors in Swedish municipalities and upper secondary schools do not experience competition. Municipalities and schools, however, have different strategies for handling this (Vetenskapsrådet 2007-3579, compare to Nyhlén 2011). When it comes to principals, nine out of ten municipal school principals and 84% of principals in independent schools regard the need to advertise and position their schools a consequence of the growing school market. Thus, the voucher system has changed all principals' work, not only the work of principals in independent schools. Competition and

recruitment of students are part of everyday life for school leaders at different levels. This is most certainly so in the city areas, where students easily move across municipality borders, challenging the basic foundations of the governing system.

7.5.3 Local Governance

The law clarifies that it is the local 'headman's' (that is the municipality or the independent school) responsibility to make sure the students meet the national goals and to provide the required resources. This highlights the importance of local governance. As described in an earlier chapter, the responsibility for municipal schools is assigned to the locally elected municipal councils, with politically appointed local school boards. Here, one of the key questions for local leadership is how the local quality machinery for goal fulfilment is set up between politicians, superintendents and principals in the municipality. When it comes to independent schools, the governing structure is not as clear. On a general level, Portin et al. (2003) have identified a basic difference in that school leaders in independent schools are faced with less strict governance structures.

In the Swedish case, local differences in the governance of independent schools depend not only on size but also on the association form. Independent schools can generally either be companies or compounds, meaning that, contrary to what is often discussed in the media, not all principals work within for profit companies. Some principals work within nonprofit contexts, where parents or members of staff make up the board. Principals' daily work is thus shaped by the different local contextual frames.

From newly collected data from principals in independent schools (Vetenskapsrådet 2008-5005), we know that being a principal in an independent school requires the capacity to orient oneself within different kinds of board structures and, at the same time, the ability to relate to different municipal structures. For some individuals, schools' governing structures are completely flat. The owner of the school can also be chair of the board, the principal and superintendent. This means that board decisions about the school are made by actors present in everyday life at the school. One aspect of this is that from a school leadership perspective, the flat organisational structures of small independent schools equal the situation in small municipalities, where a few actors perform many different tasks with a heavy workload as a consequence.

School leaders in independent schools do not only need to navigate between local board structures but between municipal structures as well. Since the vouchers are administered by the students' home municipality, the independent schools, even though they are their own *head men*, must relate to the municipal administration to receive financial means. Although there are national guidelines for how the transfer of public money to private actors is to be calculated, local practices differ. A principal in an independent school must manage the fact that her/his school may receive students not only from dozens of municipalities but also from very different ones. While some are large (like Stockholm with almost one million inhabitants), others are extremely small (with only a few thousand inhabitants). Governance competence is definitely an aspect of importance in principals' everyday life.

As we have seen above, municipalities have the right to *look into* independent schools. This means that the task of superintendents and other municipality actors is not only to enhance the quality in municipal schools; they also, most often, engage in the work of independent schools as well. On the preschool level it is an outspoken municipal task to control that the schools live up to the standards. This means that public actors are involved in the daily work of private actors – at least as long as the schools are working inside the municipal borders. When students cross geographic lines, basic principles in the governing system are challenged.

To simplify the picture, we can argue that what all the country's municipalities have in common is that each school has a core, consisting of classrooms where students are taught by teachers who work to meet national goals. What differs are the surrounding structures, including the multiple levels of local leadership. The linking to other leading actors is thus one dimension that equals the work of school leaders in Sweden to that of colleagues in other countries with independent schools. It is, however, evident that the specific character of the national governing structure is affecting what in the end constitutes the frame for principals and other local school leaders. In Sweden, this is strengthened by the fact that laws and regulations are established at the national state level.

And again, from a national perspective, the homogenisation through the new school law makes the jobs of principals across the country more similar. All principals must follow the national school law, newly appointed principals must attend the national principal programme, and schools must follow the national school curricula. That is, from the national point of view, there is today no such thing as independence from the public, apart from the fact that there are private operators within the system. When we now move to Denmark, this is one major difference to bear in mind.

7.6 Denmark

7.6.1 A Brief History of Independent and Private Schools in Denmark

In Denmark, political liberalism became a major political force during the 1830s and won so much strength that absolutism was replaced by a democratic constitution in 1849. These liberal ideas also had a great impact on the new pedagogical creation of independent schools. In the beginning, they were predominantly connected with religious and especially *Grundtvigian*[1] circles, which in school matters were backed

[1]N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) was a Danish writer, theologist, poet, philosopher, historian, priest, philologist, school philosopher and politician and was the inventor of the folk highschool (folkehøjskole) in Denmark, an exam-free school originally meant for sons and daughters of peasants in order to heighten their cultural upbringing. He gave name to the 'Grundtvigianism', a highly influential cultural movement in Denmark. Grundvig's thoughts about the exam-free school and instruction through the 'free word' are part of the independent and private schools' heritage. As a politician he was part of the constitutional assembly and therefore has influenced the constitution's § 90 about the parents right to educate their own children.

up by liberal forces that, in this pedagogical trend, saw a powerful alternative to the former strong state influence on the school field.

In 1855, the Grundtvigian alliance had a breakthrough in Parliament, and a law was passed that specifically legitimated the independent school movement. The law's most prominent clause stated that children's obligation to attend a school was removed if their parents could teach them. The clause entailed that parents obtained the right to establish their own schools and employ their own teachers (Winther-Jensen 2007). In the Constitution of June 5, 1915, it was specified that 'Parents or guardians that themselves see to that the children get an instruction that be commensurate with what in general is demanded in the public primary school are not obliged to let the children in the public primary school' (Grundloven af 5. juni 1915 [the Constitution of June 5, 1915] 1915, section 83). Parents were thus not obligated to send their children to school. Their only obligation was to ensure that their children received instruction.

The optimistic view of life in the Grundtvigian tradition combined with political liberalism laid the foundation for the philosophy from which it was possible to contest the conservative, absolute conception that the state's interests and existence came before everything else, and that the individual must be subordinate to the state's interest. Grundtvig wanted the public primary school to be restricted to teaching reading, writing and numeracy.

A co-believer of the Grundtvigian thoughts about a resistance to the public exam school, Christen Kold,[2] founded the first independent school in 1852 based on the oral narrative as the pedagogical principle, with the aim of kindling the spirit. Kindling the spirit is only possible with the *living word*, was Kold's contention, and only when the spirit is contended is it possible, through the '*artificial* way of information', through writing, to enlighten the children. These principles have had an immense influence on Danish school thinking, especially the thinking of independent schools. This ideal of formation, what in German is called *Bildung*, had a great impact on the country's spiritual life. It became an integrated part of the fight for national survival after the wars with Prussia and Austria in 1848–1850 and especially after 1864, when Denmark was transformed from a medium-sized European power to a small power (Winther-Jensen 2007). These thoughts were part of a nation-building process, in the same way as education has been seen as a nation-building effort after wars in other European countries (Ramirez and Boli 1987). This influence can be traced in laws on public primary schools far into the twentieth century, for example, through parents' representation in school council and school boards and the resistance to exams by certain political parties, that is, the social liberals, which historically have had a great influence on the development of the Danish school (Winther-Jensen 2007).

[2]Christen Kold (1816–1870).

7.6.2 The Fundamental Common Values of Private and Independent Schools

The independent school tradition builds on three pillars. First, parents' right to choose a religious upbringing for their children. Today, this means parents' right to decide, within broad legal frames, how their children are going to be brought up and taught. Second, the minority right that is a part of the democracy understanding that became predominant with the 1849 constitution. It implies that the majority has the right to decide, but that extensive consideration must be taken to the minorities and their chances of living in accordance with their views of life and society. Third, and as a result of the second *pillar*, Denmark has decided that parents have an obligation to educate their children but not necessarily in a school.

The freedom of school and education choice builds on five principles of freedom:

1. The freedom of ideas: to be free to choose a certain religious, philosophical, political or other idea as an educational foundation and the freedom to fight other perceptions.
2. Pedagogical freedom: to be free to choose the contents and methods for the education of one's children. Independent schools are, for example, independent of the law of public primary schools' objects clause and contents.
3. Economic freedom: to be free to – within broad frames – decide how a school's means shall be used in the school.
4. Freedom of employment: to be free to employ teachers, regardless of their education, and to employ and dismiss teachers on the basis of their religious, political or pedagogical beliefs.
5. Freedom of students in the school: to be free to decide on the student group's composition without interference from the authorities (Den Store Danske n.d.).

These principles of freedom constitute the foundation of independent and private schools, and they build on long historical traditions. The so-called progressive free school movement (*lilleskolebevægelse*) has over the years, especially since the 1970s, taken advantage of this through political (often with a left-wing inclination), pedagogical (e.g. in the form of Rudolf Steiner schools) or more traditional Christian (*Grundtvig-Koldske* schools, fundamentalist Christian [evangelical] schools) considerations. During the last 50 years, where Denmark has become a multicultural country, these rights have taken on new topicality, because many private and independent schools have become religious schools, especially schools with a Muslim foundation. As such the principles of freedom have been predominant. These Muslim schools have been contested, especially by the Danish People's Party.

During the last 10 years, the former centre-right government, whose government platform included the Danish People's Party, tried to strengthen the control with especially Muslim schools. Therefore, the above-mentioned supervisor, which each school has to appoint, must be certified by the ministry (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 9c); therefore, it is specified that the school

leader must master 'Danish in speech and writing', unless the supervision is practiced in German minority schools or in schools with state permission to teach in another language than Danish (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 9c, subsection 2). This can be seen as an attack on the principles of freedom for independent schools, especially the freedom of ideas and the freedom of students in the school.

7.6.3 A Picture of the Independent and Private Schools

In 1995/1996, there were 412 private and independent schools in Denmark, and in 2001/2002, the number had stabilised at 453 (Bang 2003). In the school year 2009/2010, between 14.7% (Christensen and Ladenburg 2012, 12) and 13.3% (Molsgaard 2012, Table 1) of Danish children went to an independent or private school. The figures vary. If we however look at the development during the last 4 years, there has been a 13% rise in the number of private schools (Pedersen 2012, 1).

The probability that a student will go to a private or independent school increases with their age. Nineteen percent of students in the tenth form go to a private or independent school (Christensen and Ladenburg 2012, 23). The figures for children who go to a private or independent school are higher in the big cities. In Copenhagen and Frederiksberg (the capital area), 26% of all children go to an independent or private school. The explanation for this must be that there are more religious schools here, compared to other parts of the country. The density of immigrants is relatively high in the big cities. That means that the public schools have many immigrant or second-generation immigrant children. Especially in schools with a high density of immigrants, we see that parents choose not to send their children to these schools and instead choose private or independent primary schools. On the other hand, we see that religious schools grow, because the children here can be brought up in their native culture.

Following the structural municipal reform in 2007, where 271 municipalities were merged into 98, there has been a parallel move towards fewer and bigger public schools. That means closing smaller public schools. Since 2008, 48 new private schools have been established in Denmark, more than 10 per year on average. Over the last 4 years private and independent schools in Denmark have received 379 million kroner in state funding; this is an 11% increase. Public schools, on the other hand, have had their funding reduced by 4%. The rise in the number of private schools can be seen as a form of rebellion against the closing of public primary schools, which differs from independent and private schools' traditional wish for specific pedagogical or religious foundations (Pedersen 2012), that is, the freedom of ideas and the pedagogical freedom. According to this interpretation, parents choose not to send their children to public primary schools, because (a) a worsening of the financial situation for public schools appears to lower the quality of these schools, (b) because closures and mergers of public schools mean that their children have a longer way to school and (c) because the

wish for more freedom of ideas and pedagogic freedom makes parents prefer private or independent schools. Therefore, parents open private schools – often in the buildings where the former public school resided, funded 70% by the state – to make reduce the distance their children have to travel to school or to gain more freedom of ideas or pedagogy.

In general, private and independent schools score higher marks on average. That is true in general for the bigger private and independent schools. But many of the new private schools are quite small, and that may become a problem, since the pedagogical environment in these schools may be too limited (Pedersen 2012). The average size of private and independent schools is 193 students, whereas the average size of public primary schools is 383 students, that is, twice the size of private and independent schools (Molsgaard 2012). These figures cover a variety of school sizes, ranging from very small to big schools. In the law on independent and private schools, there is the requirement that the state can only give grants to a school if it has a minimum of 32 students in the first to seventh forms (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011, section 19). Some of the immigrant-dominated schools have been criticised for being of too low a quality, especially by the Danish People's Party, for political reasons.

Where the demands for documentation in public schools are growing, control of private and independent schools is rather week, and that may pose a problem concerning the quality of the education in these schools (Pedersen 2012). Private and independent schools do not have to conduct exams and tests. Nevertheless, exams and tests are offered in many private and independent schools, partly due to competition with public schools. That is, private and independent schools wish to give their students the same education opportunities as students in public schools, and without the final exam after the ninth form, students cannot go on to upper secondary school.

To sum up, there is no obligatory education for school leaders in Danish independent or private schools. Since 2007, all public leaders, including public school leaders, have had to hold a public diploma in leadership. This is not required of leaders of independent or private schools. Denmark has a relatively long tradition for granting parents the right to choose between different forms of school, within rather wide frames. These rights rest on a number of public school freedoms. Accordingly, there are no specific demands for formal education of teachers and leaders in private or independent schools. The only demand is that the leaders be able to speak and write Danish – except in cases where the freedom of ideas constitutes the foundation of the school. There is the possibility that recent years' extended focus on especially the religiously founded schools may lead to more public control with independent and private schools, as evident from the law on independent schools (Friskoleloven [the law on independent schools] 2011). But so far the principles of freedom have carried more weight than a wish for more state control. On the other hand, some transnational ideas have also influenced private and independent Danish schools. Even though there has been a strengthening of demands for the formal competences of supervisors in private schools, there are still no formal demands for specific competences of private and independent school

leaders, except that they must be able to speak and write Danish. With regard to German and other schools with permission to teach in another language, there is not such demand.

7.7 Final Comments

Since privatisation and marketisation are phenomena that occur in many countries today, we began this chapter by noting that the changes must be considered as transnational tendencies. We took as our starting point that the winds of change are sweeping across all Nordic countries, but that there also seem to be different opinions nationally about whether independent schools should be accepted as a part of the public school systems in these countries. Without going into detail on Finland, Norway and Iceland, we can see new school markets develop and identify a growing interest in involving private actors; although the development in these countries has been slower or more dependent on single political parties than in Denmark and Sweden. As a consequence, school leaders in the Nordic countries, although they live in the same world and within short distance of each other, experience the transnational trends in very different ways.

A key question for the chapter has been how we can explain what happens when the transnational meets the national and how this in turn shapes the local conditions for school leaders. The answer is that this depends a lot on the national history. Although Denmark and Sweden are the most similar countries on the surface, a more in-depth study of each nation's history highlights the fact that the school systems' legitimacy is built on two separate, and quite opposing, principles. In Denmark, freedom is the key concept, meaning that the system is built on the right to be different. This in turn entails fundamental acceptance of differences between schools. In Sweden, on the other hand, the key concept is national equality or equivalence. This means that focus in general is on how to minimise the differences. Although this has not always been the case regarding independent schools, the new national school law from 2010 makes the independent schools less independent. This has major consequences for the school leaders. While school leaders in Denmark are faced with very few restrictions and obligations, principals in Sweden are faced with many. They must all attend the national principal programme, where they spend a year (20% of the time) studying the law. The national school inspections also visit each school to make sure that equivalence is established. Thus, the two countries which seem on the surface to be the most similar are very different when we compare national regulations and the consequences for school leaders.

Through the case of independent schools, it also became obvious that international trends are not single individual flows, sweeping into a country as new phenomena at distinct times in history. Denmark as well as Sweden has a long tradition for involving private interests in the public sphere. That is, *new* trends meet old structures, changing the outcome. Although it is still meaningful to compare the obvious trends, it must be remembered that probably all countries have a history of finding a balance between

private and public education. Paying attention to these crucial *equilibrium points* and offsets over time may give us a better understanding of the present than focusing on phenomena which appear as tendencies without historical resemblances.

Focusing on independent schools as an isolated phenomenon makes the historical perspective possible. It is, however, also possible to widen the perspective. Through this chapter we have become aware that other trends (described in other chapters) are interwoven with the one in focus here. What has elsewhere been described as a strong international focus on measurement and control of output is also present in this chapter, although we have chosen not to comment separately on them. The findings in this chapter are relevant for the other chapters, though. The national differences, noticed as a focus on freedom or equivalence, are for one thing important when we try to understand how ideas about national testing settle in different national contexts. What the study of Denmark and Sweden shows is also that a country's character, although it is marked by history, is not entrenched in eternity. New influences make them change, although not in the same ways and not in the same velocity.

Taken together, we have found several differences related to the frames surrounding principals in the two Nordic countries. It is obvious that being a principal in Sweden is not the same as being a principal in Denmark. At least this is the case if we study the regulation of the principal's work by the nation-state. What this chapter does not do, however, is examine if the different contexts really matter for the internal work within schools, leading work with the education of children and young people. What if the keywords, freedom and equality, are only words for different means towards the same goals? Do other frames affect the teaching? Could it be that there is a Nordic model, with a strong focus on democratic values, which is larger than the system questions examined here? If so, more variables are needed to explain differences within similarities and similarities despite of differences.

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Chapter 8
Leadership for Democracy

Lejf Moos, Börkur Hansen, Göran Björk, and Olof Johansson

8.1 Introduction

The report for the Swedish Successful School Principal Project, where two schools were revisited after a 5-year period, was argued:

> What was most interesting at both schools was that the principals succeeding the first very proficient principal were not fully accepted. In both cases the first principal had created a culture of very strong collaboration between the principal and different teacher teams. This was based on trust, dialogue and knowledge, but also a great deal of social competence. The new principals could not live up to the demands from the teacher teams and was not sensitive enough to understand how to approach the existing structures when changes were needed. It might always be a problem to replace a popular leader and then live up to high expectations and perhaps also handle the sorrow people can feel losing a leader meaning more to them and just an administrator. (Hôôg et al. 2009, 751)

This excerpt illustrates how traditional values and norms are very powerful in the practices of schools and school leadership. Teachers were raised in the Swedish culture of democracy and social justice and thus expected and demanded to be treated in line with those values of collaboration, trust, dialogue and knowledge.

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_8, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

An anecdote from two school visits, which one of the authors witnessed a decade ago, can illustrate differences in norms and behaviour between Nordic and English culture. A group of Danish school leaders visited an English school, and later on an English group visited a Danish school. When the Danish group visited the English school, led by the school leader of this school, they were very astonished to see that she entered classrooms without knocking on the door first. She opened the door and entered. Several months later, the English group visited a Danish school. They were astonished as well when the Danish school leader knocked on the door and waited for a 'come in' before opening the door and entering. Both groups were surprised by this breach of norms and behaviour: the English group because they felt they had a right to enter the classroom (they were after all at the top of the local hierarchy) and the Danish because they felt that they were visiting teacher and student territory.

Analyses of the past are good foundations for foretelling the future. However, the perspectives of the analyses, the lenses used to collect and analyse empirical data, are important bases for the robustness of the predictions. If the perspective chosen builds on societal, political or educational theories or analyses that have been overtaken by actual developments, then the foretelling is not going to be robust.

8.1.1 Denmark: Traditional Values

Danish values are deeply influenced by the agrarian cooperative movement, which emphasised the need for establishing democratically organised local self-help organisations (Moos and Kofod 2011). In education this foundation was reflected in the emergence of a free school movement and the embrace of the ideas of a mid-nineteenth-century influential thinker, who advocated freedom of choice for parents in educating their children. In 1903 the comprehensive school model – the *Folkeskole* (primary and lower secondary school) – was introduced as a locally controlled but nationally based model, with the freestanding school as an important supplement.

The values of individual choice and localism were incorporated into post-war efforts to build a welfare system that would protect the citizens against external threats. The welfare state in Denmark was built on participatory democracies on individual and institutional, local (municipal) and state levels. The Danish democracy that emerged was less centralised than that of many other countries, with strong local governance. This provided a foundation for the development of the modern comprehensive education system, which was also *owned* by the municipalities, but reflected the dominant values of *Bildung* that dominated in German and Scandinavian educational philosophies. The concept of *Bildung* is difficult to translate into English, but it encompasses an educational approach that promotes the formal and informal development of the whole person – mind, heart, selfhood and identity – rather than focusing primarily on knowledge and skills.

During the twentieth century, as Denmark made a gradual transition from a predominantly agricultural society to an industrial and service economy, the education system also changed. The emphasis on freestanding schools shifted to a nationally

guided but municipality-based system that provided comprehensive and (by the mid-1960s) untracked experiences for all children from age 7 to 16. Freestanding schools became less common than in the early decades of the twentieth century, but still represent an important component of Danish education in both rural and urban areas today. Free schools are publicly supported, and parents are still free to choose. Thirteen percent of children attend free schools (Undervisningsministeriet 2008).

As Pedersen (2010) points out, the last few decades have seen a new phase in which Denmark – a very small country that is physically and culturally connected to the economies of Northern Europe – has been adjusting to the increasing presence of the integrative forces. Pedersen (2010) describes the development in three phases:

1. The period from 1864 to the Second World War was a nation-building period. Denmark was defeated by Prussia and Austria in 1864 and quickly declined from a recognised European power to a very small and economically unimportant nation. At the same time, the agricultural sector experienced a major economic crisis. The educational focus was on the need to educate next the generations to build a new, national community.
2. The period from the Second World War to the 1990s was a democracy-building period. Politicians wanted to prevent another war by raising democrats in school. Therefore, democratic participation became a pivotal value in schooling.

   The building of a socially just education system – the comprehensive school with no streaming – took place over a century:

   1903: The comprehensive schooling system with passages between all levels was launched.
   1937: The next step was formed with the *middle school*, a comprehensive school built on the *Bildung* vision.
   1958: The next step towards the comprehensive school was formed with the postponement of streaming to year 7.
   1975: The streaming was softened.
   1993: Streaming was abolished in the *Folkeskole*, and the *Bildung* vision was reiterated.

3. The present era: The state is competing for survival in the global competition, and thus, schools must make sure that children grow up to be skilled and willing workers (Pedersen 2010).

For a clearer definition of the current challenge in Denmark, note two competing needs. On the one hand, Denmark seeks to be an open and flexible participant in transnational agencies, like the WTO, the OECD, the IMF and the EU, while Danes, on the other hand, want to maintain their traditional and uniquely Danish values. These developments have created a tension between economic policies aimed at surviving in the global marketplace (and thus emphasising a skilled workforce) and educational politics continuing the lines established in 1903.

The Folkeskole Act of 1993 (Consolidation Act No. 730 of June 21 2000) completed the development of the comprehensive *school for all* that was based on the combined traditions of local control and social democracy. Shortly thereafter, however,

in 2002, national tests and assessments were introduced, which inaugurated a period of adjustments between traditional and global pressures. The tensions were clearly revealed in the Folkeskole Act of 2006 (Consolidation Act No. 170 of June 2 2006) – carried with support from most political parties – which articulated the primary purpose of schooling: producing an excellent, talented workforce. Participation in the international programmes, comparing the outcomes of schooling, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), TIMMS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) were important influences in this development. This 1993 act represented a departure from the focus on *Bildung*. Reduced local control was realised through the Public Sector Structure Reform of 2007 by consolidating municipalities from 274 to 98 (Consolidation Act No. 540 of June 24 2005). External observers noted that this represented a shift towards more centralised control of education, including evaluation and assessment of student learning (Shewbridge et al. 2011).

The values of previous eras are still prominent in a complex political and educational situation, but so are adjustments to changing global pressures.

8.1.2 Iceland: Traditional Values

The values of nationalism, democracy and equity play a large role in the shaping, development and operation of the education system in Iceland. The first education law was enacted in 1907 concerning the education of children. This act outlines governance and funding structures for a public system for the country as a whole as well as main curricular aims. In 1907 Iceland was a part of Denmark, managed like a municipality or county within the Danish public administrative structure. The struggle for autonomy and independence was a large part of Icelandic politics in the beginning of the twentieth century. An important step in that process was the establishment of a public education system, mediating the values of nationalism, independence and citizenship (Guttormsson 2008; Lög um fræðslu barna 59/1907; Pálsson 2008). These values have seen generic ever since, but Iceland became autonomous in 1918 and received full independence as a sovereign state in 1944.

The preservation of the Icelandic language can be seen as a part of the rationalisation for independence. Ever since, Icelandic has been stressed in the curricula at all school levels as the mother tongue. Strategic attempts have been made to shield the Icelandic language from the influence of other languages by various means. Today this value is being challenged in a society that is becoming more and more multicultural and by other forces that drive communication in a global world (Ottósson 1990; Konráðsson 2007).

The notion of democracy is a part of the governance structure outlined in the Icelandic sagas. Democracy has ever since been an issue in Icelandic culture. The educationalist Guðmundur Finnbogason (1903) articulates in his treatise Lýðmenntun

(e. public education) the rationale for a public education system. His writings can be seen as the main ideological foundation for public education in Iceland and the education act that followed in 1907. His main argument is that a public education system is the primary basis for a just democratic society and the development of students as individual beings. Today, education laws concerning preschool, basic school (including primary and lower secondary school) and upper secondary school state that their primary purpose is to enhance the development of students and their participation in a democratic society (Lög um framhaldsskóla 92/2008; Lög um grunnskóla 91/2008; Lög um leikskóla 90/2008).

A major rationale for a public education system in 1907 was to make education compulsory and to ensure the access of children to education, irrespective of where they lived and the economic status of their parents. Municipal authorities were mandated to establish schools, and funding arrangements were organised to ensure their operation. In 1946 the education system was reorganised and coordinated as a whole to allow for increased educational opportunities for students. The establishment of multi-programme upper secondary schools in 1971 also provided more educational opportunities at the upper secondary level, but these schools organise their curricula in Carnegie units in both academic and technical programmes that can lead to matriculation. Another major restructuring took place in 1974, guided by progressive educational thoughts. This was the establishment of the comprehensive basic school (age 6–16), where the primary and lower secondary levels were organised into a comprehensive whole. The aim was to organise and structure the operation of basic schools in such a way that they met the needs of children to as great an extent as possible. Rote learning was minimised and focus was shifted to problem solving and understanding, special education was strengthened, group work emphasised and the curriculum thematised, to mention a few elements. The major changes since 1974 have been to reinforce the implementation of these major progressive policy ends and to improve the external support of schools. The transfer of comprehensive basic schools in 1995 from state to municipal control can be seen as part of those efforts (Guttormsson 2008; Finnbogason 1996; Hansen and Jóhannsson 2010).

In addition to these basic traditional values of nationalism, democracy and equity, the values of choice and competition are increasingly noticeable (Finnbogason 1996; Hansen and Jóhannsson 2010). Provisions have been made to make the establishment of free schools more accessible at all school levels, and a few individual municipalities have abandoned school neighbourhood access structures with open-access schemes. National testing is favoured in Iceland with diagnostic tests in several subjects in the fourth, seventh and ninth forms in comprehensive basic school. The performance of each school on these tests is presented publicly and by many used as indicators of effectiveness. Participation in OECD programmes like PISA and TALIS can also be seen as a part of this comparative and competitive environment, but Iceland participates in a number of transnational programmes that provide various kinds of comparative information concerning education (Námsmatsstofnun 2012).

8.1.3 Sweden: Traditional Values

Historically, Sweden has been a highly centralised country. The state has controlled most parts of the public sector, and education is probably the area where the state influence has been greatest. Compulsory elementary education in Sweden was introduced in 1842. Today's 9-year compulsory comprehensive school (*grundskola*) came into being in 1962, and at the same time, Sweden introduced its first modern curriculum. In recent years educational policy has been dominated by an active reforming process: The structure of responsibility and management has been altered, and the school system has developed new curricula, syllabi and assessment systems. In 1991 the old National Board of Education was abolished and replaced by a new National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*). Its main tasks are to evaluate the ways in which the municipalities deal with their schools, help them to improve their schools, control and collect statistical information and to assist parliament and government in preparing educational reforms.

The new School Act that was passed in 1985 by the National Parliament (*Riksdag*) introduced decentralisation of power from the state to the municipalities, but the process of decentralisation was not completed until the National Board was reformed in 1991. However, there is still a national curriculum. The state makes decisions about the School Act of 2011 (the national curriculum is from 1994, but was updated in 1998, 2011) with accompanying syllabi, timetables and grading system.

One of the fundamental principles of the Swedish education system is equal access to public sector education for all children and young persons, regardless of sex, residential locality and social and economic circumstances. Equal education therefore shall be provided in any type of school, anywhere in the country. Education shall equip the students with knowledge and skills and, in partnership with their homes, promote their harmonious development into responsible individuals and citizens. Education shall take into consideration pupils with special needs. All activities in school shall be designed in keeping with basic democratic values. And all persons active in schools shall in particular promote equality between the sexes and actively counteract all forms of degrading treatment, such as victimisation and racist behaviour. Education in Sweden has a dual task of embracing both the traditional knowledge mandate and the democratic *citizenship* mandate. The School Act states that 'All activity in schools shall proceed in accordance with fundamental democratic values'. This is important, because it means that all teaching should apply this regulation.

The Swedish curriculum for compulsory school opens up by identifying democratic values in Swedish society, which schools should represent and impart. The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school should represent and impart. This is followed by, 'In accordance with the ethics born by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity of spirit, tolerance and responsibility'. This common value system should,

according to legislation, permeate all educational activities and be shared by all who work in preschools and schools, staff as well as children. 'According to the School Act, it is incumbent on all who work in the school to work for democratic working structures'.

In a diverse society, Swedish students should appreciate the values that are to be found in cultural diversity. 'Awareness of one's own cultural origins and sharing a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to empathize with the values and conditions of others'. This ability shall be fostered among all who work in schools. The importance of having an international perspective is also highlighted by the notion of being citizens in a global context, but it also means to develop an understanding of cultural diversity within the country. The students shall also be familiar with central parts of the Swedish, Scandinavian, Nordic (including the Sámi) and Western cultural heritage and develop an understanding of other cultures (Norberg and Johansson 2010).

Today, compulsory school can be organised in various ways. There has to be a head teacher or principal (*rektor*), who is in charge of the educational activities in a given school. The head teacher must be familiar with the everyday work conducted in the school and promote educational change for school improvement.

8.1.4 Finland: Traditional Values

The Finnish educational system is strongly linked to its history of nation-building. Two hundred years ago, Finland became a grand duchy under the Russian Tsar after having been separated from Sweden. The trend towards a nation began with a strong element of democracy. The history of the Finnish society and education system should be interpreted and understood via the political and social processes that began after the separation and the end of the long period (1249–1809) of Swedish rule, at which point Finland became a grand duchy under the Russian Tsar, before it gained independence in 1917.

Following Siljander (2007), there are two major trends in the period following 1809. One was the National Romanticism of Turku, oriented towards the West with the ambition of preserving the privileges of the Swedish period. This *Turku Romanticism* was not accepted by Finland's new political position as part of Russia. The other trend was academic intellectuals who followed the philosophy of Hegel, implemented in Finland by J.V. Snellman (1806–1881). This movement was formed by the idea of institutions based on Finnish culture, carried by the Finnish language. Church and schools were important cultural institutions. The comprehensive education of children in relation to subject matters, personal and social competencies was built on the Hegelian philosophy of *Bildung*. These two trends were based on defence: the former, a defence of achieved privileges for the Swedish-speaking administrative population and the latter, a defence of academic intellectuals who worked to unite the people speaking the two languages by institutions and culture to

avoid absorption in Russian institutions and culture via the introduction of the Russian language.

From these two trends, three forces on future development emerged. The first force came from the new Russian powers, which worked to bring Finland closer to Russian interests. The second force strived to unite the Finns and the Swedes to one people. The third force tried to defend the privilege of the Swedish-speaking population. These three forces are in some way still alive in the tension between the two national languages today and in relation to the external power of the EU (Siljander 2007).

Many of these intellectuals were originally part of the Swedish-speaking population and the favoured class. They were acting in relation to the political situation, well aware of being part of Russia, with some degree of independence. This group contributed strongly to fulfilling the intentions formulated by J.V. Snellman: creating a national identity based on Finnish language, literature, history, science, art and general *Bildung* and educational processes. The field of education became an influential source of this national process (Siljander 2007). This intellectual group became a strong force that shaped a democratic attitude in the construction of the nation. This is visible in a study of the state school doctrines in Finland in the 1800s and 1900s (Kivinen 1988).

Interpreted in a democratic perspective, this period was important in forming the early profile of Finnish education and culture that united a people, divided by two languages, Finnish and Swedish, into one people and even one nation. Characterised by personal participating and including the two language groups, the entire population engaged in the common work for culture, language and religion. In the words of a language of education, this was a *Bildung* process. By using the *Bildung* metaphor, Snellman emphasised both the specific national identity and general humanity. Siljander (2007) interprets and describes this twofold character as the foundation of a modern society with, for example, civic rights, equality in the face of law, equal political opportunities and economic freedom.

Following Turku Romanticism, an ambition to maintain the privileges of the Swedish rule appeared. This group had a significant impact. The position of the Swedish language and institutions is to some extent fruits of this force (Hansén 1988). Despite the good intentions, there were discrepancies between the Swedish-speaking and the Finnish-speaking parts of the population. The Swedish-speaking population, supported by *Svenska fokskolans vänner* (supporters of the Swedish elementary school, 1882), received financial resources to build schools close to pupils' homes in accordance with a 1898 decision. The Swedish school network became more closely linked than the Finnish. The result was a more and earlier educated Swedish population. This inequality gave rise to the 1921 law of compulsory education for all children between the age of 7 and 13 in a school with six forms. During a short period, the number of pupils in school increased to about 90% (Cavonius 1978). Through this legislative step, Finland marked the way to more formalised democratic thinking based on a vision of a participating democracy, asserted and protected by law.

The post-war period in Finland was, like in the other Nordic countries, a period of educational expansion, solidarity, equal basic education for all, equal opportunities,

regional balance and education for the civil society and the democratic welfare state with growing industrialisation. The challenge of establishing regional balance was met mainly by decentralising curricular work to schools and teachers and school governance to municipal and school levels in the 1970s and onwards – now a combination of local, municipal and national levels.

From the mid-1980s, the economic and financial steering system has changed the ideas of democracy to a more market-dominated political steering system based on financial recourses, something like market or money democracy (see Kivinen 1988).

The way to do democracy in the education system has to some degree moved from the teachers and the schools to both an organisational and political level managed by municipal education boards and officials such as principals and chief educational officers. But also on the national level has the administration moved from decentralisation to centralisation, except for accountability for activities and results. Evaluation is the controlling factor that manages the school in accordance with the economic and political systems (Risku and Kanervio 2011).

8.1.5 Norway: Traditional Values

The Norwegian country case (see Møller and Skedsmo's contribution Chap. 5 to this volume) says that equity, participation and welfare state are the distinguishing features of the Norwegian education model, based on a social democracy. Educational institutions have always been seen as pivotal institutions for raising citizens. This does not only entail educating able employees but also active participants in a democratic society. Education systems have for centuries been composed of national, regional and municipal authorities and politicians. The local level has always been very important.

A consequence of the 400 years Norway spent under Danish rule and the 100 years it spent under Swedish rule, with no aristocratic or economic elites, a popular resistance to elites was established, and it gained huge importance. People learned through experience to argue against the rulers and stand up for their beliefs. The movement became important in both economic and educational developments. One of the reasons for this was that local teachers, being educated, became local agents for the civic society. Because of their education, they were able to communicate and act in respect to regional and national levels and to mobilise the people in the municipality.

Teachers' roles changed somewhat after the Second World War, but the discourse of teachers as civil society activists survived for several decades, particularly in rural areas. Their image was that of nation -builders and, thus, building national identity in students. This function was and still is very important in a country with so many small villages and municipalities with difficult communication lines.

There is a long tradition for political consensus when it comes to developing and maintaining the comprehensive school, because of the very long history of oppression from neighbouring countries, which also cultivated alliances between farmers

and workers. These alliances were not always consensus driven, but when it came to educational politics, the effort to reach a shared understanding was considerable. So the farmer, represented by the Liberal Party, and the workers, represented by the Social Democratic Party, often collaborated on education. After the Second World War, the Social Democratic Party allied with the white-collar middle class, like many other Social Democratic Parties in Europe.

Møller and Skedsmo describe in the country case in Chap. 5 this volume the post-war period in Norway in this way:

> The period from 1945 to about 1970 is often referred to as the *golden era* of social democracy (Telhaug et al. 2006). The cornerstones of this period were citizens' equal rights, the responsibility of the state for the welfare of all citizens, and struggles to narrow the gaps in income between classes and between men and women. This model was, and still is, supported by the labour market model, which includes collective bargaining and developing legislation with cooperation between governments and labour organisations. School access for children from all socioeconomic groups is considered very important. In addition, nurturing a national identity has played an important role in the construction of national curricula. However, the model includes some gaps. For instance, the concept of *nation-building* leads to the exclusion of ethnic minorities. The Sámi people and the Kvens, for example, have historically been excluded. (Stugu 2001)

8.2 From Welfare States to Competitive States

Economy frames the contemporary state (Moos 2012). This has crucial influences on public sector governance and thus on education and educational leadership. Denmark and many other Western states have developed from welfare states primarily to competitive states over the past 30–40 years (Pedersen 2010).

In the post-war years, we have seen the emergence of welfare states, where areas of civil society were taken over by the state that would protect its citizens and thus further social justice, political equity and economic equality. Full employment was a main goal, and the public sector was seen primarily as serving citizens. For example, citizens were supported in case of unemployment.

Transnational agencies were driving forces behind the opening of national economies towards a global competition from the 1970s and onwards, picking up more speed from the mid-1990s. Economic aims shifted from growth through full employment and increased productivity (of the labour force and technology) towards growth through international trade and investment. National governments increasingly worked through their memberships in international organisations on the regional markets.

In the 1970s governments began to turn national economies in a neo-liberal direction that was built on rational choice, increasing market influence and minimal state influence (e.g. deregulation, privatisation, outsourcing). Citizens were seen more as members of the labour force, with full responsibility for their own situation, and as consumers, and the public sector was seen primarily as a service organ for production and trade in the national, innovative system. The state influences the availability

and competencies of the labour force and of the available capital. The competitive state is characterised (Pedersen 2010, 72) by being regulating by displaying best practices and budgets; by framing the availability of the labour force, capital and raw material; and by being an active state, encouraging individual citizens to enter the labour market. Pedersen argues that, based on a number of decisions concerning the labour market and Danish membership in the EU in 1993, this was a turning point in the development from a welfare state towards a competitive state.

8.2.1 Governance and Management of Public Sectors

There is a long tradition for negotiation in the Danish political system. Most governments have been minority governments, forcing government parties to find majorities for their legislation through negotiation with opposition parties; most economic politics have been negotiated between the market and the political establishment, so there is a tradition for having neither a market-driven nor a state-driven economy, but a mixed, negotiated economy (Pedersen 2010).

This trend seems to be in line with the soft governance politics, the *open method of coordination*, the EU introduced in 2000 (Lisbon). Pedersen describes decision-making processes as play processes in three phases: (1) language play: focus on making sense and defining the problem at hand; (2) negotiating play: forming coalitions and agreeing on the frames; and (3) negotiation: reaching an agreement by majority (Pedersen 2010, 145). The focus on working with the *open method of coordination* is on construction of premises for decision-making and negotiation towards reaching agreement.

The public sector, which in the competitive state is seen as a service to the market, is governed by variations of what is often called new public management (NPM). This form of governance builds on a principal (politicians) agent (civil servants) (PA) ideology at several levels (state, municipality, institution), where enticements are developed in order to engage and encourage civil servants to work effectively and efficiently, while evaluations and quality assurances are meant to monitor and assess the outcomes (Tyler 1949). An important move has been to decentralise decisions from state to local levels, thus leaving institutions with the autonomy to lead the ways work is carried out within national aims and frames. This structure has created new institutions, which need to be responsive to the surroundings and the *consumers* and thus need to have room for leadership. Both institutions and leaders are subject to fluidity; aims and frames are subject to political negotiations and thus require institutions and leaders who can manoeuvre in a fluid, negotiable environment.

While there appears to be more room for manoeuvre for leaders of public institutions like schools, it does not mean that they are free to do whatever they feel like; national aims and frames are there, and they are more detailed today than before. The social technologies used by the competitive state constitute strong guides. Taking part in the global economic competition also means taking part in a global educational

competition. The Danish government states in the work programme from 2010, Denmark 2020 (Regeringen 2010), that in relation to education, their goals are as follows: Danish students must be among the most competent in the world and at least one university should be among the ten best European universities. The prime minister said that Danish students should be placed within the top five nations in PISA. The rating of education systems, schools and students is made so much easier by the international comparison programmes we participate in PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS.

In connection with the first visits, we described how the process of restructuring is working to decentralise and loosen organisational connections (Weick 2001) between central agencies and local agents, which entails less prescriptions from the central government for the municipal and school levels (e.g. with regard to finance and administration, not curriculum and evaluation).

Schools make development plans, quality reports, for the municipality every year. One principal argues, ‘My task is to translate them to teachers so the plans can be turned into developmental activities, in order to give meaning to teachers. It is about me trusting teachers’. This principal uses the same phrase as another principal; hence, principals translate the legal and legitimate political external demands on teachers to ensure that they meet these demands in their work.

8.3 Translation of External Expectations into Internal Meaning and Direction

Changes in external expectations with respect to governance and leadership have been described above; neo-liberal versions of new public management have been employed. One aspect of education that still needs to be underscored is the ways educational aims are expressed and understood. Chapter 1 of this volume provides an image of different theories: the UK-US, Tayloristic, scientific management and the Nordic and continental comprehensive way of thinking. The scientific management form strives to perfect education by making all decisions regarding student-teacher encounters on a scientific level: detailed aims, outcomes, content, standards, etc. The Nordic curriculum thinking, called didactic thinking, builds on national aims and local interpretation of the situation, based on teacher professionalism.

The two ways of looking at teaching call for different forms of leadership, different relations between school leaders and teachers. In the UK-US system, there is a move towards prescribing teacher behaviour. The Nordic version contains more understanding of the need of teachers to have room for interpretation within general aims.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the word *lead* can mean the following: (1) ‘show the way’, for example, lead the way to somewhere; (2) ‘connect two things’, lead from something to something; and (3) ‘a path’, for example, to go in a particular direction. *Leading* is the major task of school leaders in the sense of *leading the way* and *being at the head of*. Leadership is an interactive

practice, say Leithwood and Day (2007, 4). They agree with Woods, when he writes, 'the essence of leadership is not the individual social actor but a relationship of almost imperceptible directions, movements and orientation having neither beginning nor end' (2005, 115). And Leithwood and Day continue: 'while reciprocity is fundamental to such relationships, the defining contribution to an organisation is an emergence of a shared sense of direction with perceptible influence, eventually, on teachers to move in that direction. Direction and influence are at the core of most conceptions of leadership' (2007, 4). Concerning the Nordic context, one could add that leaders shall influence teachers, but they must leave room for interpretation.

Leaders, however, do not work in a vacuum; schools are built on relations with the outside world, and that means that school leaders are responsible for bringing external expectations into the school and implementing them by cultivating acceptance, by adjusting and adapting them to the internal sense of meaning of the school. There are many legitimate and legal expectations from stakeholders outside and inside schools that create, limit and direct the work. Many of these expectations contradict each other, and many external expectations, demands and structures can seem strange and meaningless to professional cultures. This puts the school leader in a position, where she/he needs to interpret, translate and mediate these external demands in order to facilitate sense-making and the creation of a shared direction inside the school.

Governments and local educational authorities make policies, plans, principles and strategies for education in school. Some of these are accompanied by social technologies (e.g. tests, manuals, standards), and some are declarations of intent: descriptions of aims or values. This can take the form of soft governance that leaves room for school discretion, interpretation and manoeuvre, when schools choose between particular ways and methods. The intention is of course to make schools develop according to the general aims and directions, as they are described in 'organisational ideas' (Røvik 2007). Røvik describes the difficulty of implementing ideas into existing organisations in effective ways that change and form their practices and thinking. Therefore, he argues, much more attention needs to be given to the phase where the idea meets the organisation. The idea needs to be understood and accepted by the organisation, leaders and teachers, in order to have an effect on practice and thinking. Ideas need to be translated in order to fit the mental models or worldviews of professionals. In this aspect of school life, leaders and leadership are key players. They receive the information and demands from the outside, but they also know the organisation, its culture and the professionals in it. They are better positioned than anyone else to translate, reformulate and negotiate the direction of what needs to be done, so that it makes sense to the teachers.

This insight is supported by the research done by Cynthia Coburn (Coburn 2004, 2005; Coburn and Stein 2006). She finds that some aspects of leadership are important in order to make external initiatives work in schools: There should be agreement between the life views of teachers and the new idea; there is a need for intense and coherent knowledge and opportunities to try out new practices. These aspects were built on knowledge of both *sides*: external expectations, the idea and the internal culture and expectations – a knowledge that school leaders have.

8.4 Nordic School Leadership

The other chapters in this volume give many examples of how Nordic school leaders balance new expectations against traditional values. Danish school leaders bring external demands to the teachers by saying, 'Let's see how we can use this in a productive way. Can national tests and student plans be used to legitimise the school to parents? Can we couple the new plans with what we used to do: the student portfolio? Tests are mostly rituals and the results are difficult to use for educational purposes'. The principal needs to be loyal to the political demands and, at the same time, make teachers accept the new demands. So he says, 'Let's do it and use it for our own purposes'. It seems to be a genuine transition argument: Let us see the old in the new. The Danish country case describes the use of social contracts and social technologies that are constructed in ways that leave room for teacher and student negotiation and deliberation.

The Finnish country case describes the development in the Finnish education system over the past 20–30 years, where there has been a major emphasis on teacher professionalisation through university education and popular recognition in order to enable them to make wise decisions in practice.

The Icelandic school leaders are not satisfied with having to do more managerial work; they want to be educationalists, supporting and negotiating with teachers.

The Norwegian country case describes that school leaders pay little attention to the national accountability system; thus, it does not influence their ways of exercising democracy in schools.

The Swedish teachers are strong, as was illustrated in the beginning of this chapter. If school leaders do not negotiate with them, they make them leave school.

In all the countries, there seems to be growing awareness of the importance of managing through personal sense-making, setting the scene and the agenda (producing the premises), making connections to decision-making in ongoing interaction with teachers and developing new and appropriate social technologies for those purposes, for example, teams and annual plans. Therefore, more attention is paid to social structures, technologies and school cultures (Moos 2011).

8.4.1 Decentralisation Within School

In the ISSPP, we observed decentralisation inside schools, as leadership was decentralised from the principal to teacher teams and individual teachers (Moos 2011, 2012). Teacher teams had not previously been inserted as a permanent link between the leadership and individual teachers; this occurred from 1999 and onwards. New tasks and duties were distributed, loosening the organisational connections (e.g. practical annual and weekly planning of lessons, parts of financial management), while other tasks were recentralised (e.g. target setting and evaluation of instruction and learning), tightening the organisational connections.

Teachers worked in teams within the frames and directions given by – and often negotiated with – the school management. At the same time, we saw the unfolding of different social technologies. Many of those were in the forms of meetings: educational council meetings (all teacher staff and management meet regularly according to the acts of the school), all staff meetings (teachers and other staff and management meet once or twice a year, according to regulations), team interviews (teacher teams meet with the principal) and *employee development interviews* (individual teachers meet with the principal once a year).

Schools also use contracts between the principal and teachers or teacher teams in the form of annual plans (teachers plan the instruction of a class for a year at a time and hand it in to the principal) and student plans (plans for individual students' progress in all subjects).

This development meant that leadership influence was less direct and more in the form of sense-making, setting the agenda and institutionalised influence. Within the teams, teachers had to collaborate very closely and therefore had to invest their personality in this part of the work as well as in their relations to students and classes. It was not enough that they invested their time and presence; they had to be motivated and committed. Those tendencies seem to be very much in line with the demand for negotiating competition in the public sector of a competitive state.

8.4.2 Decision-Making Through Negotiation

When we look at decision-making as a communication process we can distinguish three phases. The first phase is the construction of premises. Here the stage, the frame and the agenda are set, discourses are developed and positions are taken. The next phase is the decision-making process, and the third phase is the *connecting* phase, where one is interested in evaluating the effects of the decisions: Were they accepted and implemented? If not, what is going to happen? (Moos 2009).

Principals have started to struggle with the first and third phases in particular: How can they describe the frames and aims of the self-governing teams and autonomous teachers in a precise and not too limiting way? And they are struggling to evaluate whether decisions have made *connections*: Have the teachers done what was agreed on or expected of them? This seems to be a new and advanced phase in reflecting on and developing principal influences in schools, which can have a great influence not only on the relations between teachers and leaders but also on the relations between teachers and students in class. It seems to be very much in line with the form of governance introduced by the state.

We can distinguish three general forms of influence: direct influence, strategic influence and reciprocal influence. Reciprocal influence takes on many forms: setting the agenda, sense-making, as will be described below, and constructing the premises for decision-making, as described above. At the core of these forms are deliberations and negotiations, the reciprocity of relations; they accept that agents are dependent on each other. They have more often than not diverse perspectives

on education and professional work and diverse interests and values, but they need to find an appropriate and pragmatic level of consensus in order to proceed from one situation to another, from 1 day in the life of the school to the next. This kind of influence affects everyday life and interactions and communication between agents. The principals in the schools we visited talked about and focused on this subject more frequently during the second visit than during the first. This is a sign that school leaders get out of their offices more and into staff rooms, classrooms and corridors.

The second form of influence is named strategic influence: Leaders of organisations have to produce strategic plans for 1, 2 or 3 years at a time. Here they evaluate the current status and describe the goals, initiatives and direction for the period to come. In many places, much work is invested in this kind of planning, only to see that the administrative and political premises for these plans are changed every so often. The detailed aims and actions laid out in strategic plans are not met, but they can nevertheless serve important purposes by indicating a direction that everyone can use as a map that can help them make sense of their situation (Weick 2001). So the impact of plans is more in terms of sense-making than strict plans for the future.

Third, we should consider direct influence (Barach and Baratz 1962). Here an agent makes a decision and communicates it to her/his followers, who should observe this decision. Principals in our study also use this kind of influence, but there is a clear tendency that they try to use the other forms of influence to a greater extent. Often they emphasise the first phase, the construction of premises, by involving teachers in the process of making sense of situations and demands before decisions are made. In some cases – when schools are in challenging circumstances and firm actions are needed very quickly – principals take the lead and make decisions. In other cases, where principals are new to the school and a shared sense of the culture and values has not yet been established, principals also take the lead. In case of large disagreements between individuals or groups in the staff, and when external expectations collide with teachers' professional identities or opinions, principals have to make decisions. There is a clear tendency that when external standards, aims or demands for accountability are very tight – like in high-stake testing systems – principals use more direct power than in other systems, as shown in the analysis of the initial case stories (Moos et al. 2008).

We see a trend towards more reciprocal influence in schools. This is very much in line with the demand for negotiation in fluid environments and with the *soft governance* trends. Karen Seashore Louis provides a powerful illustration of this position:

> Many contemporary democratic theorists argue that the most essential element of democratic communities today is their ability to engage in civilized but semi-permanent disagreement. Articulating a humanist voice that calls for respecting and listening to all positions – but then being able to move forward in the absence of consensus – will be the critical skill that school leaders need to develop when the environment makes consensus impossible. (Louis 2003, 105)

The fluid institution and environment call for 'semi-permanent disagreement' and 'respecting and listening to all positions' when moving forward.

8.5 Is a Nordic Model (Re)emerging?

We have been looking at traditional values in education systems and institutions, at contemporary transnational influences and at current systems and values in education in Nordic countries and the surrounding world. We have seen that the foundation for the incoming transnational influences were different two decades ago than they are today. Structures, culture, values and norms were different then, and although much has changed over the years, much has also remained as a basis for contemporary interpretations and developments.

One pivotal difference is found in the basic structure and understanding of society. Is society clearly divided into social classes or is it more egalitarian? And how does this show in the education system? We know that countries like England, Germany and France used to be clear, steep hierarchies with demarcations between social classes, while the Nordic countries used to be flat hierarchies with few, *softly bordered* social classes. This is evident from the countries' education systems, in that England, Germany and France have preserved a divided, streamed system. Once put into one line of education, young people had to stay there. The Nordic countries have strived to abolish streaming and have succeeded to a great degree. Public schools are non-streamed and comprehensive. In Denmark there is a long tradition for one special kind of streaming: private schools.

One may find that neo-liberal focus on choice would further streaming, also in Nordic systems, because great emphasis is placed on outcomes, and this is also true, in some ways, as more freestanding schools are being established in more countries. On the other hand, there is still a strong will to continue non-streaming, which is a sign of *softer* legislation.

Hierarchical structures can be found in schools as well. In England, Germany and France, we see more layers of staff in schools. Twenty years ago England had structures with 10–15 layers (these included, e.g. assistant teachers). This structure is also a career path for teachers, influencing relations between leaders, middle leaders and lower layered teachers, so as to further monitoring and evaluation. In the Nordic education systems, we were used to few levels (teacher, middle leader and leader). This made it easier to establish communities of practice in schools. Until the beginning of the 1990s, teacher committees were powerful, not so much formally, but informally. A school leader would very seldom make big decisions without discussing these with and consulting teacher committees. This tradition has continued in the self-governing teams, where leadership decisions have been distributed to teams of teachers (like annual and weekly planning and managing substitute teachers).

The purpose of schooling was different too. In England, Germany and France, there was a very strong focus on academic attainment within sharply separated subjects and outcomes. A sign of that tendency is that teachers were traditionally subject teachers with specific classrooms. The Nordic systems focused to a much greater extent on comprehensive *Bildung*, coherent education of subjects and personal and social competencies. Teachers – especially in the first 6–7 years of

school – taught several subjects in *their* classes. They were *class teachers* with special responsibilities for students' coherent school day and education, for relations to parents and other teachers. Another difference is the predominant way of teaching. In the Nordic countries, there was focus on oral teaching, discussions and dialogues in class; a class was like a community. This educational trend was inspired by the folk high schools and Grundtvig (see the beginning of this chapter). In England, Germany and France, there was a stronger emphasis on reading and writing, on teachers' questions and students' correct answers.

Although major transnational influences and social technologies support Anglo-Continental tendencies, we see in the empirical sections of this chapter that Nordic interpretations and development follow a distinctive path – yet.

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Chapter 9
The Professionalisation of Nordic School Leadership

Michael Uljens, Jorunn Møller, Helene Ärlestig, and Lars Frode Frederiksen

9.1 Introduction

Educational policy influenced by neoliberalism, emphasising efficacy, excellence, competition, productivity, deregulation and increased individual responsibility, has taken various shapes in the education sector in the Nordic countries. Common for all, at least on a rhetorical level, is an increased focus on school leadership, accountability, quality assurance and evaluation. This chapter investigates how and to what extent the professionalisation of Nordic school leadership may be in conflict with established images of teacher professionalism in the Nordic countries. School leadership as a policy domain is of particular interest, because of the political and ideological nature of leadership as a process of influence. In addition, leadership is often framed both as a problem and as a solution in educational policy and reform (Gunter 2012). Also, school leadership may be framed as a balancing activity between various stakeholders and seen as something that is executed in the form of and in relation to different knowledge practices within historically developed cultural institutions. Therefore, the tensions between the local, national and transnational levels are

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_9, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

important to explore in order to understand the discourse of school leadership across countries and how and why accountability has become a defining theme for leadership (Christensen and Lægreid 2011; Hopmann 2007; Hudson 2011; Møller 2009b; Røvik 2007; Uljens 2007).

The discussion draws upon content analysis of policy documents across Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway, and it is also informed by findings from the OECD study of improving school leadership across 22 countries, in which the four Nordic countries participated (Pont et al. 2008), and findings from Nordic studies on education reform and school leadership (Berg 2011; Johansson 2011; Ärlestig 2008). Through the lines of argumentation in policy documents, it is possible to discover constituting and regulating factors that relate to dominant discourses of educational leadership in the participating countries.

As the perspective is comparative, we start by briefly characterising some general trends of the development common to all Nordic countries, applying a historical and cultural lens (Ahonen and Rantala 2001). As the analysis mainly focuses on the post-war period, it is assumed that the global conditions have been similar from an educational perspective. We will draw attention to some aspects of the ideology and the history of the Nordic education system and include an analysis of historical distinctions of school leadership and teacher professionalism in order to discuss how these aspects intersect with the globalised policy trends. Against this background, we explain how, in recent years, the position of school leaders and the approach to leadership training have changed radically across countries and how these changes also may influence our images of teacher professionalism. We discuss the framing of school leadership in relation to what seems to have become more dominant discourses of leadership at policy level. We conclude by presenting two scenarios, which may be identified as possible developments in the future.

9.2 Trends of the Post-war Societal Development

The ideology and educational policy of the Nordic welfare state have broadly been built on an assumption of mutual positive effects between economic growth, welfare as well as political and cultural citizenship, the state having a central role. Education has been considered crucial for economic, cultural and political citizenship. This wide doctrine of the welfare state emphasises the state rather than the individual as the party responsible for the well-being of the members of society (see Ahonen and Rantala 2001; Antikainen 2006; Telhaug et al. 2006). The role of the state has, in this model, been to produce rather than buy services, which has characterised the recent development towards a competitive state (Pedersen 2010), where subjectivity is customised and *entrepreneurilisised*. Educational equality has referred to equal opportunities but not in the sense of identical support for every single student, irrespective of resources, as this would open up for reproduction of inequalities. Instead positive discrimination has been, and still is, accepted – those in need are supported. The change has reflected a shift in emphasis from the public sector to the private

sector, from a view of knowledge and education as increasingly a private rather than a public good. The launch of the first PISA findings in 2000 also introduced a shift from more input-oriented policy instruments to a more output-oriented policy.

The neoliberal shift and agenda were widely conceived of as the way forward after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Berlin wall in 1989, with Thatcherism and Reaganism as early expressions of the change. Simultaneously, rapid technological development supported the idea or vision of the global village in which the political role of the nation-state decreased. Ideas and insights concerning sustainable development operated in the same direction. On the one hand, increasingly new forms of grass-roots interaction were made possible by new technology, while transnational organisations and conglomerates, on the other hand, grew rapidly from the mid-1980s. Both developments questioned the traditional role of the nation-state that has been the self-evident point of reference in education for the past 150 years.

The liberation of the financial market was to many a logical consequence of the collapse of Eastern Europe. This in turn supported the quickly developing markets and new (read cheap) production conditions in Asia and China, which seriously challenged the US and European economies. The deindustrialisation of Europe thus continued at an increasing pace, requiring a restructuring of the post-industrial labour market, well-visualised by the development in the car-manufacturing cities in the USA. The rapidly ageing population in the West is added to this picture, demanding ever-increasing funding when operated according to the principles of the post-war welfare society.

In addition, in many countries clinging to the principles of the welfare society and a simultaneous development of the economies in a neoliberal direction have resulted in a lowering of the taxation level. However, in order to avoid too dramatic effects, as a lowering of the taxation level could result in a lowering of the state income, this was compensated for both by increasing debts and by privatisation, which was believed to be more efficient.

The strong nationalist tradition in Europe, which since the mid-nineteenth century stepwise substituted religion with language as the organising principle for the nation-state, has also been challenged by increasing mobility and multiculturalism. The challenge is to define the constituting elements for social cohesion and avoiding drop-out. In principle, the problem is the same as before: How to manage in a pluralist society? To conclude, education and educational leadership cannot be understood if disconnected from its cultural and political and economic framings.

9.3 Contextualising School Leadership Over Time

The societal development, combined with a decentralisation of curriculum work, has presented school leaders with new and difficult challenges to be solved on the local level. The idea of increasing individual responsibility has been well received by a continuously better educated Nordic middle class, and this well-educated parent

generation has, to an increasing degree, oriented itself towards educational matters. The pressure for individual educational solutions increases as expressed by families. However, this differentiation generates tensions in a time when a collective comprehensive school is strongly needed in order for the young generation to learn to live together in a society that demonstrates historically new cultural variations. A similar paradox may be identified with respect to the social media. Precisely when common platforms for social interaction have extended, we witness increasing differentiation of social interaction. Increasingly obscure communities in cyberspace develop without being socially monitored, which may create a false sense of freedom. In fact, both things occur simultaneously, for example, children play online distinct games on international servers.

New models of governance have been introduced to solve the challenges schools are facing. There has been a shift away from government towards forms of polycentric governance, where policy is produced through interactions between actors in different networks, through multiple agencies and multiple sites (Hudson 2011; Pierre and Peters 2005; Stoker 1998). However, this does not mean that bureaucracy is disappearing. Even though it can be established that networks increasingly shape educational policy, bureaucracy is in fact developing rapidly at the same time. New forms of bureaucracy connect to the accountability paradigm by demanding continuous documentation and monitoring of work. Central governments reclaim control, often in an indirect manner, through target setting, performance measurement and the use of quality indicators (Hudson 2007). Hence, more tightly coupled and narrowly controlled education systems and practices can be identified worldwide (Meyer and Rowan 2006), but at the same time, particular effects of policy implementation emerge from networks of interests and actions that are brought into play.

School principals are increasingly experiencing a work environment that takes the form of public educational discourse in media, where benchmarking and test scores are at the front and where economic interests or efficiency demands overshadow professional interests. It is assumed that the way school principals respond to this shift in policy depends on their capacity for professionalism. Hence, the preparation and development of school principals have taken centre stage in all the Nordic countries. Figure 9.1 tries to capture in an ideal, typical way a framework for describing how the responsibilities of school leadership have developed over time in the Nordic countries. It may act as a tool for discussing what kind of professionalisation of school leadership is developing in the Nordic countries.

Figure 9.1 exemplifies three ideal governing regimes in which school leadership is contextualised over time. Often the introduction of new rules will be added to or be placed alongside existing rules, and the three regimes may also be understood as competing conceptualisations of leadership, accountability and trust. Although these regimes are presented as distinctive political regimes which have developed over time in a linear way, in practice they overlap as the constructions of various actors, who translate new demands and initiatives differently. Different labels are constructed to capture different conceptualisations of school leadership at different times and via different ideologies. Figure 9.1 also indicates interactions between the political context and the configuration of school leadership, trust and accountability.

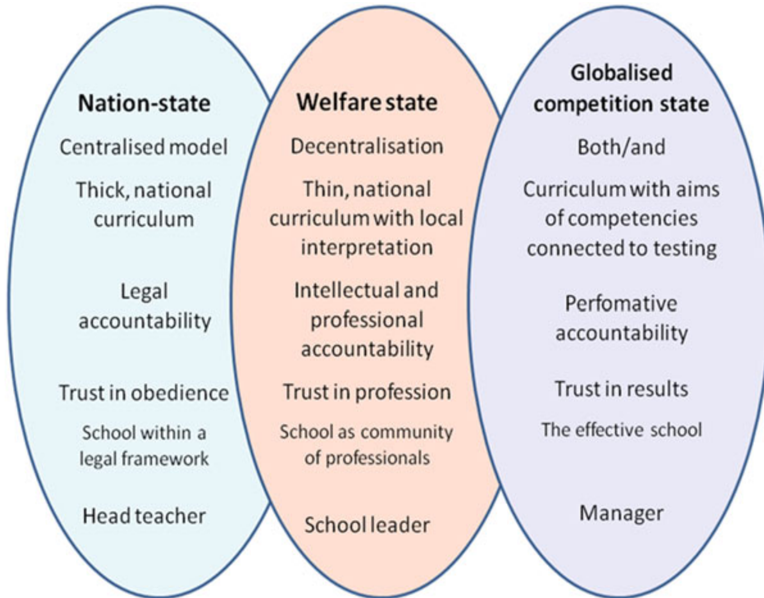

Fig. 9.1 Contextualising school leadership in the Nordic countries over time

Figure 9.1 signposts a change in dominant ways of understanding accountability, which are closely related to what shapes the basis for trusting relationships and, hence, how we understand both leadership and the teaching profession. This chapter aims to examine how and to what extent the professionalisation of Nordic school leadership may be in conflict with established images of teacher professionalism. The reason for this is that teacher professionalisation has mainly occurred in the welfare state era, while educational leadership in turn has emerged as a strong topic in the competition state. However, before analysing how school leadership is framed across the four countries, we will first point to a distinction between professionalisation and professionalism.

9.3.1 Professionalisation and Professionalism

While professionalisation may be characterised as a sociological project relating to the authority and status of the teaching profession, professionalism can be framed as a pedagogical project, concerned with the internal quality of teaching as a profession; it is about teachers' rights and obligations to determine their own tasks in the classroom (Englund 1996; Helsby and McCulloch 1996). Although we can distinguish between these two concepts, they are not mutually independent, and the authority of professions rests on a societally based legitimacy. Defining a profession from a traditional sociological perspective, the profession should include six aspects: a theoretical

knowledge base, a long education, autonomy in the profession and control over who enters and who leaves the profession, increased knowledge of how the profession is conducted and professional ethical guidelines (Carlgren and Marton 2000). The education sector is often considered semi-professional due to limited control of these features. Semi-professions are to a larger extent externally controlled and thus accountable to external interests. The change from governance to governmentality has had implications for what and who semi-professions are accountable to. Traditionally, schools have been morally responsive to the public through the mechanism of the state. The state has controlled education and the implementation of the curriculum, which still holds true. In fact, education in the form of a modernist project is established on that basis. In his lectures from 1826, the paradigmatic educationalist F.D.E. Schleiermacher clarifies that the reason why school teachers, in contrast to private teachers, are in need of a reflected language is, first, to increase the quality of their teaching through increased reflection and, second, to be able to communicate the reasons for educational actions taken. In moral terms professional accountability can be seen as keeping to ethical standards held by teachers as a group and as individuals; this way, standards always keep students' learning and best interests in focus.

However, in recent years, by introducing a market logic, schools are still accountable to the state but also to an increasing degree to the *customer*. The dominant discourse across the Western world today tends to be related to performative accountability. Trust in the teaching profession has increasingly changed to trust in results. This shift in accountability policies during the last decades has moved focus away from providing educational input and processes and on to measurable outcomes. It means that schools are held accountable for generating not only good quality teaching but also for improving student learning outcomes. The model serves three functions. This external quality assurance (a) allows for state control and monitoring, that is, political steering, and (b) the customers (homes and parents) will be able to make informed decisions concerning their choice of school. A final idea is that (c) competition between schools will enhance the quality, that is, that schools are able to do better if they are given clear information about their performance. This in turn makes them interesting partners on the market for consumers. If school financing is connected to the individual student, like in Sweden, schools will start to compete with each other in order to become more attractive.

Professional standards for teachers and principals are in the making, and benchmarking and comparison are at the heart of the new performance assessment. However, even though the Nordic education systems have for some time been influenced by discourse standards and accountability, most schools seem so far to have the *option* of paying little attention to external accountability. They do not run any risk with this approach. The status of performative accountability is that of an *anticipated future*, but to some degree school principals seem to struggle with the tensions of external managerial demands and their own standards for acting as professional educational leaders (Møller 2009a).

Professionalisation of school principals is on the agenda in all Nordic countries, but this has led to a series of dilemmas: What does it mean to be a professional principal? And will the image of a professional principal conflict with the image of

a professional teacher? How will professionalism be framed in future educational policy? Will successive state initiatives erode teachers' professional autonomy and curriculum control and weaken the position of teachers in other areas? Another scenario implies that recent state interventions may have a positive impact on teachers' professionalism in practical terms, as a restrengthening of state influence on, for example, curricula may reduce the influence of performative accountability put into practice by evaluative undertakings.

In the next section of this chapter, we will briefly present the four countries' approaches to leadership preparation through the lines of argumentation applied in key policy documents. In addition, we will also refer to perspectives on and changes in teacher education across the four countries.

9.4 Findings

9.4.1 Professionalisation of School Principals

Norway: Until the early 1990s, no formal education for school leaders was offered by Norwegian university colleges and universities. However, since the early 1970s, national and regional authorities have encouraged in-service training. In the period from 1980 to 2000, such efforts were supported by broad national in-service programmes for school leadership. In that period the main teacher unions strongly contested the need for formal, university-based preparation programmes for school leaders. According to the unions, experience as a teacher was a sufficient and substantial qualification for a position as principal. Furthermore, the unions argued for keeping this career option for teachers (Tjeldvoll et al. 2005; Møller and Schratz 2008). At the start of the new millennium, however, the situation changed completely, and now the unions argued for formal education programmes in leadership and management. In addition, several universities and colleges began to offer master's programmes incorporating educational leadership. This change of view is related to the role of transnational policy-making agencies and the impact of international assessment systems (e.g., PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS). It should also be noted that there has been intensive public debate about the PISA findings, and the debate seems to a large extent to have influenced the public framing of schooling and school leadership in Norway during the last 10 years, and increasingly new elements are dominating public opinions about education and leadership.

It was argued that the problematic PISA findings demonstrated the need for a new governance model in education, and in 2004 a new governance model for education was launched with a focus on deregulation, efficacy, competition and accountability (White Paper No. 30 2003–2004). It also placed leadership and learning at the centre. Teachers and school leaders needed to do better than before, and the White Paper No. 30 (2003–2004) indicated that on some aspects, the schools have not succeeded in their efforts before. Therefore, a national quality assessment system would be established to help the schools to achieve their objectives in a better way. Each school needed ambitious school leaders with positive attitudes to change and

improvement. Local autonomy was highlighted throughout the report, but it also argued for the need to strengthen the supervisory role of the state, in terms of introducing state inspection, to ensure that municipalities attended to their responsibilities according to the Education Act. These arguments illustrate how centralisation and decentralisation are interdependent processes that occur at the same time.

At present Norway does not require any leadership qualifications, but influenced by the international OECD project Improving School Leadership, the Norwegian Minister of Education and Research launched a national education programme for newly appointed school principals in 2009. Through this programme, the authorities want to make their expectations concerning the school principals' role and responsibility more explicit. So far, six higher education institutions have been accepted as national providers. This move may be interpreted as a (re)professionalisation of school leaders. Higher education institutions are selected as providers, which also implies some academisation of principalship and indicates the importance of principals being reflective about their own positions.

It is, however, possible to identify significant differences in the providers' education programmes, which reflects the ongoing discussion of what counts as a professional knowledge base for school leaders. While some programmes foreground educational theories and draw upon empirical studies of children's learning, curriculum studies and studies of the school as an organisation, others refer primarily to research on leadership in both private and public organisations (Møller and Ottesen 2011). Despite these differences, which are anchored in discrepant epistemological foundations, the different programmes have been selected to implement a national policy for leadership education and training in Norway. In addition, most universities and university colleges are involved in in-service training for school leaders and offer a master's degree in educational leadership.

In order to understand how this is possible, it is important to trace historical and cultural patterns of social development within the Norwegian context. Local municipalities and counties play a strong role in school governance, and they are responsible for providing in-service training for teachers and school leaders. The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, KS, has long argued against a mandatory leadership programme. According to this association, the local municipal authorities, who are defined as *school owners* in key policy documents such as White Paper No. 30 (2003–2004), should be responsible for leadership development. Their argument is that, in cooperation with their school leaders, they are better qualified to evaluate the needs and priorities for capacity building. Municipalities and counties do not want state intervention in the form of mandatory requirements. Instead, they want to encourage the formation of a local network, in which schools and school leaders are able to learn from one another (Møller and Ottesen 2011). This shows how the relationship between state governing and municipal governing is rather complex.

Sweden: Like the other Nordic countries, most principals in Sweden have a teacher education. Some principals have participated in recruitment programmes for teachers who are interested and have the potential to become principals. Many start their path towards principalship as department chair or deputy principal.

Principal training in Sweden has since the 1960s been a national interest, where the state has taken responsibility. When the municipalities became in charge of the schools due to decentralisation in the beginning of the 1990s, the programme was reformed. A three-year part-time education is offered to persons in a principal position. Since the beginning of 2010, the education has been obligatory for newly appointed principals. The participants are expected to spend 1 day a week studying and to finish the programme within 4 years. Since 2007 the programme has been available at six Swedish universities.

The national programme is offered on an advanced level and focus on school legislation, steering towards goals and objectives and school leadership. The programme is more theory-based than earlier national programmes and has, during the last years, changed from focusing on school improvement to emphasising systematic work with quality assurance. This education supports the School Act which stipulates that all education should rest on a scientific basis. The new School Act is more specific in several aspects and regulates principals' work to a higher degree. This includes governing schools' internal organisation and leading teachers' work in the classrooms; in Scandinavia this is called pedagogical leadership. Pedagogical leadership is closely connected to democratic and instructional leadership and can be described as a form of leadership that focuses on teaching and learning towards goals and results (Törnsén and Ärlestig 2012).

Some universities offer a master's programme in educational leadership. In addition to the national and individual education initiatives, the school owners often offer a wide variety of in-service programmes. They cooperate with consultants as well as national agencies and universities. The Swedish National Agency for Education frequently offers conferences in relation to changes in the national policies. Temporary school improvement projects for teachers, which include in-service training and education for teachers, also stipulate that principals should have an active role and participate. All things considered, principals in Sweden have many opportunities and many of them spend a lot of time staying updated and educated on the current improvement themes and educational changes.

Denmark: In many ways the Danish school system is divided into two rather distinct areas: basic school (*Folkeskole*) and upper secondary school (*gymnasium*). Among the most important issues are differences in teacher education and financial regulations of schools. These affect the conditions for leadership and for professional development and expectations.

Teachers – and school leaders – in basic schools are educated in university colleges for the specific purpose of becoming teachers. Teachers – and school leaders – in upper secondary schools are educated in universities in one or typical two subjects and not necessarily for the purpose of becoming teachers. It is a career decision that is mostly made during or after completing the university degree. Basic schools are governed and financed by the municipalities, while upper secondary schools have gone through a remarkable change in regulation. They used to be governed by a regional council, but now they are self-governed institutions with direct links to the Ministry of Children and Education. The schools now own their own buildings and

risk bankruptcy. This model is known from many vocational schools. At the same time, they are competitors on the market for students and teachers. They are responsible for their own survival and growth as well as the societal task of producing a well-educated generation. All upper secondary schools are governed by a board with varying authorisations and compositions, for example, with parents, local politicians and university staff.

Nearly all leaders of basic schools in Denmark have a teacher licence, issued at a teacher training college or university college, and in addition they have attended in-service courses in leadership or hold a diploma. At the moment they are not required to have any formal education in leadership, but in the nearest future, this will be required. From then on the requirement is a diploma degree in leadership. Almost all leaders in basic schools support the need of a formal education. The needed subjects are quality development, coaching and strategic leadership. Most courses are provided by university colleges or by university colleges and universities in collaboration.

Leaders of upper secondary schools are also authorised teachers – formal teacher qualifications are required. Leaders of vocational and upper secondary schools do not need to have a formal leadership education, but many have attended short courses or hold a master's degree in education from a university. Most leaders or potential leaders, who have a master's degree, have this master's degree in educational leadership. Most of the master's courses are provided by university departments related to educational research. Some leaders have chosen to take a degree in general public management. A typical career path has been becoming a head teacher after having held a position as middle manager in a school where she/he has worked as a teacher, but it is now becoming more common to apply for a head teacher position in another school. It is acknowledged that new leadership skills are needed due to the structural and financial reforms in education; however, so far, it has not led to a stronger pressure for formal education. The growing importance of a formal degree in education is illustrated by the current situation where several positions as middle managers are selected among applicants with a master's degree.

Finland: After having introduced the nine-year basic school during the 1970s, a significant reform concerning the principal profession was launched in 1978: All schools were to be managed by principals specifically appointed to the task (Lahtero 2011). The principal profession was established, although smaller schools, as before, were still managed by the teachers. In 1980 a specific introductory education was arranged for newly appointed principals, also reflecting a change towards educational leadership (Alava 2007).

The role of the principal was strengthened in the 1990s as a result of a decentralising of the administration and the new 1999 legislation (Juusenaho 2004). In 1992 the first ever official national regulations concerning principals' qualifications were accepted. The education of principals for the certificate focused on educational leadership, legislation, administration and economy. Thus, the 1990s represent a significant step in the professionalisation of principalship. Deregulation of laws, increasing degrees of freedom and stronger focus on profiling each school by constructing school-specific curricula through the 1994 reform obviously strengthened

the role of principals. Curriculum reform and new evaluation procedures were introduced and resulted in challenging tasks for school leadership in schools and on the municipal level, not always easy to handle (Svedlin 2003).

Since 1999 all principals in lower and upper secondary schools in Finland are required to hold a five-year masters' degree from a university, be qualified teachers, have sufficient teaching experience, have received a national educational leadership certificate provided by the Finnish National Board of Education or an equivalent of 25 ECTS credits in educational leadership offered by in-service education centres at universities, sometimes with a professor of education as the main person responsible for these studies. Allowing these centres at the universities to provide obligatory education in educational leadership may be interpreted both as a change in the role of the state and as a form of academisation or reprofessionalisation of educational leadership. Principal education has expanded and changed from emphasising administrative management towards educational leadership for school development, following distributive leadership principles. Parallel to this, curriculum planning was partly decentralised. As the legislation has developed from an institutional to a functional form of legislation, the local authorities have, during the past 10 years, been allowed to delegate power to the schools concerning, for example, the appointment of teachers and economic decisions. Also the relations with external actors have increased. There are signs that the accountability paradigm influences principals' work; yet a school development orientation is growing stronger. The deregulation has also resulted in pressure to frame one's own work in order to avoid burnout. In Kanervio and Riskus' (2009) study, more than 50% of the superintendents expected principals' workload to increase in the future.

Today it is discussed whether the education of principals should be extended by in-service training programmes. An effort in this direction was made in the form of extensive professional development programmes in the 1990s, but they were expensive. Pressures to expand are partly a result of the fact that the low formal requirements (only 25 ECTS credits) for principals may appear to be an anomaly compared to the extensive Finnish teacher education system. Steps are taken, in different directions. At some universities principal education is connected to existing MEd programmes in educational HRD (Human Resource Development). Continuing education centres again work to create faculty external in-service programmes.

School principals' job descriptions are generally considered somewhat open – they are in charge of the schools, it is said. Otherwise the job descriptions are in the hands of the local school authorities. Naturally, the open description allows for both management and leadership as well as for cooperative and distributed forms of leadership. Also, decentralisation of curricular work to schools requires space for action. Working with the school's activity plans is thus an important tool for the principal. In the Finnish model, this radically undefined space for action may, depending on the perspective, either be seen as an expression of trust with regard to the principals' work or as a structure allowing for continuous changes of the work.

Today new forms of partnerships are created between cooperating schools, often due to economic challenges. Also, collaborations between schools, national and

regional institutions and universities arise, aiming at combining the professional development of teachers and principals with research-based and data-informed school development and producing new combinations of site-based school development, in-service training for principals and teachers combined with development-oriented research. Aspects of school development are of increasing importance from a distributed and collaborative leadership perspective. A recent phenomenon is education of principals for other countries, for example, Chile, following a view of education as part of the export sector in Finland.

9.5 A Comparative Perspective

Comparing the four countries' approaches to the professionalisation of school principals, both similarities and differences can be identified. There is a historical tradition that principals' competences build on their education and experiences as teachers. Principals have traditionally been chosen among the teachers in the school. During the last decade, more and more university-based programmes have occurred in all Nordic countries. The content points towards both a more effective organisational leader with the responsibility for administration and results and a more theoretical research-based education. There is an ambition both to meet the requirements of a globalised world with more effective organisations and to create more independent educational leaders.

In Norway, Sweden and Finland, national agencies seem to play a key role in developing national programmes for school principals, and there are many similarities in the curriculum guidelines, although it seems like the Swedish programme has the strongest focus on legislation. However, while these programmes, covering 30 ECTS credits at a postgraduate level, are mandatory in Sweden, this is not the case in Norway. In Finland a mandatory programme of 25 ECTS credits for school principals was developed in the 1980s, but the candidates had to pass a teacher-oriented master's exam before they could enrol in this programme, which focuses on leadership, organisation and administration. In Denmark there is a distinction between basic school, for which in-service training or a diploma is required, and upper secondary education (vocational school and *gymnasium*), which is self-governed, and the principals in upper secondary schools do not need to have a formal leadership education. In all four countries, most principals are trained as teachers, but in Norway this has not been a mandatory requirement after 2004. In Sweden the School Act states that principals need education and experience, which ensure that they have *pedagogical insight*. Even if most principals are trained as teachers, it opens up positions for other professions that include pedagogy and learning in their education.

To sum up, professionalisation of school leaders has to an increasing degree developed in all four countries. As this has occurred during the largely neoliberal New Public Management era, the question is whether this professionalisation is, or

runs the risk of being, in conflict with established images of teacher professionalism, images developed and framed by ideas that are important for the Nordic democratic welfare society?

If we compare the four countries' approaches to teacher education, Finland is the only country which has followed a line of great independence in teacher education in relation to political fluctuations and state intervention. While Sweden and Norway, in particular, but also Denmark, have gone through rather intensive periods of reforms in teacher education during the last 20 years, Finland has offered university-based teacher education on a postgraduate level since 1979.

Teachers' work has also step by step been professionalised through a strong form of academisation in Finland, as faculties of education were established in 1974 to take care of all teacher education. Sweden applied a similar but lighter model in the 1970s; for example, professorships at the teacher education departments were not established until the 1990s. Norway and Denmark have continued to have different paths to the education of teachers for basic and upper secondary levels. In addition, while Finnish teachers still enjoy a high status and can afford to set high standards for those who apply for teacher education (one in ten are enrolled), the other Nordic countries are struggling with recruitment and retention of teachers, and the status of teachers is declining (although in public speeches everyone emphasises the importance of recruiting excellent teachers). Applications to teacher education are also declining, and the salary is low compared to other professions with the same length of education. Many, both inside and outside, schools believe that teachers' work is too demanding.

So far, we have only compared the structure of professionalisation offered to school leaders. A comparison of how accountability practices are performed or have changed will probably, in more detail, inform the discussion of possible conflicting images of professionalism.

9.6 Is There a Nordic Model of School Leadership?

As we are also discussing whether there is a specific Nordic perspective on school leadership, we may ask what defines the specific Nordic way of framing school leadership. What values are in focus? Nordic leadership is by far an ambiguous and unclear concept. It cannot be outlined as a theoretical framework nor does the conceptualisation function as a practical tool. A main argument is that the Nordic way of managing and leading organisations is influenced by the welfare systems and broader industrial relations, a system-labelled bargained constitution which is characterised by a high degree of unionism as well as many formal negotiation procedures (Sippola 2009). This may have, historically, nurtured the development of institutionalised trust relations. The unions have contributed to robust elements of negotiations in the workplace. The welfare state has simultaneously played a powerful role in shaping job security. The historical conditions for school leadership have

been similar across the Nordic countries, yet there are obvious signs of that; for example, Sweden has privatised the school system in a way that appears as a new direction, not followed in, for example, Norway or Finland. In addition, the Swedish system with national school inspection also differs from the rest of the Nordic countries and has changed school leadership both for principals and superintendents.

Leadership research in the Nordic countries has, to a large degree, focused on leadership in general, not on school leadership in particular, although the public sector has been included (Strand 2001). These studies usually apply leadership concepts developed in other organisational contexts, for example, knowledge management and change leadership based on empirical studies of different types of organisations. Many of these studies are to some extent in debt to Hofstede's (1980, 1990) intercultural analysis of country-specific differences between IBM subsidiaries worldwide. Measured by power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism and gender roles, Hofstede found that management in the Nordic countries was characterised by low power distance between leaders and employees, medium collective orientation, high degree of gender equality and medium to low degree of uncertainty avoidance. In a specific Nordic context, Larsen and de Neergard (2007) have investigated public leadership in the Nordic countries. Based on interviews with public leaders in various positions, they conclude that the two main points are that leadership is not seen as an expression of the personality, style or behaviour of the individual (the leader) but as interactive processes in the organisation, and Nordic leadership is featured by the involvement of employees in leadership processes (Larsen and de Neergard 2007, 8). These involvement processes are supported by the professional background and values of the leaders, which also support the legitimacy of the leaders. Another approach is the one applied by Schramm-Nielsen et al. (2004), who conducted case studies in four different industry clusters. Their findings 'illustrate that successful Scandinavian management builds on the strengths of the culture, context and history in Scandinavia' (Schramm-Nielsen et al. 2004, 166) and also emphasises information and empowerment and employee influence on decision-making as well as on daily practice.

However, understanding leadership as interactive processes is already mainstream across countries, both in education and in other sectors. As such, this characteristic is not a specific Nordic way of conceptualising leadership, but there might be other distinctive aspects of the Nordic culture which influence leadership in practice. For instance, the Nordic countries have a strong ideological tradition of emphasising the role of educational institutions in the making of civic society. Social and civic aims are included in national curriculum guidelines, and these aspects have traditionally been closely connected to the specific welfare state model which developed after Second World War. The educational legacy is about the common school for all as tenet of equal educational opportunity. Also, the unions have contributed to robust elements of negotiation in the workplace and a form of institutionalised trust relation, and the welfare state has simultaneously played a powerful role in shaping job security (Sejersted 1997).

In addition, school leadership as school improvement and school development is considered important. New models reflecting a research rather than evidence-based models are being developed.

9.6.1 Performative Accountability?

In Sweden the focus on results has contributed to a change first and foremost in rhetoric and conversations, which slowly also affect and change both principals' and teachers' actions. More and more often principals and their influence and responsibility to lead the work with teaching and learning are mentioned in different kinds of policy texts – policy texts that become more and more specific. This creates expectations for principals to be more committed in what happens in the learning processes. Today this is visible in, for example, the implementation of the curriculum and the School Act.

There has also been a change in the structure of the national agencies. Earlier there was only one national agency for the school sector. In 2008 a new agency, the Swedish School Inspectorate, was established. One of the arguments for creating a new agency was that it is not possible for the same agency to both control and support schools. The new agency now inspects each school at least every third year. At the same time, the number of national tests has increased, as has their importance. The Swedish National Agency for Education is active in implementing the curriculum and other reforms. They give examples of best practice and offer implementation conferences and detailed general advice with the aim of helping teachers and principals interpret national policy documents. The governing of schools has shifted from a focus on objectives to a focus on results (Berg 2011).

Even if the role of the national level has become clearer, evaluations and research show that principals' pedagogical leadership has traditionally been, and still is, weak and that principals, to a high extent, do not interfere with what the teachers do in the classroom (Berg 2011; Ärlestig 2008). Teachers' autonomy in the classroom has been strong, and at the same time, there has been a pressure for more openness and the ability to explain why and how teachers work in relation to student learning.

Along with an increased focus on comparability, the focus has shifted from discussions about values, norms and processes to results, data and measurement. In the previous curricula and syllabuses, the state reduced their role in regulating the knowledge content and argued that this was a task for the local professionals. At the same time, regulations of working hours and working conditions have become more detailed. This has contributed to moving teachers away from teaching and on to other tasks.

Denmark has a long tradition for independent schools (charter schools). These schools are governed by independent boards with a great deal of autonomy, and they are entitled to state funding. Currently, there is a debate concerning the autonomy of these independent schools due to global educational competition and the concern of social and societal integration.

The basic school is governed by the municipalities. It is dominated by decentralised tools but, to a larger extent, regulated by centrally determined ends, regarding curriculum, etc. In several subjects compulsory canonical lists have been produced, and there is a greater focus on standards and tests (PISA). This issue is, however, subject to discussion due to the change of government.

In Norway the devolution of greater responsibilities to schools has contributed to a number of demands, in particular on school principals whose responsibility for student outcomes in their schools is emphasised in public debates. Until the launch of the second PISA findings in 2003, there was hardly any focus on testing pupil achievements and assessing outcomes according to indicators of educational quality or standards in Norway. Instead, matriculation exams in lower and upper secondary schools had been conducted for more than 100 years. Also, it was taken for granted that teachers could be trusted to do a good job. Following the publication of the PISA findings, other social groups now wish to be included in defining educational quality, and a national quality assessment system was introduced in concert with the reform, introducing a shift from the use of input-oriented policy instruments to a more output-oriented policy (Skedsmo 2009). National tests have been introduced in primary and lower secondary schools, but compared to the ways in which accountability practices in relation to high stakes testing are implemented in other countries, for example, England or the USA, little pressure is put on principals in the Norwegian education context. Hopmann (2007) has aptly called the Norwegian response to new accountability expectations *muddling-through*, that is, planning, coordinating and reporting on a local level, with no real stakes and inconclusive outcomes. In sum, so far the emerging age of accountability has had only minor consequences on classroom practice. Studies show that discrepancy between leadership teams and staff is still relatively small (Møller 2009b). This feature reflects the historical collegial tradition. Classroom management has been and still is, to a large degree, the teachers' responsibility and domain. There is still little or no intervention in classroom practices from principals or local authorities, unless the parents have raised complaints about the teachers.

Despite all the changes on the international scenery, the idea of educational equality has remained the guiding principle in Finland. The educational policy of the welfare state was, and still is, at least in Finland, built upon a conviction of positive mutual effects between economic progress, educational equality, social justice and welfare and active, participatory citizenship. Also, in Denmark a national agency for school inspection and quality is established in relation to the Ministry. The agency is responsible for tests and evaluations, as well as periodically inspections of the quality of content and pedagogic and of the impact of the national tests. The tests have generally increased in importance, and like in the other countries, the focus is more on measuring results. The strong tradition of educational independence in, for example, teacher education in Finland has always valued content-based teaching. When the rest of the Nordic countries emphasised citizenship education in the 1970s, a high number of content-oriented professorships of education were established at the new faculties of education in 1974. The tradition of content-focused teacher education since the 1970s may partly explain the Finnish results in PISA.

Not only was teacher education in Finland prolonged during the 1980s as to respond to the higher expectations to handle educational issues on the local level but also Master programmes in educational administration (HRD) were introduced in 1979. Masters from these programmes were to work, for example, as superintendents in

the public school sector. The professionalisation of principal education was also initiated in the end of 1970s and took significant steps in the 1990s when universities started to educate principals. Education for both principals and teachers was redesigned in Finland mainly as a response to the changes in educational policy developed during what previously was called the welfare state regime. Although the welfare state model in Finland clearly was affected by new public management policy ideas applied on many societal fields during the past 10–15 years, the educational sector, apart from universities, has not been very much affected; for example, the principal and teacher education programmes have not been redesigned as a result of this process as has been the case in many countries.

Another phenomenon connected to performative accountability is marking and national tests. Finland never left the practice of teachers grading students' achievements. In addition, Finland has been conducting national tests in upper secondary school (matriculation exam) for decades, and the school system has reminded parents of their responsibilities, while secondary and upper secondary teachers have been educated at universities since the 1850s. All of this is related to a relatively independent education sector, including administration, research and teacher education. Paradoxically, there is a risk that the new international competition-oriented trend (e.g., PISA) may question and challenge the Finnish model that has successfully combined the idea of a school for all with high standards and a strong care for all children in need of special education (Uljens 2009). However, among practitioners in schools and on the municipal level, international achievement results do not receive very much attention, neither as control nor in a constructive fashion. While Finland has traditionally invested more in university-based teacher education compared with the other Nordic countries, new forms of school development initiatives, combined with continuing education and research, are being developed.

In the educational culture that is now spreading, parents appear to see education increasingly as a private good and as a right; if the intended aims are not fulfilled, schools are more easily blamed for such lack of success. This may be taken to reflect a culture of individualisation and privatisation. During the welfare state regime with more regulation, problematic topics were framed as political issues, while during the regime of the competitive state, parents tend to frame problematic topics more often as private issues to be solved by jurisprudence rather than through a public debate focusing on policy and principles.

School principals in all four countries are increasingly experiencing a work environment in which benchmarking and test scores are taking the centre stage. The increased focus on educational outcomes in terms of student achievements implies concepts of educational quality that, in form, seem to be defined by expectations about specific outcomes. This also points to a belief that any divergence between the expected outcomes and the level of achievements can be identified. As such, performance measurement becomes a key part of the evaluation processes. So far, the current climate of managerial or performative accountability does not seem to influence the Nordic principals' work to a large degree. However, they live in a time of evidence and data, and data may act as a powerful tool in education. It can be used for good or bad. Social media, Wikipedia and WikiLeaks are signs of a time when

it is almost impossible to control how data is and will be used. Transnational actors have reframed the conditions not only for schools but also for states by, for example, communicating results directly to individual schools (Frontini 2009). The state level with resources to interpret and relate to received results is partly being overlooked, while schools, with limited capacity to make use of results, are provided with them. This may be seen as newer communicative mechanism that does not follow traditional hierarchy of organisational cooperation. What forms these accountability pressures will take in the future are yet uncertain. Increased emphasis on national monitoring of educational outcomes as a part of developing and securing educational quality will probably have consequences for all the actors involved: key leaders at the municipalities, principals, teachers and students.

Overall, this highlights school leadership as a balancing activity, where several actors and interests are competing. They all agree that they want better results, but their means of reaching these results vary. The question remains: What do we mean by a professional principal in a Nordic context, and how is the relationship to the framing of professional teachers?

9.7 Discussion

We may say that neighbouring countries' approaches to school leadership and accountability are culturally and historically distinct, but at the same time, they seem at present to be drawn together by common economic and political forces. Rapid technological innovation, mobility and globalisation have resulted in new challenges for school leaders across many countries. Also, the changing social environment has been accompanied by changes in major legislation, resulting in new governance structures across many countries. More autonomy for administrative agencies and other institutions has been the core of many recent reforms in public sectors, together with institutional detachment from democratic government and politics. Various governments now realise that management from a distance has created specific accountability and control issues, and they have started to focus on improving the governance of these newly autonomous bodies. New strategies for reinventing government by establishing New Public Management, NPM, both at the central and at the municipal level have emerged. On the one hand, it is argued that the introduction of NPM has been motivated by concerns about reducing disparities in educational outcomes across different social groups. Therefore, there is a need for strengthening state oversight of and responsibility for public sector services (Røvik 2007). On the other hand, it is often argued that the cost of the public sector is too high, and NPM is an instrument for efficient service production, governed by a performance-oriented culture with a focus on results and efficiency (Olsen 2008). Both arguments are closely connected to a practice of holding schools accountable for outcomes which meet the predefined criteria and the reason why external evaluation of education at various levels has come into focus in recent years.

NPM does not stop holding schools accountable. The use of standards and by giving concrete examples of what different actors are expected to do, the responsibility is connected to the individual actor; educational decision-making is geared towards streamlining working methods, not aims. Today the opportunity to complain and take action if teachers and principals do not act in an expected way has increased. The more general reforms in relation to NPM seem to have in common that they have little respect for professional norms and knowledge.

Today there are efforts on all levels to raise the quality in teacher education and in-service training and give teachers who want to broaden or deepen their education the opportunity to do so. At the same time, there is greater pressure on teachers and principals to document what they do and take a broader responsibility for the school as an organisation and for the quality within school. Marks and merit points are used not only to analyse students and their performances, they are also used to assess teachers' performances. Principals are expected to make decisions concerning the teachers' salary. Schools in Sweden have a higher external pressure, and the opportunity to compare is important. This creates a pressure to find actions that almost immediately show effects in relation to results. This can raise issues about what is valued in the principal and teacher professions. Is it the ability to be flexible, positive to reforms and comparable to others, or is the way to autonomously perform the work, so that teachers use their professional skills in various situations?

Findings based on the International Successful School Principalship Project (Day and Leithwood 2007), which was launched in 2002 and in which Sweden, Denmark and Norway participated, are frequently quoted in the OECD report about Improving School Leadership. The Scandinavian case studies within this project particularly emphasised how the construction of leadership identity was grounded in the view that education should promote democracy as a fundamental social value and an ethical guide to citizenship. At the same time, school leadership was framed as a profession distinct from teaching. It was emphasised that the old legacy of understanding principalship as primus inter pares had disappeared gradually, but mutual trust and respect between school leaders and teachers were at the core of what they thought should count as a successful school.

These case studies also recorded that school management had become less predictable and more turbulent in the last 10 years, with a stronger focus on managerial practice and external accountability. Understanding leadership as primus inter pares was often by the principals recognised as a romanticised, old-fashioned view of leadership in schools. Nordic school leaders have today, like their colleagues in other countries, taken on many more administrative and managerial tasks, and both their superiors, teachers and the parents expect far more of the school leaders than ever before (Møller 2009a).

In our analysis we have highlighted how professionalisation of school leaders is developing in all four Nordic countries, although at the moment it is difficult to forecast if this emerging professionalism among school leaders will be in conflict with established images of teacher professionalism. The point of departure for our analysis was contextualising school leadership over time in our countries

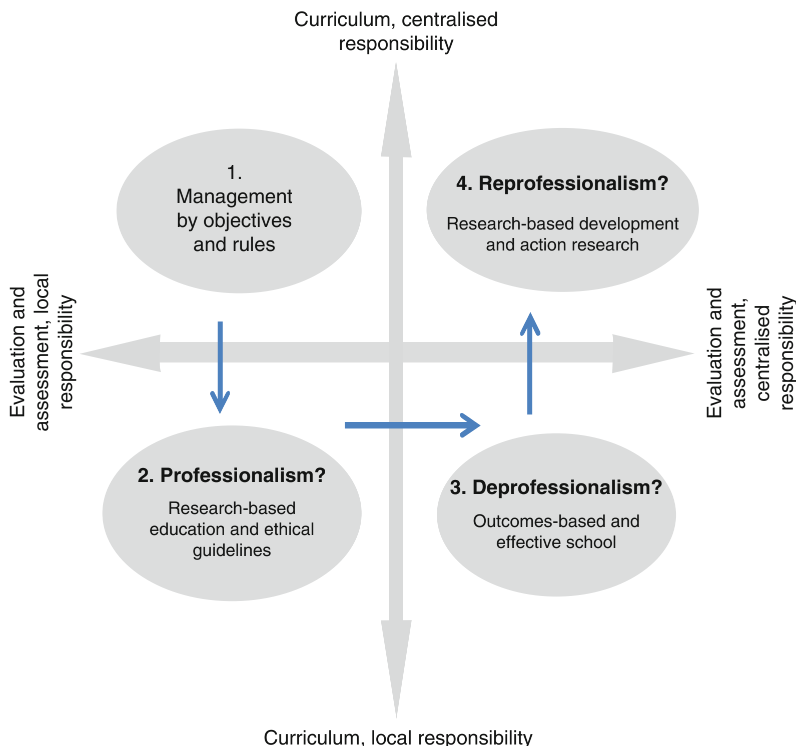

Fig. 9.2 Four positions in educational policy in relation to images of professionalism in a national perspective

(cf. Fig. 9.1). Whether the curriculum is centrally or locally controlled, and whether evaluation and assessment are a local or central responsibility, will probably influence the images of professionalism. Figure 9.1 exemplified three ideal governing regimes. Based on our analysis, it is possible to identify four positions in education policy, and each position contains different images of professionalism, deprofessionalism and reprofessionalism (Chap. 3 by Uljens and Nyman, this volume) (cf. Fig. 9.2 above).

Position 1 refers to the introduction of *management by objectives* in the public sector. It started as a modernisation programme in the mid-1970s. This position reflects that the curricular responsibility is located on a state level, while teachers were trusted in marking and evaluating learning results. Position 2 exemplifies the delegation of curriculum responsibility to the school level, while teachers' responsibility for and influence on marking and evaluation remained. The move from positions 1 to 2 was in Finland partly compensated for by increasing teacher professionalism by moving teacher education to universities and by emphasising the professional development of principals. Both positions 1 and 2 reflected, in essence, the politics of the welfare state.

In turn, the move from position 2 to position 3 indicates a more radical shift towards what is sometimes called the competitive or neoliberal state. Using the dimension evaluation and curriculum, the shift indicates that the teachers and schools continue to have a local responsibility for the curriculum, while assessment is gradually being centralised and externalised from a school perspective. In this, local responsibility of curricula easily gets overruled by centralised assessment governing. Even more significantly, this change reflects that not only are the students evaluated by performance tests, student results are now interpreted as reflecting the quality of the teaching. Evaluation of student performance is thus used in many new ways, as was previously discussed. What makes this move different from the previous is the introduction of strong transnational interests, like PISA and the EU. That is, the accountability-oriented policy shifts influence not only away from the individual school but also beyond the nation-state. The OECD communicates results directly to the schools over the heads of national authorities, thus contributing to a formulation of a public space beyond the control of national politics. Finally, the move from positions 3 to 4 reflects the ongoing reformulation of the role of the state as a restrengthening of its interests.

Paradoxically, the move from position 2 to position 3 may lead to versions of deprofessionalisation of teaching and leadership; an increased focus on the predefined aims, contents and levels to be achieved by students may result in emphasising the methodical dimensions of teaching – the efficient delivery of goods, that is. A technologically inspired understanding of teacher effectiveness, a scientific and engineering, not academic, view of teachers' work may develop into a climate of managerial accountability and evidence-based research, which holds neo-Taylorian features. Increasing focus on classroom studies may run the risk of causing a technological instrumentalisation of teaching, a kind of *methodication*. To some extent that would echo programmatic teaching ideals and instructional laboratories from the 1960s and 1970s. The Finnish universities, for example, have gone through a process of formulating course descriptions on the basis of the idea that they should be intersubjectively observable. The positive side of all this is a stronger focus on teachers' professionalism, although it alone reflects a very narrow understanding of the teaching profession.

In such a scenario, the question is, for example, how to organise educational testing so that these efforts may avoid counterproductive consequences for schooling? From the case of Finland, we may learn that control, surveys, evaluation and the like are not the problem as such; the problem is how these are used. The Finnish model has consequently emphasised a relative independence of parties and agencies responsible for schooling (administration, teacher education, schools). It has continuously demonstrated trust in the education sector, thus upholding its self-esteem, rather than questioning the morals of the teachers by, for example, externalising evaluation. This also requires an emphasis where learning among the professionals is well-established. A consequence of this would be that increasing professionalisation should indeed be coupled with less external control of teaching results and teacher education.

Another paradoxical consequence of competitive evaluation systems may be that a stronger focus on achievement levels creates anxiety of variation among actors, leading to teaching for testing and a limiting of the freedom of choice in schools. We can already see indications of such a development. For example, in all four countries, the amount of variation in achievement related to the school level has increased, indicating increasing differentiation between schools.

Where are we heading? After the collapse of the financial markets in 2008, the agenda is established anew. The role of the nation-state within the EU is gaining new attention. Trust in a self-regulating market following principles of effectiveness, productivity and optimisation has diminished the past 5 years. The ongoing, large scale operations in order to get the Euro market going is a good example of how the role of political steering and the activities of the nation-state have not been outplayed. More generally, it appears as if renewed belief in political steering of societal development has established itself and is reflected, also in educational policy in the Nordic countries.

It appears that in Finland, a strong tradition of professional teacher autonomy, compared to politics and homes, correlates with an early and strong academisation of teacher education as well as with independent faculties of education responsible for educational research. In such a culture of mutual trust and professional independence, there has been no obvious need of developing a culture of performative accountability. In fact, quality assurance has not been used to allocate resources or explicitly control the school. In addition, both principals and teachers experience ranking on the basis of results as a threat, as the primary consequence is labelling and shaming.

Compared to Finland the other Nordic countries' teacher education and schools were never offered a similar independent role in relation to state and local authorities, which have a stronger tradition of functioning as instruments for politicians in their efforts to develop society through teacher education. This may also be a result of pragmatic and consensus-oriented politics in Finland. Yet, a conclusion would thus be that independent academic professions require a relatively independent professional education for teachers and principals. In this light it becomes important how the academic professionalisation of educational leadership is organised, also when this occurs within the universities.

9.7.1 Summing Up

This chapter aimed to investigate how and to what extent the professionalisation of Nordic school leadership may be in conflict with images of teacher professionalism. The chapter has highlighted the ongoing reconstruction process or (re)professionalisation of school leadership, which to some extent is coherent with the renewed education policy. A main argument is, however, that the leadership type, tasks and role resulting from this (re)professionalisation may conflict with the teacher ideal that has increasingly been promoted by teacher education in the Nordic countries since the 1970s. In general, the teacher ideal was developed first as a consequence of equal and compulsory education for all, led by democratic ideals, and later as a

response to various steps in the decentralisation of curriculum planning and other forms of deregulation during the 1980s and 1990s, which required an independent professional. The principals' education has developed and expanded slowly in many Nordic countries. So far it does not appear as if the negative sides of the accountability paradigm have pushed itself through in Nordic principals' education. Is it possible to conclude that there is a Nordic model of school leadership? Our conclusion is very tentative.

Whether the Nordic countries will hold its legacy about the common school for all as a tenet of equal educational opportunity probably depends on how they adopt the new international ideas of education as human capital and an individualistic quest. Two scenarios may be identified as possible developments in the future. The first one is labelled *universal managerialism* (UM). It focuses on managerialist goals, results and quality assurance and accentuates the principal's role as accountable. Resources will be connected to success on test performance, influenced by an *added-value thinking*, and other disciplines than educational sciences, like for instance economy, will increasingly influence research on education. We have chosen to label the second scenario *research-based school developmental leadership* (RDL). Within this scenario theory development on educational leadership continues within education as a professional discipline. The educational leader may be framed as an interpreter, translating the logics between different knowledge practices. Resources for school leadership research are combined with school development and continuing education. In this vision, municipalities, schools, state and universities cooperate on both research-based school developmental work and developmentally oriented educational research. This points to a renewed understanding of professionalism in teacher and principal education, as it must include training in school- and site-based developmental work related to ongoing research projects.

School leadership exists in relation to other positions and agents, who often base their practices on different epistemologies. Professionalisation is a growing homogenisation of approaches to governance across the Nordic countries due to global forces, and local traditions ensure that they are played out differently in national contexts. A number of historical analyses of education have demonstrated that our history is about choice.

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Chapter 10
Successful Nordic School Leadership

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10.1 Introduction

It is not often that one can make Nordic and international comparisons within the same project. In the International Successful School Principals Project (ISSPP), we were able to do so, because the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish case studies were part of an international project, including eight educational systems. In the project we were interested in finding out how school leaders influence the teaching and learning in their schools. We conducted case studies based on visits to 4–5 schools in each educational system. We observed and interviewed stakeholders in 2003–2004 and returned to the same schools after 5 years to find out if and how the school leaders had been able to sustain *success*. In the ISSPP we cross-analysed our case studies, looking for characteristics in principals' behaviour that could shed light on which leadership characteristics explained successful student outcomes.

Taking the ISSPP as our starting point, we knew that there are differences between the Nordic situation and the situation in the UK and the USA. We were reminded of this as the criteria for choosing case schools were that they had improved their score on the national league table in the past 3–4 years, that they had good inspection reports and that the school leaders were considered successful by their peers. The first two criteria were easily fulfilled in the UK and the USA, where they have national databases for this information. This was not the case in Denmark,

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_10, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

Norway and Sweden, though so we had to go different ways in identifying case schools.

For this chapter our guiding research questions are as follows:

- What has characterised recent changes in the external context of school leadership?
- How is leadership reflected and enacted in practice in order to respond to changing external and internal expectations?

The major part of the analysis in this chapter was built on the comparisons we made at those stages (Moos et al. 2011). Thus, they are robust foundations for the comparison between Denmark, Norway and Sweden, finding similarities and differences in the way school leaders act and think. Being part of the international project, we are also able to compare the Scandinavian findings with the non-Nordic education systems, and therefore, we are able to discuss if there is a uniquely Nordic model of school leadership.

10.2 Theoretical Perspectives

In our analysis we draw on different theoretical perspectives. Ideas about distributed leadership form the basis for our study of school leadership. Distributed leadership can, however, take many forms. We have chosen to build on the work of Spillane and colleagues and the notion that school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, encompassing both the school's social and situational contexts (Spillane et al. 2001; Spillane and Orlina 2005). This perspective implies a focus on leadership tasks and functions and on how these are distributed among both positional and informal leaders within the school organisation. Such tasks and functions would typically include identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination and use of the social, material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for teaching and learning processes (Spillane et al. 2001; Spillane and Orlina 2005). As such, this also allows us to consider the managerial dimensions of leadership involved in maintaining the conditions necessary to help an organisation achieve current goals (Cuban 2001). At the same time, interactions between leaders and other agents are brought to the forefront. Leadership is therefore seen as 'an influencing relation' between leaders and followers that takes place in situations (Spillane and Orlina 2005; Woods 2004; Woods et al. 2004). This understanding takes into account that the principal cannot be sufficiently informed to make all decisions in a school nor can she/he be present in all places and situations where decisions need to be made. In this way we consider the influence of leadership twofold: making the decisions and, at the same time, producing the premises for decision-making of followers (sense-making or setting the scene) (Moos 2009).

Since recent changes in all three countries imply a movement from input-oriented towards output-oriented school governing, we have chosen emerging practices of

accountability as the focal point for our analysis. Researchers have developed different typologies for describing how different key actors in the school system are held to account. The typologies have been developed over time, and as such, they differ according to how accountability is defined. Some researchers regard accountability as systems, while others describe accountability in terms of different forms, processes or social practices. While older typologies seem to focus on institutionalised accountability related to different spheres and roles in a hierarchy, more recent versions express how forms of accountability are included in what is referred to as performance management and directed towards individuals (cf. Ozga 2009). We have chosen to define accountability as the management of diverse expectations generated within and outside the organisation (cf. Romzek and Dubnick 1987). These expectations differ according to direction, clarity and consequences and imply processes where the distribution of different functions, tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined. The expectations can sometimes be contradicting, and the degree of authority and control of key actors, such as school leaders, can differ. In order to differentiate between different types of expectations for our analysis, we have been inspired by the work of Moos (2003), Firestone and Shipps (2005) and Sinclair (1995).

The first category is managerial expectations and the extent to which they have changed at the national and local levels, as interpreted in acts, regulations, policy documents, evaluation procedures, official standards and criteria for success and accountability practices. This can also be linked to increasing demands from the marketplace: competition between schools and schools' financial situations. In Denmark and Sweden, we have seen that free choice of school has led to increased competition among schools. In Norway there are very few private schools.

The second category relates to expectations of the public – of the local community and parents – and to what degree these have changed in the course of the project. In our case stories, local political and community expectations are more important than national political expectations.

The third accountability category is professional expectations. This category refers to the how school leaders believe they best meet the needs of pupils, staff and the school organisation; we compare our data on the subject from the first and second rounds of data gathering. Closely linked to this are possible changes in cultural and ethical considerations with respect to the needs of the children and adults affiliated to the schools and school leaders' understanding of the societal aims and purposes of education.

The different types of expectations relate to different logics, which emphasise societal concerns, political pressures, bureaucratic concerns, top-down management, responses to market dynamics, professional responsibility and ethical principles. These logics can exist in combination or parallel to each other, and they can easily conflict (cf. Firestone and Shipps). If we look at the relationships between the different categories, they are linked to different areas. For instance, responses to political, managerial and public accountability are more likely to be linked to external accountability dynamics, while professional expectations often relate to school internal processes. However, schools seem to vary in their configuration of the

elements that comprise their internal processes, e.g. teachers' sense of work responsibility; the collective expectations of staff, school leaders and parents; and the organisational rules, incentives and processes that encourage or compel external as well as internal accountability practices.

10.3 Changes in the External Context of School Leadership

In the UK, the USA, Australia and Canada, school governing structures and processes have changed markedly since the early 1980s, and Denmark, Sweden and Norway have experienced considerable changes since the early 1990s. These developments were influenced by new public management (NPM) reforms, which can best be described as an overarching set of principles that are being played out in various ways in different countries (Hood 1991, 2007; Johansson and Lundberg 2002; Moos 2009). In general, this set of principles accentuates a focus on flat and flexible organisational structures, hands-on professional management, evaluating performance according to explicit standards, flexible structures and management by objectives and results (Heinrich 2005; Olsen 2002; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Rhodes 1999). In contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries, NPM reforms in Scandinavian countries have been characterised as *modernisers* rather than *marketisers* (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). This means that the reforms followed managerial and user-responsive strategies rather than competition and marketisation strategies. In the field of education, these reforms involved a decentralisation of finances and administration from states to local authorities or institutions: a powerful tool for making the education systems more user-responsive, more efficient and cost-effective. However, decentralisation was also seen as a governing strategy, which provided greater opportunities for active participation at the local level and thereby strengthened democracy (cf. Karlsen 1993).

However, this decentralisation trend in the 1990s has been coupled with more central regulation, establishing systems for evaluation and monitoring educational quality. In the Scandinavian countries, these developments have taken some time, but they were speeded up by the first and especially the second PISA reports. In Norway standardised testing was introduced for the first time in 2004 (in the fifth and eight forms) and a national quality assessment system in 2005. Because the evaluation of the standardised tests showed that the quality of these tests was inadequate, they were improved and introduced again in 2007. Since 2006 there have been nationally initiated projects, focusing on developing standards which are referred to as local indicators of goal achievement. In Sweden the right-wing alliance government has increased the number of national tests and compares Swedish results with the international PISA results. The government has also introduced a control agency, the Swedish School Inspectorate, which is still trying to find its place as a control agency. In 2006 Denmark decided to introduce national tests in all forms. There is no inspection.

Moreover, in all three countries, curricula and standards for student achievement are predominantly developed at a central level and observe cross-national frameworks, e.g. the European Framework. These curricula can be characterised as competency-oriented, as they emphasise the development of basic competencies in literacy, numeracy and science (Karseth and Sivesind 2009; Sivesind and Bachmann 2008). This makes it easier to develop standards which can be used to assess and compare student achievements nationally and internationally (Moos 2006).

The fact that the schools in these three countries now have different types of information and results, which can indicate the degree of success, provides a foundation for new emerging accountability practices. In Denmark and Norway, the municipalities, as *school owners*, are in charge of quality development in schools. In general there is a strong focus on reporting to the municipalities, and the schools' results on the standardised tests represent a powerful means for holding school leaders accountable. The extent to which the schools' results are linked to consequences in terms of soft accountability mechanisms differs from municipality to municipality.

Due to increased national output governing of schools, the three Scandinavian countries are tightening the couplings between state and school. In Denmark and Sweden, the major logics, bureaucratic and marketplace accountabilities, make up the basis for all political regimes and thus for the isomorphic development of national governance. The carriers of these developments are dominant political discourses of *competition of the knowledge economies*, effectiveness and *back to basics* and social technologies, like international comparisons, benchmarking, rankings, league tables and contracts. In Denmark the dominant political discourse is changing from traditional democratic *Bildung* to effective *back-to-basics* schooling, i.e. more focus on national level goals and accountability (tests, quality reports, student plans). The couplings between national, local and school levels have changed, so that finances and day-to-day business have been loosened, and goals and evaluations of student outcomes have been tightened.

In Sweden the quality of schools is also a very central element on the policy agenda. The right-wing alliance government is after 7 years still working on improving student outcomes. There is much more focus on international comparisons and measurement, and there is an intense debate over which methods should be used. A state school inspection has been introduced for improvement, via quality control and new national goals, and principal and teacher educations are being implemented. In addition, a new school law was introduced in 2011. In the first evaluation, a principal characterised the implementation process as follows: 'It is like building a roundabout in high traffic!' The process is still running, and the role of the principal has been strengthen so much that we can say it is now an entirely new role.

In Norway there is also increased focus on monitoring student achievements on national, municipal as well as school levels (Skedsmo and Hopfenbeck forthcoming). The policy discourse centres on using student outcomes to improve learning, and elements such as monitoring, control and accountability are concealed (Skedsmo 2011).

10.4 Leadership Functions in the Schools: Responding to External Expectations

Denmark: School leadership can be described as a translation of external expectations into internal direction, and it is often more reactive than proactive. The leadership practice has not changed in the last 5 years, but there is a growing attention to the external demands following the growing national goal-setting and accountability demands. The trend of governments tightening their couplings with schools through the use of more detailed and strict social technologies like testing, comparisons, rankings and benchmarking is producing results in that most of the school leaders are more focused on the effectiveness and *back-to-basics* trends. At the same time, they are trying not to neglect or let teachers neglect the comprehensive, holistic goals.

Norway: In the initial study, we found that school leaders were engaged in motivating teachers according to the aims formulated in the national curricula and priorities set by policymakers and administrators. They were personalising institutional goals and building trust between themselves and teachers. In the three Norwegian schools, this focus has been maintained. However, we found greater awareness of student outcomes in terms of achievements on the standardised tests. In the interviews the school leaders at Brage and Furuheia compared the results of their schools over the last years, and they knew how their schools performed compared to other schools in the municipality and the national average. They accentuated the importance of helping students to live up to their potential. Both schools are recognised in their local community for taking very good care of students with special needs, and this is the reason why many parents want their children to go to these schools.

There is no standardised testing in upper secondary school in Norway. However, compared to the interview 5 years ago, the school leader at Ospelia upper secondary school is also more aware of quality indicators such as dropout rates and the results of the school with respect to the school leaving examination and the craft certificate. During the past 5 years, the number of students characterised by weak academic results and low school motivation has increased. This is due to changes in mobility in this region and recruitment procedures which are based on the students' marks from lower secondary school. The changes have led to greater competition between schools and to nonadmission of students with poor academic results and a history of low school motivation; these students thus have to commute. When the school leader talks about the success of the school in the last years, he emphasises the positive feedback from the school administration at the county level on the school's efforts and accomplishments regarding this group of students.

In spite of greater awareness of school results and comparison with the results of other schools, it does not seem as if new output measures have led to any changes in the schools' practices. The school leaders' definition of success is the same as 5 years ago. All three school leaders are still working on providing a good education for all students according to their needs and abilities. The core values of the schools are also the same, as are the criteria for a good school: to see the whole student and

to get the best out of each individual. The school leaders do not report any changes in how they respond to external expectations, and the schools seem to be recognised for their efforts.

Sweden: The school leaders from our case studies who had been successful had left their positions 5 years later. Interestingly, the teachers in both schools did not accept the new incoming school leaders. The teachers, in both cases, had worked in self-governing teacher teams, and the *second-generation* school leaders had neglected their relations to these teams. Subsequently, teacher pressure made the teachers leave. *Third-generation* school leaders have now been appointed. The teachers have been important stakeholders in the recruitment process this time, and they think that they will be able to cooperate with these new leaders.

In both Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of managing through personal sense-making, setting the scene and the agenda (producing the premises) and in making connections to decision-making in the everlasting, ongoing interactions with teachers and in developing new and appropriate social technologies for those purposes, e.g. teams and annual plan. Therefore, there is more attention to social structures, technologies and school cultures.

10.5 Expectations of the Public: The Local Community and Parents

During the first school visits, we found that many schools were engaged in providing working relations with parents and the local community. Some of the school leaders analysed the context in which they were located to find out about expectations to schools and to establish alliances and partners in supportive and productive networks. They focus on building good relations with local educational authorities. In many cases this is done via professional organisations and unions and networks.

There is a growing tendency in most of the cases to looking at the local community (including parents) as separate from local school governing (municipal authorities) and very much so from national governing processes. In many of the case schools, there is an increased focus on cooperation with parents. At the same time, the school leaders in more cases are seen as integrated partners in loc.l governance (as part of the authority) in a move to reduce and weaken the power of local authorities and leave more decisions/forms of influence to national authorities. Summaries of the case-by-case accounts are more detailed and diverse:

Denmark: Parents have become a focus for school leaders. In one school this was a result of a temporary dive in student results; in another it was a result of the potential risk of having to merge with another school. There is more focus on collaboration with parents for two reasons: their involvement in re-culturing the school and in the fight against school mergers. The relations to local authorities have changed in some places from being based on dialogue to being based on written principles, procedures and contracts.

Norway: In the Norwegian case schools, parents are required to show an interest in the schoolwork of their children. However, the extent to which the Norwegian case schools collaborate with the parents seems to depend on the challenges the schools are facing and, thereby, the need to collaborate. One of the school leaders has continued his strategy to involve parents as little as possible in school activities. This is due to differences in their socioeconomic backgrounds and the fact that involvement of the parents will accentuate the same differences between the students. At Furuheia the school leader has purposefully involved the parents in solving discipline problems, which was a big problem for the school a couple of years ago. To be able to solve these problems, the school needed to collaborate extensively with the parents. At Ospelia upper secondary school, the students are older, and therefore, collaboration with parents is not that emphasised. However, the school leader has continued his work on increasing student participation, and the school has a well-functioning student council, which meets regularly with the school leader. As mentioned earlier, the school leader had very positive experiences of hiring a social counsellor to take care of students with extra needs. In addition, this school, as an upper secondary school that offers vocational training, collaborates extensively with local companies and industry. Compared to the situation 5 years ago, the school has established partnerships to the benefit of the students as well as the companies.

Sweden: Parents want their children to have a pleasant time, both in school and in their spare time. They also want their children to focus on getting good marks, so that they can go on to the next school level, but not necessarily very high marks. The success of schools is often measured according to local community expectations with less weight given to national expectations. This causes some tensions in schools. Both schools have very good community relations and are supported by the parents. The parents really like that no child is left behind, even if it means that the schools have not yet succeeded in both this broad commitment and in producing excellent marks.

At the second visit, most case schools had expanded their community work considerably, some in relation to parents and others in relation to new partner institutions and enterprises. In most places there are clear indications of a move towards systems leadership for many reasons: schools are looking for support from parents; they are forming partnerships with social and cultural institutions that can support schools with challenges which are not easily, if at all, met within schools; some schools are forming partnerships with institutions and enterprises in order to facilitate a broader learning area for their students; and then, some schools are networking with authorities and policymakers at several levels to try to influence the context and expectations of their school.

10.6 Responding to Internal Expectations

In the first round of visits, we found, in accordance with other research, that an important leadership criterion for student success is the school leaders' attention to the core tasks of the school: teachers' practice in the classroom, interactions

between teachers and students and students' peer relations. The school leaders set and continuously raised the standards and expectations and produced improvement plans, and they put much effort into providing instructional support. Moreover, they were engaged in promoting reflection and modelling desired commitment, values, norms and practices. They continuously worked on building capacities that fit with the new demands and expectations of policymakers, parents and students, and many places constantly struggled to build persistence for challenging circumstances.

In the meantime this work had been continued. Thus, in all schools there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of leading through personal sense-making, setting the scene and the agenda and producing the premises for decision-making, focusing on interactions with teachers. More attention is paid to the social structures, technologies and cultures of the schools in order to achieve collective aims. Important means for school leaders to influence this seem to be establishing team structures, supporting the teamwork of teachers, making annual plans, etc., to clarify the priorities of the school and set the direction.

10.7 Increased Focus on Student Outcomes

Denmark: The shift in external expectations has had an impact on the inner life of schools. The need to measure outcomes and the more detailed national goals, especially with respect to literacy and numeracy, have brought more attention to these curriculum areas and less to cross-curricular activities. More specialists, like reading consultants, are brought into schools in order to support teachers. School leaders put more weight on new social technologies like teachers' and teams' annual plans and student plans, thereby making expectations explicit. Teacher teams and networks are strengthened.

Norway: As mentioned earlier, in the three Norwegian schools, there is a greater awareness of student achievements. Thus, when the school leaders and the teachers talk about the level of achievement among the students, they relate this to the abilities of the students, their engagement in their own learning processes and how the schools can help them reach their potential. The importance of a good social environment is accentuated and provides a foundation for high-quality teaching and learning processes. In order to enhance student learning, several structural changes have been implemented, such as the use of screening tests to document the level of student achievement in order to meet the needs of the students, increased collaboration in teacher teams and hiring nonteaching staff to take care of the social environment and support students.

Sweden: The *first-generation* school leaders focused on student outcomes and teacher collaboration and thus produced good results and a good climate, while the *second-generation* was more negligent of both tasks and tried to ride on the positive culture, a leadership approach that was not successful in either school. The *third-generation* has begun their regime with focusing on student outcomes. This might become successful if they are also able to collaborate with the teachers.

The case stories demonstrate the changes in school contexts and expectations to schools. The pressure of national aims, performance measurement and accountability has increased considerably in the Scandinavian countries. The school leaders pay more attention to student outcomes, especially when it comes to basic competencies. In order to respond to new expectations, they focus on strengthening the internal capacity of their schools in ways that support student learning in those areas.

10.8 Trust

During the first visits, we found that school leaders were engaged in stimulating teachers intellectually, promoting reflection and modelling desired commitment, values, norms and practices. There was a continuous work on building capacities that could fit the new demands and expectations of policymakers, parents and students, and there was in many places a constant struggle to build persistence for challenging circumstances. During the second visits, we found the following:

Denmark: School leaders often lead in indirect ways by setting the agenda or the scene. Most teachers are working in self-governing teacher teams with a high degree of responsibility and autonomy, but also with new forms of internal accountability. School leaders and leadership teams try to strike a balance between *leading at a distance* and being *at hand* and supportive to teachers.

Norway: With respect to leadership strategies, the school leaders in all three schools say that they express their expectations of teachers and students more explicitly and they observe lessons more frequently, which the teachers support.

Sweden: The successful school leaders who left focused a lot on pedagogical leadership through collaboration with and trust in teacher and teacher teams. The two intermediate school leaders neglected this close collaboration with staff. The third school leaders say they will focus on quality in teaching and collaboration. The question is if the form of this collaboration will please the teachers and the teacher teams. If they are not pleased, we will probably see two more principals leave their positions. And our lesson is that strong teacher cultures are important for principals' chances of success.

It seems to be a common feature of all case schools that both school leaders and teachers insist that teaching is not a technical, instrumental activity but is deep down a matter of relations, interactions, communication and making sense of oneself, one's relations to other people and to the outer world.

In some cases it has become more evident that there is a focus on building and sustaining trust between teachers and school leaders. In some instances the basis for trust is now clarified to a much greater extent than previously. School leaders can trust teachers to be responsible and hard-working.

10.9 Distribution

More work remains to be done with regard to building teacher teams, distributing authority from school leaders and middle leaders to teacher teams and individual teachers. At the same time, there is a growing closeness between school leaders and teachers in professional and personal relations of trust, support and care and, perhaps most importantly, a clear direction and expectations.

During the first visits, school leaders were encouraging collaborative decision-making, teamwork and distributed leadership in a collective culture and in structures that supported collaboration. Participation in decision-making, premise production and connections were part of a safe and secure environment for teachers. During the latest visits to the case schools, we found the following:

Denmark: Leadership teams as well as teacher teams are pivotal features of schools. School leaders' relations to individual teachers, teams and the whole staff are multilayered and often take place in an intricate mix of meetings. Contracts between school leader and teacher teams and individual teachers are important tools for leading.

Norway: In all schools teacher teams have been established. Collaboration and shared leadership responsibility can be seen as part of a process of strengthening the internal capacity in order to respond to new expectations. One of the schools has experienced a big turnover due to retirements and has subsequently hired many young teachers. The new teachers have introduced more extensive collaboration, because they are used to this way of working in their teacher education.

Sweden: The teacher teams are central to the schools. They focus on creating a good above average, but not excellent, school. The school leaders' role is to work with the organisation of the school and discuss quality questions with the teachers, parents and students.

The organisations of many case schools are becoming team-based networks or webs. Leadership is being distributed from the school leader to leadership teams and further on to teacher teams.

On the one hand, this trend seems to leave teachers more room for manoeuvre, individually and in teams; on the other hand, school leaders develop new ways of making their influence noticeable through different forms of sense-making and through the use of new social technologies like annual plans, team meetings with the management and other regular meetings. In many cases, middle leaders, specialists, are brought in to support teachers.

Generally, there seems to be a trend – occurring at different paces and to different extents – towards recognising that teachers must be self-governing (Foucault 1991), i.e. that they are given room for manoeuvre, followed by strict standards and demands for accountability. School leaders are aware that teachers need to receive support and care in order to manage their choices and room for manoeuvre, thus creating a safe and secure working environment.

10.10 Professional Expectations

In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there now seems to be more focus on student outcomes, and areas such as basic competencies are prioritised. These are concerned with the broader aims of education, emphasising democracy and *Bildung*.

Denmark: Traditionally the vision of comprehensive democratic *Bildung*, which encompasses both subject matter and personal and social competencies, is still strong, but now this approach is being challenged, and there is much more focus on basic literacy and numeracy. The school leaders worry that they may be unable to sustain this vision.

Norway: The schools focus on basic competencies as well as taking care of key issues related to equity and social justice. The standardised testing and increased monitoring of students' progress are not seen as a problem. On the contrary, it can help schools to focus. None of the school leaders experience external accountability pressure from their superiors at the municipal level or from parents. They rather experience support and recognition because of their reputation of taking good care of students with special needs.

Sweden: The case schools' focus is both on social goals and academic knowledge. Both schools are producing marks above the Swedish average, but could do even better if they focused more on academic knowledge. However, the parents are satisfied with a school that is above the Swedish average.

10.11 Discussion and Summing-Up

Looking at the findings from the case schools in the three countries, three trends especially appear to be common features. The first trend is the way school leaders translate and mediate external expectations to fit internal conceptions.

Translation of external expectations: External stakeholders (government, municipality, parents, etc.) often have a set of legitimate, although often contradictory, expectations of schools. The school leaders seem to take on the responsibility of *mediators*, which means that they translate the expectations into a language and a practice that are acceptable and legitimate to the teachers and other school staff. This is part of the process of school leaders' setting a direction for the school and how they compel a sense of purpose, develop a shared vision and help build consensus for aims and strategies for achieving these aims.

Moreover, the principals in the case schools prioritise developing internal capacity as a strategy for responding to external expectations. For the principals this implies creating suitable structures and nourishing cultures that support internal capacity building. In doing this, all the principals seem to take the needs of the students as a point of departure.

Comparing the Nordic reactions to external expectation with the UK-US reactions in the ISSPP project (Moos et al. 2008), we see an important difference. While the

Nordic school leaders mobilise teachers and middle leaders, there is a strong tendency in the UK and the USA that school leaders take over the command. One example is the privatisation of a struggling school. The school leader gets the powers of a CEO and starts letting a lot of the teachers go (Jacobson et al. 2011). Generally, the UK-US school leaders were more compliant with national standards and high-stakes accountability systems. Those patterns are in line with the traditional norms and values described in the Prelude.

Leading the environments: All the schools are profoundly dependent on their environments, be they political, administrative, community, professional, cultural or other. On the one hand, the principals seem to focus on understanding and interpreting signals and expectations of many stakeholders. On the other hand, they have to be able to communicate and legitimate school priorities and practices in relation to the results achieved to relevant stakeholders (Weick 2001).

We can also conclude from our analysis that both principal leadership and student outcomes can be characterised and described as continuously successful over 5 ears. Sustainability is, according to the United Nations' Brundtland Commission, 'the capacity of organizations to self-renew and, if applied to schools, underlines the importance of ordering institutions in ways that are sustainable in the long term' (United Nations 1987). This means that we have to shift our understanding of school development – and thus of successful school leaders – from the work of individuals towards a more organisational, collaborative understanding: from leader and manager towards leadership. This is not news to the school leaders in our case schools, but it has been underscored in most schools in the past 5 years (Moos et al. 2011).

Again, building on the Brundtland Commission, we must meet 'the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (United Nations 1987). We can focus on the interdependencies between schools and their present and future contexts. The school leaders in our cases know that their schools are placed in and are part of local communities in every respect: culture, social circumstances, economy, history, caring for past and future generations, etc.

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Chapter 11
Local Decisions Under Central Watch: A Nordic Quality Assurance System

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11.1 Quality Assurance

After the Second World War, across all sectors of public welfare services, significant powers and authorities were delegated from state level to local levels simply in order to mobilise local entrepreneurship and resources in the construction phase of the Nordic welfare state model (Fimreite and Lægreid 2005; Montin and Amnå 2000).

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_11,

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Especially education tasks and responsibilities have been decentralised from state level to municipal level over the past 20 years in the Nordic countries, that is, school districts and the school level, and as a consequence of this, the national political level has perceived a need for the legislators and ministry to strengthen the control of the levels below in new ways, not merely via regulations. Thus, new forms of quality assurance have been created, and, for example, in Sweden a new inspection agency has also been developed and implemented in the governance structures. Quality assurance can in its best form describe a fruitful relation between state, municipalities and schools. The government formulates proposals for the parliament to legislate and return to the government for implementation. Implementation of legislation is done by state agencies, which issue regulations and establish the government's educational agenda.

Whenever the education system is decentralised, the balance between professional and political powers on all levels of the system is changed or challenged. The responsibility and professional ability of principals and teachers are enhanced, but responsibility and authority do not always go hand in hand, and at the same time, evaluation becomes an important instrument for governing both on local and national levels (Lundgren 1990).

The national level sets out the frames and aims of education and an overarching template for the quality reports. The municipal level develops the frames and aims and also the template for the report in line with local policies. Schools write reports every year, and the documents about quality are part of a school's self-evaluation of the results for the year and constitute a basis for formulating the aims for the next year. The combination of fixed issues and broader issues of school choice with self-evaluation procedures aims at producing a strong sense of responsibility and accountability.

The sense of accountability is placed at the school level, even if it can be argued that the responsible level is the school board. In the case of the quality report, school leaders are at the lower end in relation to the school district management, while the superintendent is in the lower end of the contact with the ministry and very often also with superiors within the municipal hierarchy.

The past decades have seen the Nordic education systems move towards a more decentralised education system. In this chapter, we compare recent political initiatives in order to reassert central command through national quality control in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. In this chapter, we focus on three dimensions: (1) the national standards, (2) the procedures used for determining whether the standards have been met and (3) how national actors might intervene in loc.l leadership if the standards are deemed unfulfilled. By comparing four Nordic countries according to these dimensions, we will show that the Nordic states have all taken steps to reinforce hierarchical relations between the central and the local levels, but also that there is notable cross-country variation in the scope and form of the strategies used.

11.2 Political Initiatives for National Quality Control in Denmark

11.2.1 School Inspector in a Welfare System

It is necessary to go back half a century to understand the current situation of quality control in Danish schools. It is also necessary to look at how politicians and administrators have issued legislation and produced social technologies to describe aims of schooling and how they have created systems and discourses of quality control. It is interesting to see how political decisions on school content and curricula are moved from local levels to national levels and to school leadership. The schools used to be national-municipal schools; the government was in charge of the economy (distributing funds to schools according to number of students, etc.) and staff management (teachers were employed by the ministry). A very detailed set of regulations was issued.

The first Act on the *Folkeskole* (primary and lower secondary school) following the Second World War was issued in 1958 (Ministry of Education 1958). It was only agreed on in parliament after several years of public discussion, and it contained general regulations and very short statements on the aims of the subjects to be taught. Two years later, the ministry published a number of teaching to support municipal school districts to produce fixed curricula. The idea was that the government issued the general frame and aim of education, and local authorities at municipal level produced curricula. Most municipalities elevated the guides to municipal curricula. A regulation of national final examinations was issued at the same time with the title: Final examinations. Standards and demands (1961). This is an excellent example of an early social technology produced by the political-administrative system, because it describes in more detail general expectations to subject, themes and levels in each and every subject matter. This part was not up for local negotiations and decisions, but of course it was as always up for practical interpretations in everyday teaching and school life, with very little or no national control.

At the beginning of the welfare state construction process, it was a political-cultural premise that the government issued general frames and aims and left much to local, municipal level interpretation. The details in aims and also in the control of processes and outcomes were left to local agencies, as there was only one national set of tests, the final examinations. The practical interpretation was formally left to the municipal level, but in real school life, much of it was left to teachers. The general understanding was that teachers had much freedom of interpretation, called *freedom of methods*. Based on professional discretion and local knowledge of pupils' motivation and proficiency, local culture, practical frames and parents' interests, they were to make wise decisions on how, when and what to teach. The school leader, entitled the *school inspectors*, only interfered if there had been complaints from

students or parents, because her/his major responsibility was to see to it that regulations were acted upon, hence the title.

The next legislation on schools was issued in 1975 (Ministry of Education 1975). This act again issued the frame and general aim and left it to municipalities to write the curricula. At this point, many municipalities initiated long and intensive work on producing local guides. Parent and student organisations, teachers and politicians were involved in this work. The final examinations were adjusted to fit the new organisation of education, but nothing much was changed in the relations between national and local levels.

11.2.2 Towards a School Leader in a Competitive System

Relations between ministry and municipalities and schools changed at the beginning of the 1990s. It was called a decentralisation of municipalities, because the responsibility for finances and staff was given to the municipalities that could decide to pass it on to the individual schools.

From the beginning of the 2000s, the Ministry of Education has taken many initiatives, intended to give the national level more power and responsibility. The subject matter aims that used to be very broad and loose at this level were supplemented with *clear aims* that were developed into *shared aims* from 2006 onwards (Ministry of Education 2009b). These regulations were issued with inspiration from the English national curriculum, which is extremely detailed (Steffensen 2005, 8), and it was a first in Danish educational governance: detailed, national aims for the age levels.

Parallel to these initiatives, the minister for education called upon the OECD to undertake a review of the Danish *Folkeskole* (Mortimer et al. 2004). On the basis of a short report on the state of the art of the schooling system and 2 weeks' interviews with numerous stakeholders, the review group produced their recommendations. One central recommendation was that a *culture of evaluation* needed to be developed. The minister immediately took action and initiated a legislative process in 2006 that would multiply the number of national tests from one, the final examination, to one national test per school year.

The OECD is also of pivotal importance, when looking at the most powerful social technology in education: the international test and comparison (e.g. PISA). Denmark has participated right from the beginning, and politicians put a lot of prestige into the results. The then liberal prime minister declared in 2011 that he wanted Danish education to be among the top five countries in PISA by 2015.

At the same time, two more initiatives were taken. Schools were asked to write individual student plans (Ministry of Education 2009a): plans for each student's progress over a year in each subject. The *quality report* (Education 2007) is also a social technology that pulls decision-making or parts of decision-making from the local level to the central, national level. The act prescribes the procedure of self-evaluation: from school to superintendent to ministry (Moos 2013 forthcoming).

Another OECD report had some influence on the Danish educational discourse: the examiners' report on Danish educational research and dissemination (OECD 2004). In line with the generic OECD discourse of that time, the report found that teachers did not make use of educational research and evidence, like PISA. The report was read carefully by ministries, which found that it was time to introduce into educational research and education concepts like *evidence-based practice*, *best practice*, *clearinghouses* and more international tests (Ministry of Education and Science 2005; Moos 2006).

A national agency, the Council for Evaluation and Quality Control, replaced in 2006 the Basic School Council, signalling a shift in interest towards the contemporary neoliberal focus on evaluation and quality control. Both of those councils were advisory with no management power. For a short period of time, there was a semi-autonomous Danish School Agency with managerial and monitoring functions. In 2011 it was, however, merged into the ministry because of economic cutbacks in the ministry.

Since the so-called decentralisation in 1992, which made each school more self-governing and more accountable, there has been a growing recognition of the need to have a manager of schools or a leader, who takes the blame *at the end of the day*. Municipal and national authorities need to know who they can address. Aided by the OECD report on school leadership (Pont et al. 2008) and other sources of inspiration, there is a growing attention to the need to also have school leaders lead education in schools. In relation to the contemporary social technologies – PISA, quality report, student plan, shared aims – school leadership is in high demand. School leaders need to be very active in monitoring, setting goals and controlling teachers and education, making use of the evidence and the data from the tests. The dominant discourse on school leadership does not often ask for school leaders to be partners in a dialogue with teachers and students.

The influences from transnational agencies are so very flagrantly manifested in the case of Danish educational politics.

11.3 The Finnish System of Quality Assurance

11.3.1 From a Centralised to a Decentralised Society

In the same way as the other Nordic countries, Finland experienced an exhaustive and extensive transition from a centralised society to a decentralised one at the end of the twentieth century. Before that, however, the state developed its norm-based, system-oriented and centralised steering apparatus to the maximum to ensure the successful implementation of the education reforms in the 1970s (Risku 2011). There was inclusive legislation, extensive administration at the national, provincial and local levels and abundant administrative staff to make sure, supervise and report that the reforms were implemented as the state had planned (Isosomppi 1996;

Kivinen 1988; Lapiolahti 2007; Lyytinen and Lukkarinen 2010; Nikki 2001; Sarjala 1982; Varjo 2007).

While the implementation was being conducted, the Finnish society changed fundamentally. As a result of the changes, new legislation has been passed since the 1980s to dismantle the centralised governance and to implement a decentralised system (Kuikka 1992; Peltonen 2002). The relationship between the state and the municipalities has been completely rearranged. Today municipalities are the main providers of education services, possessing a constitutional autonomy on how to provide the services (Risku 2011). Superintendents, principals and teachers do not serve the state. They are recruited by the education providers and serve them to fulfil the goals set in legislation (Alava et al. 2012; Pennanen 2006; Souri 2009).

In 1983 the school and textbook inspections were abolished (Kupiainen et al. 2009; Lyytinen and Lukkarinen 2010; Nikki 2001). In 1985 the state ceased regulating the number of classes and class sizes in basic education (Laukkanen 1998; Souri 2009). Legislation from 1991 expunged task lists for educational officials in municipalities, and the 1993 Act abrogated the cost-based and earmarked government transfer system, making it index based (Souri 2009). From 1994 national core curricula have merely constituted common guidelines, leaving a lot of autonomy for municipalities and schools to draw up their own curricula (Aho et al. 2006; Kupiainen et al. 2009). In 1999 relative assessment in basic education was replaced by a criteria-based one (Risku 2011).

11.3.2 Evaluation of Education in the Decentralised System

The present evaluation system in education in Finland is based on legislation from 1998 (Acts 628–633), 2003 (Act 351) and 2009 (Act 558). According to the acts, the purpose of evaluation is to secure the execution of educational legislation, to support the development of education and to improve conditions for learning. The salient findings of evaluations are to be published.

The general framework for national evaluation of education is established by the Ministry of Education and Culture together with the Finnish Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and the National Board of Education. The framework consists of evaluation at the international, national, regional and local levels (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a, b; Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). The foci and objects of evaluation are based on the government platforms and five-year education and research plans (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012b).

There are presently three main actors responsible for carrying out the national evaluation of education. The Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council assist the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as education providers in conducting evaluation (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). The third main actor, the National Board of Education, is responsible for the national evaluation of learning outcomes. In addition, there are thematic evaluations by several other actors (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a).

During the planning period of 2012–2015, external national evaluations will focus on the realisation of equality, on productivity and economy and on welfare, employability and competitiveness effects. National evaluations on learning outcomes in basic education will concentrate on the ninth form and include national sample-based assessments on a wide sphere of subjects according to a systematic framework. In vocational education, there will be national sample-based assessments on 12 vocational upper secondary qualifications (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a). The learning outcomes of general upper secondary education are assessed by an independent Matriculation Examination Board. The matriculation examination assesses learning outcomes in practice in all theoretical subjects offered nationally and is conducted biannually in all upper secondary schools (Finnish Matriculation Examination 2012).

At the regional level, regional state administrative agencies are responsible for the evaluation of the accessibility of basic services. During the planning period of 2012–2015, there will be regional evaluations on the accessibility of basic and upper secondary education as well as on the accessibility of basic education in the arts (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a).

Legislation mandates all municipalities to evaluate their operations and all education providers to evaluate their education and its effect and to participate in external evaluations as stated in legislation (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012b). Education providers are responsible for evaluating their education in order to be able to develop their operations and to compare their evaluation results with national evaluation results (Kupiainen et al. 2009; Lapiolahti 2007). Local evaluation is to be based on local goals, which are derived from national objectives (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a). The Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities represents the municipalities in the national discussion and decision-making, also producing educational indicators (Hannus et al. 2010).

11.3.3 Leading Development of Education Through Evaluation in the Decentralised System

One can claim that there is quite a lot of evaluation on education in Finland. The evaluation does not confine itself to assessing learning outcomes, but relies on an extensive sphere of evaluation information. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for developing the education system, considering the quantitative foresight and the National Board of Education and the higher education institutions regarding the qualitative foresight (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012b). Municipalities and other education providers have the ultimate responsibility for the quality of their operations (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a, b).

The National Board of Education does not use lists based on school-specific average values, because they are considered to be uncertain. In addition, they do not often take into consideration the external context of the school, although it may have an essential effect on the learning outcomes. The National Board of Education wants to express its support to principals and teachers working in challenging

contexts and offer them information on the basis of which to develop their schools (Kuusela 2008).

International evaluations and assessments are used to position Finland in the global context and to identify national strengths and weaknesses. Finland also tries to take an active role in the development of international evaluations, so that they meet the needs of the Finnish education system (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2012a).

The state seems to support the development of local provisions of education through information and guidance rather than through legislation and funding (Kanervio and Risku 2009). An illustrative example is the quality criteria for basic education produced by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2010). It was designed to be a practical tool for the local evaluation and development of education. Each of its four quality cards for structures and seven for quality, as experienced by students, includes a description of the quality and its criteria and questions to both the education providers and schools with which to support evaluation and development. In the same way as national core curricula, the quality criteria for basic education does not prescribe, but steers local development, which is to be based on local contexts and goals derived from the national guidelines (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2010).

In addition, the quality criteria for basic education is a representative example of the dialogue with which the Finnish education system is developed. When the quality criteria for basic education was still a draft, the Finnish Association for Local and Regional Authorities compiled its own counterpart, developing the municipal-based education system (Juva et al. 2009). An intensive discourse was held, and the final quality criteria for basic education was a synthesis of the discourse (Hannus et al. 2010).

There is still a lot to do to improve the use of evaluation information to develop the Finnish education system. The national level has been criticised for not being able to take the changes in society and the everyday challenges of schools into consideration sufficiently. Thus, education policies and their goal settings may be based on theoretically ideal starting points, which do not correspond to the real situations of schools (Hannus et al. 2010). As one result, superintendents, principals and teachers often feel that they are in a crossfire between goals, expectations, needs and resources (Ahonen 2008; Kanervio and Risku 2009; Souri 2009; Suomen Rehtorit 2005; Vuohijoki 2006).

As the centralised governance system was dismantled, the personnel working in educational administration outside schools was cut by 40 % between 1990 and 1995. There seems to be autonomous, consistent and sustainable strategic thinking in the municipalities, but not enough personnel to lead the strategic development (Kanervio and Risku 2009). Local authorities seem to face significant challenges in developing their education services (see Löfström et al. 2005; Rajanen 2000). Evaluation information on education does not always realise itself in the best possible way as development at the local level (see Lapiolahti 2007; Svedlin 2003).

11.4 The Norwegian Quality System: Towards National Control and Authorised Empowerment

The Norwegian system of quality assurance is designed to contribute to quality development at all levels of compulsory education with a particular focus on basic skills in language, reading, writing, arithmetic and ICT (Eurydice 2006).

However, a national quality system of upwards reporting of cost indicators, national test data, evaluations and state supervision of schools refers in a wider sense to the *classic* tension between state regulation and local autonomy enjoyed by municipalities and schools (Baldersheim and Ståhlberg 1994; Lægreid and Christensen 2006; Cribb and Gewirtz 2007). In Norway there has been a strong legacy of central regulation of compulsory education that can be traced back to the eighteenth century, where centralisation and standardisation were regarded as necessary in order to build up the school system to provide equal opportunities for all students and ensure the quality of public schooling (Lundgren 1990; Karlsen 1993). In the period after the Second World War, the political administration of educational reforms was centralised from the top down, where decision-makers at the national level formulated and prioritised goals, made plans and provided resources, while schools at the local level were viewed as possible instruments for the attainment of political goals (Lundgren 1990). The development and growth of the Norwegian comprehensive education system represent a visible trend towards centralisation, in which the state's role in providing legislation, rules, regulations, finances and laying down curricula and syllabuses gradually became more influential (Lauglo 1990; Gundem 1993). From the 1980s and onwards, decentralisation was put forward as an important quality improvement strategy (Engeland 2000).

In certain ways, there have always been tensions between state government and local autonomy in the Norwegian education system (Karlsen 1993; Gundem 1993). Decisions about the geographical location and size of the schools as well as the content and organization have, particularly from a historical standpoint, caused disagreements and even conflicts (Karlsen 1993; Gundem 1993). Decentralisation as a governing strategy was seen as democratic, since it provided greater opportunities to active participation at the local level (Karlsen 1993). In many ways, it was looked upon as an alternative strategy, which implied redistributing authority to the local level. Still, rules and procedures decided upon centrally had to be followed, but this type of 'authorized empowerment' (Sears and Marshall 1990) intended to promote more local adaptations and priorities, for instance, in terms of resource allocation (Karlsen 1993). Decentralisation has also been pointed out as a way of reducing possible conflicts on the national level by distributing difficult tasks and decisions to the local level (Weiler 1990). Different efforts were initiated to increase local autonomy. For instance, the Local Government Act of 1969 expanded the authority of the local politicians and administration with respect to decisions about school districts and the geographical location of schools (Karlsen 1993). The changes in the central allocation of resources from 1986 also represented a decentralisation

strategy in terms of transferring block grants to the municipalities (Royal Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 1983–1984). This was seen as a necessary condition for local autonomy and more efficient resource allocation according to local needs (Karlsen 1993; Lauvdal 1996; Engeland 2000).

11.4.1 Soft Governance and Quality Assurance

Despite these attempts to decentralise tasks as well as the authority of the state, several studies show that the municipalities' influence on the schools was still limited (Askheim et al. 1992, 1993; Karlsen 1993; Engeland 2000). This was also the case after the Local Government Act of 1992 and the Act of Compulsory Education of 1993. Moreover, after the millennium shift, several visible trends of reregulation have emerged where seemingly 'the state strikes back' (Hudson 2007) in terms of indirect regulation, often labelled 'soft governance' (Moos 2009). In Norway, the increased use of assessment data and monitoring of results and accounting reports represent new ways of coordinating the education system in terms of quality control (Helgøy and Homm 2006). The tools in use, and thereby the foundation for quality improvement, are based on premises defined by national authorities (Skedsmo 2009). This type of central coordination can create a certain dependency, which establishes new patterns of interaction between the national and local authorities (see Ozga 2009). These developments may result in less local autonomy and increased bureaucratisation of the school system. At the same time, local autonomy is emphasised in the national policy discourse. White Paper No. 30 refers to the municipalities as *school owners* and defines broad areas of tasks and responsibilities of municipalities and schools related to quality improvement (Royal Ministry of Education and Research 2003–2004).

11.4.2 Assessment of Education

The introduction of the national quality assessment system in 2005 (NQAS), which is a central part of the quality assurance system, can be described as a shift in Norwegian educational policy from input regulations (legislation, organisation and funding) towards a more output-oriented policy (Helgøy and Homme 2007). Traditionally, public schooling was regulated through the Education Act and the national curriculum. These defined the overall purposes of public schooling as well as the individual subjects (Bachmann et al. 2008; Sivesind and Bachmann 2008). Furthermore, heavy investments in teacher education have also been an important strategy to ensure the quality of public schooling. Until the first OECD review of the Norwegian education system in 1988, there was a general assumption that the Norwegian education system met high standards. It was first and foremost the heavy investments in input factors that led to the public's belief that the quality of

the education system was good and that it assured equal opportunities for each and every student. However, in 1988, the OECD experts posed questions such as 'How do you know that this is actually achieved?' (OECD 1988–1989). Standardised tests were already then suggested as a possible way of gathering data about student achievements. The NQAS system comprises a mix of new and traditional tools. The national tests and the international comparative achievement studies, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, are new inventions. To some extent, screening tests and information material can also be defined as new tools, while formative and summative assessments of students in terms of local tests can be characterised as traditional. However, it should be noted that they have not, until recent years, been used to providing educational statistics for governing purposes. By function, the evaluation tools in the NQAS provide information about student achievement levels on an aggregated level, which can be used as a foundation for national policymaking and setting priorities for improvement strategies (Skedsmo 2009, 2011). As such, it represents strong means of indirect central regulation and coordination of the school system.

11.4.3 New Forms of Input Governing

Along with the establishment of the NQAS and the implementation of K06, the Directorate of Education and Training has launched several national programmes. One example is from words to deeds, which was launched in 2006 along with the latest reform, the Knowledge Promotion. The programme provides funding for development projects designed to improve 'the ability to evaluate outcomes and improve the school practice according to the aims in the Knowledge Promotion' (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training 2006). Other projects are launched which have the more direct aim of improving the students' basic competencies and teachers' assessment practices. The premises for the programme are centrally defined. Municipalities and schools can apply to participate in the programmes and in return receive economic support for their projects. Due to the ways in which these programmes are designed and managed, they represent a way for national authorities to steer school development with respect to expectations and requirements related to focus, the organization of the projects, the process and the outcomes (Skedsmo 2009).

11.4.4 Quality Reports

There are, however, some nuances that distinguish the Norwegian case from more tightly connected control systems (Hudson 2007). First, the municipalities and the counties enjoy some degrees of local autonomy in the design of the quality status report. There are several templates and tools available, linked to national register

databases, yet at the final stage the individual municipality decides itself about the components of the status report, in accordance with local priorities. Second, the operating level of the quality report system, the municipalities collect data from the school level and aggregate the sources into the report, which in the final round is submitted to the County Governor, located in each of the regional counties.

Third, the quality report then forms the basis of supervision practices, which ensure that the municipalities follow up on their responsibilities as *school owners* (Royal Ministry of Education and Research 2007–2008). Compared to inspection-driven systems found in many other Western democracies, this approach does not imply direct control of educational quality in terms of teaching and learning in schools. The state supervision follows a system revision approach and aims to reveal cases where legal regulations are not followed (Sivesind 2009). So far, state supervision has focused on areas such as the right to special education and adapted teaching, to secure a safe school environment and the establishment of quality management systems in the municipalities.

11.5 Sweden: Decentralisation or Deconcentration and Increased State Control

The past few decades has seen Sweden gain a reputation for having one of the most decentralised education systems in the world, as decision-making powers previously held by the parliament have been delegated to quasi-markets, local authorities, school leaders and other actors. There is still a presumed hierarchy at play, where professionals, bureaucrats and local politicians are expected to follow rules laid down at the national level. To this end, and somewhat less famously, the same period has also seen the enactment of an extensive accountability regime through the use of regulations, national school inspections, standardised testing, economic sanctions and other procedures. During the post-war period, formal accountability was mainly considered a concern for the political parties at the national level. The parliament represented the will of the people and would both claim credit for success and receive support, or not, in general elections for their political programmes and actions. As decision-making authority was unloaded from the parliament, however, so were demands for accountability. The need to balance increased separation of powers in education with increased centralised quality control was raised by a government-commissioned taskforce as early as the 1970s, and this balancing act has been central to much of the public sector reform that has followed. In short, although many decisions that were previously handled at the national level are now made locally, this should not be misunderstood as implying that the state no longer governs (Hudson 2007; Segerholm 2009; Rönnberg and Segerholm 2011).

Between 1945 and 1968, the Social Democratic Party governed Sweden with relatively few political constraints. Backed by a parliamentary majority and a strong economy, conditions were generally favourable for setting educational standards based on traditional social democratic values. The electoral landscape has changed considerably

since, however. Today coalition governments supported by parliamentary minorities and strained coffers are the norm rather than the exception, and the past 20 years have seen the Social Democratic Party increasingly challenged by liberal and conservative parties (Bergman and Bolin 2011). The increased ideological diversity has had a clear impact on the policy stream as well as the overall structure of education, and contemporary legislation and curricula now emphasise universalism, social equality, standardisation and central planning side by side with particularism, individual autonomy, differentiation and multilevel governance (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Hudson 2007). Decisions concerning areas such as administrative organisation, recruitment, resource allocation and school profiles are now to a considerable extent left to the discretion of politicians and professionals at the local level, although with the caveat that local objectives must not conflict with national objectives. In other areas, such as teacher and school leader education, health services, working environment and quality control, the state remains an active policymaker.

The Swedish government primarily relies on three central agencies to steer education: the School Inspectorate, the National Agency for Education and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools. The agencies have politically appointed directors, but they act independently in the sense that they are not part of any government ministry. In broad terms, the School Inspectorate is mostly tasked with oversight responsibilities, whereas the National Agency for Education and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools are mostly tasked with development and coordination responsibilities. For example, while the School Inspectorate performs site visits to individual municipalities and schools to determine whether conduct and ambitions are in accordance with national standards, the National Agency for Education oversees the development of curricula, national tests, grading criteria, legal prescriptions and teacher and school leader education while also coordinating various networks and arranging national conferences on current research, political developments and *best practices*. In practice, however, the division of labour between the agencies is more complex. The National Agency for Education is also expected to evaluate the efficacy of its instruments and oversee the analysis and collection of national statistics. The School Inspectorate, meanwhile, has increasingly adopted the role of consultant, following criticisms from local politicians and educational practitioners that too much focus was placed on areas in need of improvement while too little advice was offered on how to improve.

There is a variety of mechanisms through which the agencies and ruling political parties hope to learn about the characteristics and behaviour of the actors acting on their behalf, including procedures for screening, contract design, reporting requirements and monitoring.

Screening: Teacher and school leader training has historically been viewed as important means for securing the quality of education. The current system of university-level teacher education has its roots in the 1970s, but has been subjected to numerous reforms with the aim of keeping the skills and values of the profession aligned with the more general restructuring of education (Jarl and Rönnberg 2010). School leadership training was first introduced in the 1970s with a three-year programme

provided by the National Agency for Education. The programme was transferred to eight universities in 1993, but it would take until 2009 for it to include academic accreditation. The current programme is divided into three courses, each focusing on law, management by objectives and results and leadership. Teacher education is the de facto standard, but not legally mandatory for being hired as a teacher. In contrast, school principals are required to enrol in the school leader training programme within 1 year of being appointed. However, the new education act (2010, ch. 2, sections 13–24; ch. 3, section 16) has also introduced a teaching certificate required for marking students, which demands that teachers spend at least 1 year in service under mentorship and receive a written recommendation from the responsible school principal before being eligible.

Contract: *Design* Employer responsibilities represent one of the areas where the state has most clearly retreated. During the post-war period, wage negotiation was a matter between unions and representatives of the state. Despite union resistance, employer responsibilities were transferred to the municipalities in 1991 and wage negotiation moved to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. Municipalities and independent school owners now also hold the right to contract their own staff based on local requirements. However, while municipalities and independent school owners have the right to organise their own administration and establish voluntary functions such as the superintendent, other functions like the school principal are mandatory and entail regulated responsibilities and qualifications. In practice, part of the contract has thus already been formulated at the national level prior to any local negotiation.

Reporting Requirements: Sweden has a long tradition of self-evaluation within public services. Initially, the accelerated decentralisation of education in the 1990s was coupled with demands for locally developed school plans and yearly quality reports, detailing how the plans had been enacted. However, the plans came to remain unimplemented in many municipalities (Johansson and Lundberg 2002), and in contrast, the new education act (2010, ch. 4, sections 3–6) only demands that local quality assurance takes place and is documented; it does not specify how. Schools and municipalities are still legally obliged to provide information regarding results and finance when requested, however, and the National Agency for Education collects yearly statistics on a number of measures that are made available for public scrutiny. Additionally, schools must administer standardised national tests in English, mathematics, Swedish and Swedish as second language in the third, fifth and ninth form.

Monitoring: Through most of the twentieth century, national inspections were handled by a single central education agency tasked with both oversight and development responsibilities. The past two decades have seen the frequency and authority of inspections increased, however, and whereas previously typically performed after complaints inspections are now also performed for pre-emptive reasons. Current inspection duties are handled by the School Inspectorate through scheduled site visits to all municipalities and schools every 3 years and with written reports that are made available for public scrutiny (Rönnberg and Segerholm 2011). Additionally, Sweden makes frequent use of external third-party evaluators, perhaps most notably

through long-standing memberships in transnational collaborations such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, but also by financing research centres, doctoral students and other academic projects. Since the 1990s, attempts have also been made at promoting more decentralised forms of monitoring, that is, *fire alarms* as opposed to *police patrols* (see McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). One of the more politically prominent examples is the establishment of local school boards populated by parents and other stakeholders (Jarl 2004; Kristoffersson 2008), but the new education act also awards individual citizens expanded rights to appeal decisions made by local authorities and school leaders to the School Inspectorate.

If deviance was to be either discovered or anticipated, the state has the legal right to veto certain courses of action before they are pursued, to punish behaviour which it finds undesirable ex post as well as to de-authorise municipalities and independent school owners alike. For example, applications to establish independent schools are screened by the School Inspectorate and can be denied if deemed inadequate, but permission to operate may also be fully revoked once granted, following unsatisfactory inspection results. In contrast, the state has lost many of its direct veto powers in relation to the municipalities and has instead mainly relied on agenda control and earmarked allocation of resources. Until recently, the state could only impose economic sanctions by withholding resources that would otherwise have been delivered, but the new education act (2010, ch. 26, section 27) also awards the School Inspectorate right to fine independent school owners and municipalities. Moreover, the state does hold the right to seize full control of individual public schools for up to 6 months since the early 2000s (Swedish Education Act 2010, ch. 26, sections 17–18). It remains to be seen whether the latter is a credible threat, however, as, unlike the closing of independent schools, it is a right that has yet to be exercised.

11.6 Conclusions

When viewed as a group, Nordic national quality criteria tend to be less ideologically coherent than they once were, as social democracy has come to be increasingly challenged by liberalism and conservatism. Contemporary legislation and curricula draw on a mix of values and ideas, often emphasising universalism, social equality, standardisation and central planning side by side with competition, individual autonomy, differentiation and multilevel governance. The conduct and characteristics of local actors are evaluated through a variety of procedures, including screening, contract design, reporting requirements and monitoring, and the Nordic states employ both *soft* and *hard* social technologies to act on the judgement. There is generally a preference for steering schools indirectly – for example, through benchmarking, consultancy, guidelines and skill development – and the legal capacity of national agencies and politicians to intervene directly in the day-to-day work of teachers and school leaders remains for the most part limited. To the extent that the national evaluations are backed up by hard sanctions such as de-authorisation, economic

punishment and veto powers, they are typically directed at the top of the municipal political hierarchies rather than at individual schools or staff.

When compared, it is clear that Sweden has gone the furthest in reintroducing central command through the use of statutory regulations, oversight and sanctions, whereas Finland has largely abstained from developing a comprehensive system of national quality control. But in Finland, international evaluations and assessments are used to position the country in the global context and to identify national strengths and weaknesses. Finland also tries to take an active role in the development of international evaluations, so that they meet the needs of the Finnish education system. Denmark and Norway have positioned themselves in between the two extremes, both having developed national oversight systems with monitoring and reporting requirements, but so far without the addition of hard sanctions. In all four countries, the state remains an active player, however, and the future is likely to see further tensions in central-local relations. Educational policy is increasingly moved towards a governance space developed by experts and agents and depoliticised by use of standards and data.

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Chapter 12
The Nordic Superintendents' Leadership Roles: Cross-National Comparison

Elisabet Nihlfors, Olof Johansson, Lejf Moos, Jan Merok Paulsen, and Mika Risku

12.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on what happens when national education policies meet structures of implementation at the local school district and school levels. Focus is on the position that is subordinated to a municipal committee or board responsible for education. This position is here called superintendent, even if precise titles vary. By focusing on this position, its relation to the political board and the function as superior of principals in the school district, it will be possible to investigate some of the preconditions for learning in the school districts.

The chapter starts with a short description of the Nordic governance system and the superintendent's role in the chain of governance from municipal, regional, national and transnational levels. This position has, like the school leader position, been subject to restructuring and changes over the past decade, because of changes in governance focus, forms and meaning.

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_12, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

The findings address the power distribution between the state and the municipalities in national school governance across the Nordic countries. The underlying argument suggests that these system characteristics are crucial in determining the context for municipal superintendent leadership in practice. The conceptual model of the Nordic superintendent is discussed in the light of empirical data from all Nordic countries. The topics discussed in relation to the superintendent's position are municipal reconstruction and educational reforms.

Municipal reconstruction concerns the fact that Nordic municipalities have traditionally been strongly influenced by a so-called integration model, characterised by a relatively close fit between the state's central political level and the national administration and the political and administrative organisation of each municipality. This link is today challenged in different ways in the Nordic countries. Educational reform is the tool that political units use, when they want changes in the school sector. Decisions made by an elected political unit, national or local, constitute an authoritative decree of how the administration, in the case of education, wants the schools to act. Most of the time, reforms mean changes in some important aspects. They can be based on criticism of structures or different aspects of culture, or they can be linked to, for example, discussions about student outcomes. Thus, the use of educational reforms varies between the Nordic countries. The superintendent's role and work in this context can be of importance for pupil results.

12.2 The Superintendent in the Chain of Governance

The analytical perspective in this chapter focuses on the school superintendent and the political context in which this educational management and leadership role is embedded. We consider the superintendent a key agent in the chain of governance, where policy aims and objectives are transmitted from transnational, national and local levels to schools. This position has, like other school leadership positions, also been subject to restructuring and changes over the past decade, because of changes in governance focus, forms and meaning.

These are only a few of the reasons why several levels are interested in governing and keeping track of the activities of schools. Superintendents are positioned in hierarchical middle levels as the heads of municipal school administrations with links to schools and to both local politics and state politics and administration. The superintendent's function and role on the municipal level have changed over the last years. One obvious change is from governing to governance (Stoker 1998; Rhodes 1997); that is, the mediation processes have become much more central to creating successful school systems, and horizontal network connections play a more visible role in the decision-making chain. An overview of relations is given in Fig. 12.1 below.

Education is part of a bigger community: municipality, region, nation-state and transnational as well as international communities. Schools are important players in transnational as well as national politics; thus, they are included in chains of governance

Transnational/international level
Actors: European Parliament and Commission and interests groups; OECD international comparisons etc.
Tasks: inspire nation-states through the *open method of coordination*

National/state level
Actors: parliament, government, ministries
Tasks: determine overall objectives and framework conditions, implement legislation

Agency/regional level
Examples: county managers; citizens' legal protection and information guidance

Agreements on working conditions and wages
Actors: employers' and employees' associations/unions at all levels

Municipal/local level
Actors: municipal council, administration, superintendent
Tasks: responsible for school, determine local principles and framework conditions

Area/district level
Middle leader, school clusters

School level
Actors: school board, school leader
Tasks: administrative and pedagogical responsibility, determine the principles for operating school

Fig. 12.1 The chains of governance from national to local levels

and culture. Schools are expected to implement national and transnational (e.g. European) citizenship education, using state resources, but also contributions from the local political level. The aim has shifted over time from contributing to developing democratic societies to contributing to strengthening the national economy in the global competition.

The transnational agencies operate on a *soft governance* model, inspiring national agencies from governments and downwards by comparisons, benchmarks and European programmes. National parliaments legislate and governments carry out and implement the legislation when issuing regulation and setting the educational

agenda. The transnational agencies have only existed for a few decades, with the overarching aim to further the creation of a European community and European citizens (Moos 2009).

At the national level, we see that within the financial frames and aims of the legislation, more tasks and responsibilities have been decentralised from state to municipal and school levels. Today, municipalities have more responsibility for providing educational services, but they also have more freedom when it comes to organising these services (Helgøy et al. 2007). As municipalities differ from each other, the way they organise their educational services also differ. Laws and state regulations do not suffice as governance tools any more (Risku 2011; Ryynänen 2004). Over the past 20 years, there has been a need for legislators and ministries to strengthen the couplings between the levels in non-regulatory ways. Thus, new forms of governance have been developed and implemented.

Another reason why public sectors at the middle level (municipalities) are developing new forms of governance is that this level is being restructured, as most municipalities are getting bigger. Small municipalities are merged into larger municipalities with the obvious effect that the distance from the top level, the municipal council and administration, to the schools is increasing. This calls for governance relations that are more standardised, more prescriptive and based on less person-to-person relations.

Many municipalities have decentralised management of the budget to individual schools, within a frame given by the municipality. There is also in most municipalities in Sweden and Finland a system where the municipal council maintains authority over the budget, distributes both responsibilities for budget processes and knowledge to the school board, who distributes it to the schools. The superintendent then becomes the function that shall use her/his knowledge about the schools' different situations to support schools which, for example, are in need of extra support. The effect of this is that a tension often seems to exist between the superintendent and the municipal government as well as between the superintendent and principals. An important level in the governance chain can be defined as the educational administration in the municipalities, as this level is responsible for the overall governance of education in the municipality. This entails monitoring school budgets and improving student outcomes.

12.3 Decentralisation and Recentralisation

Restructuring public sectors has brought new forms of governance. Decentralisation of some decisions and recentralisation of others have created a necessity of new forms, mostly forms of new public management (NPM) (Hood 1991). Two main forms can be seen: contract management and accountability. They are closely related, with overlapping elements, but they are also different.

The public governance contract is mostly constructed around a model where the national level establishes the frames and aims of education and an overarching

template for quality assurance. The municipal level details the frames and aims and also the template for quality assurance in line with national and local policies. Where the emphasis is placed may vary. In Sweden it is evident, even if the school system is decentralised, that the principals are looking more to state regulations than to local policies. In Finland, on the other hand, most principals consider the local decisions on national policies most significant (Pennanen 2006). The dominating governance form in Norway can be understood as public governance contract arrangement. The state level sets out general aims of education at the various levels, followed by an overarching template of quality criteria derived from the national curricula for primary and secondary education. In Denmark we can see a shift in focus from local to national decisions and signals.

Municipal administration writes, in cooperation with schools, different reports on the situation in schools, reporting on a number of figure issues (the level of staff sickness absence, the money spent on teachers and other staff, etc.) and formulating the goals for the next 1 or 3 years in connection with a number of issues. Some of these are laid out by the administration and decided by the school board; the school itself also selects some. Examples of this could be: we want to strengthen the school's work on bullying, or we want to be more inclusive to students with special needs. Every year the school self-evaluates the results of the year and formulates the aims for the following year. The combination of fixed issues and broader issues chosen by the schools in connection with the self-evaluation procedures aims at producing a strong sense of responsibility and accountability.

The second form of governance is accountability. On the basis of municipal or national aims and goals and municipal or national evaluation (e.g. tests), it is determined whether school and municipality performance meets the standards. Again, there are differences between the Nordic countries. In some cases, sanctions are linked to the measuring of outcomes. In Denmark principals are given an annual bonus if the performance of their schools meets standards or the aims established in their contracts; however, this is not the case in the other Nordic countries.

The main difference between the two trends is that the contract model builds on self-governance and self-evaluation and thus on a high level of acceptance of responsibility for the outcomes, while the accountability model is built on central targets or standards and central measurement. Moreover, central target indicators are designed to rank municipalities and schools in a nationwide benchmarking system. One argument for the accountability model is linked to the decentralisation of the school system. The more decentralisation and freedom at the local level, the greater need for national control and inspection or, in other words, monitoring of local accountability (Weiler 1990). In two countries, we see a distinct layer between the government and the municipalities. In Sweden the inspectorate is in charge of monitoring schools' quality and level of outcome, and in Norway 19 county inspectors are responsible for supervising all municipalities on the basis of the national quality template.

The superintendent is placed in crossfire and dilemmas. Superiors are measuring them, and they measure their subordinates. Both situations underscore the hierarchical structure of contemporary NPM. Many superintendents neutralise this crossfire by

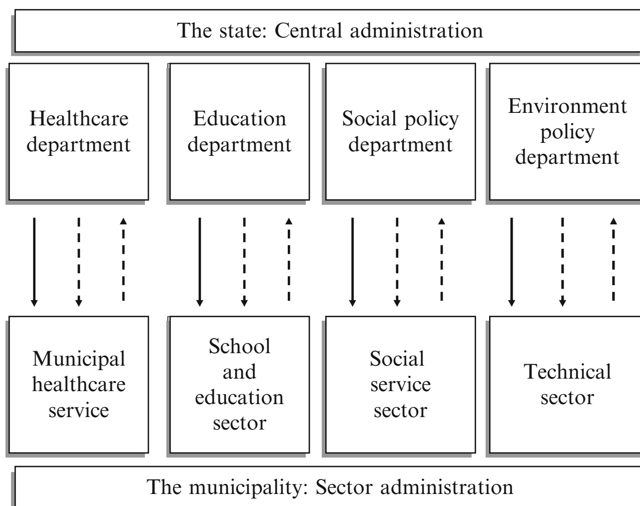

Fig. 12.2 Sector structure at the state and municipality levels

working on both the political and administrative arenas. One such example is that they characterise themselves as both policymakers and policy implementers. By going back and forth between the political and administrative arenas, they can influence the hierarchical pressure.

We see many different agents in the chain of governance. Politicians, citizens, managers/administrators and professionals make up the main groups together with parents and different unions (Kowalski 2012). Each group has its legal positions, tasks and interests, so the groups, and members of the groups, often struggle for positions and power. Some relations are described and regulated in legislation or local regulations and principles, but the borders between group responsibilities are often swampy battlefields.

This is articulated in a time of restructuring. Teachers and principals are always included in legislation, but the role of the superintendent is left to the municipalities to decide on. Also, restructuring the municipal administration has in many cases brought a simpler, more unified and leaner model of political committees and managers.

12.3.1 Municipal Restructuring as a Consequence of National Policy

Municipalities in the Nordic countries have traditionally been organised in accordance with the integrative model (Kjellberg 1988), where the municipal organisation somewhat matches the state's central administration, as illustrated in Fig. 12.2 above. An implication of this model is, as such, a functional and specialised sector

administration in the municipalities with a central school office, established for the purpose of supporting each school principal and to ensure that national and local policies are fairly well reflected in day-to-day school practices.

The model means by implication a three-layer structure. The top apex is the municipal council and its board paired with the municipal CEO and the central administrative staff. The schools and their principals and teaching staff are found at the operative level. The middle layer is then filled by the central school office managed by a school superintendent, who is administratively responsible for education within the entire municipality. By implication deflating the organisational design and replacing it with a two-layer structure represents a qualitative break with the integrative model.

12.3.2 Administrative Redesign: Towards Two-Layer Hierarchies

The deep economic recession of the early 1990s in Finland and Sweden led to a reconstruction in the welfare state model, especially concerning the relationship between the state and the municipalities. Centralised management was decentralised (Rinne et al. 2002). In the new setting, the responsibility and autonomy of the municipality was strongly increased. But also in Denmark and Norway, at the turn of the millennium, a series of redesign initiatives were launched in order to deflate administrative hierarchy and create a two-layer model, clearly inspired by similar trends in the corporate sectors (Røvik 2007). In Norway a two-layer model emerged relatively uniformly, despite the vast heterogeneity of municipalities in size, local history, political coalitions and demography. Thus, in 2004, 41% of Norwegian municipalities reported that they had implemented a two-layer structure in their administrative organisation (Hovik and Stigen 2004). In consequence, a significant number of Norwegian municipalities dismantled the central school office and the superintendent position. Then, in 2006, about two-thirds of Norwegian municipalities reported that they were, or had been, deflating the administrative hierarchies (Pedersen 2009). However, there is also evidence that most of these reform initiatives culminated around 2005 (Hovik and Stigen 2008). Therefore, not surprisingly, the 2009 Norwegian superintendent survey shows that only 20% of the 291 municipalities in the sample reported having implemented a two-layer structure. On the contrary, the 2009 data, supported by the 2011 school board survey, confirms the main image of a specialised hierarchical unit responsible for primary and secondary education within the municipality organisation. Governance in most municipalities in Denmark has also been restructured from three to two layers (Klausen et al. 2011).

Experiments with different local bodies and committees with freer hand have been common in Sweden, at least from the 1980s. A study of superintendents, who served throughout the 1990s, showed that they had experience from approximately ten different organisations (Nihlfors 2003). When this question was repeated to the superintendents in 2009 and the political board in 2012, the municipalities still seem to be searching for the best organisation. The reasons are democratic, economic as

well as rational. Variations in administrative and political designs in Swedish municipalities cover, for example:

- One superintendent – one board (with education *only* or including culture, spare time activities)
- Two superintendents – two boards
- Two superintendents – one board
- Municipal board with coordination with units for education (no special board)
- Boards on the district level for parts of the education system

Moreover, variations in organisational designs are observable in two contrasting directions. One prototype represents fewer layers between principals and the political board in the municipality, paired with a tighter coupling between the superintendent and the top apex. For example, a contrasting trend is represented by the prototype with many in-between levels.

In Sweden, 56% of the superintendents reported that they are subordinate to the CEO of the municipality organisation and, at the same time, 36% report a hierarchical layer between their office and the school principal. These functions are often called area principals or sub-superintendents. The fact that many superintendents in Sweden report that they see themselves as an integrated part of the municipal CEO's management team can be interpreted as an effect of the school board's loss of power over the superintendent.

In Finland similar trends can be noted. Municipalities, their structures and thus the role of the superintendent are becoming more and more dissimilar. Like in Sweden, superintendents are often members of the CEO's management team. In Denmark and to some extent in Norway, we see that the structure of the municipal administration is changing from three-layer to two-layer administrations, and in Denmark many municipalities locate civil servants from the municipal administration in decentralised units, between schools and municipality, as district managers. Municipalities in Finland must organise their administration according to the Municipal Act, but the statutes allow a lot of freedom. Because municipalities can organise themselves independently, their organisations vary a lot. Also, there seems to be no one way to organise the municipal organisation to correspond to the various municipal contexts (Ryynänen 2004). A very small municipality may have the smallest organisation decreed by law. In larger municipalities, the organisation may be very complex. Most municipalities seem to be revising their organisations in search for the *right* organisation; this is true for both Finland and Sweden. In 2008 94% of superintendents in Finland anticipated that the production of educational services would change radically in their municipalities by 2015 (Kanervio and Risku 2009).

12.4 Municipal Restructuring: Merger Processes

The economic situation varies between the Nordic countries as well as between different municipalities in one country. Schools are financed by both state and local taxes, but the overall conditions in a single municipality, for example, if it is a growing

or a declining society, affect the prerequisite for pupils' learning and also the working conditions for the superintendent.

All countries have merged their municipalities, but at different points in time. The reasons vary, but it is a common way to try to create economic stability in the municipality. In Sweden the largest changes occurred between 1930 and 1950, when the rural municipalities decreased from 2,300 to 800. The reasons were several, for example, the need for an adequate taxes base and the necessity to meet educational reforms as well as social policy reforms. Another reason was that the municipalities needed to be of a certain size to be able to build up the new compulsory school. There was also a hope that it would be easier for the municipalities to recruit trustees. The next mergers of municipalities took place in the early 1970s, when 848 municipalities were reduced to first 464 and then 278, before the number settled at the present 290.

In Norway the number of municipalities has been fairly stable during the last decades. Some of the reasons might be the geographic circumstances and the economic situation. Although the issue has been debated among politicians, the various governments have been reluctant to initiate merger processes through top-down dictate. Instead, the issue was left to the municipalities, and this has in fact changed the situation very little. Norway still has 429 municipalities, of which more than half have less than 5,000 inhabitants and 159 have less than 3,000 inhabitants.

In Finland the number of municipalities remained the same for several years, despite major regional changes in the demography of the country. During the last decade, however, the number of municipalities has been reduced radically. At the beginning of 2009, 99 of the then 415 municipalities merged with each other. The latest white paper by the government aimed at further reducing the number of municipalities to 66–70 by 2015. Mergers are justified by the belief that local services are retained by creating larger and more vital municipalities.

A restructuring of the Danish public sector occurred when 175 municipalities were merged into 98 larger municipalities in 2007. The background to the restructuring was the observation that small units, municipalities, could not function efficiently. This was paired with a wish to strengthen the national position in the global competition (Pedersen 2010) through neo-liberal economics and new public management interventions. The initiatives included the introduction of principal-agent thinking about politician-management relations. It generated a private sector organisational thinking, where municipalities were seen as groups/concerns with a steep bureaucratic hierarchy and schools as result units. Both municipalities and schools now become larger, as an effect of the restructuring. Over a period of 4 years (2008–2011), almost 400 out of 1,529 schools – one-fourth – were closed or merged (Stanek 2011), resulting in a stable student intake.

This short description gives a picture of the different situations that superintendents are working in. The different size of the municipalities indicates differences in superintendents' work, for example, the opportunity to build up an administration with the required knowledge and size to implement different reforms, quality control or analyse school results.

12.5 Educational Reform

Educational reform is a tool that political units can use when they want to instigate changes in society. Decisions made by an elected political unit, national or local, must be looked at as an authoritative decree on how educational administration, on all levels, and schools should act. Most of the time, reforms mean change in an important aspect. It can be based on criticism of structures or on different cultural aspects, and change is often linked to discussions about student outcomes. The Nordic countries have during the last two decades experienced somewhat different changes.

Educational reforms in Finland seem to go hand in hand with societal development. The fragmented education system, which basically derived from the Middle Ages, was replaced with the 9-year comprehensive school, implemented in the years 1972–1977 (Kupiainen et al. 2009; Sarjala 2008; Varjo 2007). The implementation of the comprehensive school was executed through a centralised, norm-based and system-oriented administration, where the role of the state was dominant (Risku 2011), also with regard to covering the costs (Aho et al. 2006; Isosomppi 1996; Sarjala 1982). As part of the implementation process, all municipalities were to establish the position of the superintendent, whose main task was to guarantee the successful implementation of the comprehensive education system (Risku 2011). At the same time as the comprehensive education system was implemented, the state made further decisions concerning social equity in society, especially in connection with social and healthcare services (Sarjala 2008; Varjo 2007).

Subsequently, the state changed its policy as well as its reforms radically. The change was reinforced by a criticism that was directed towards the inflexible and costly central state administration, which was considered undemocratic (Niemelä 2008; Varjo 2007), and by the economic recession that hit Finland in the 1990s (Aho et al. 2006). The state began to reorganise its relation to municipalities in the 1980s. The 1995 Municipal Act gave Finnish municipalities constitutional autonomy and made them the main providers of public services, including education (Pihlajanniemi 2006). At the same time, all educational legislation was reformed too. The 1993 Act changed the cost-based statutory government transfer system into an index-based one. As a result, municipalities today answer for almost 70% of the costs of educational services, instead of the 30% before the reform. Educational legislation has been simplified and streamlined, and the 1994 core curriculum reform gave municipalities a lot of autonomy in compiling their own local curricula (see Souri 2009).

Finnish legislation leaves a lot of autonomy to the municipalities: how to organise and how to provide the services legislation obligates them to provide. As Ryynänen (2004) writes, municipalities seem to have no one right way to organise. Their contexts vary and so do their organisations. According to Kanervio and Risku (2009), municipal provisions of education seem to be very different from each other, and they are expected to change and differ from each other even more in the future.

In Norway the backdrop of the systemic reform Knowledge Promotion (Ministry of Education and Research 2006) was the so-called *PISA shock* in 2001 and 2004,

displaying what was perceived as an unsatisfactory level of student achievement in mathematics, literacy skills and science among Norwegian 15-year-old students (Kjærnsli et al. 2004). Moreover, the OECD PISA studies, concurrent with evaluations of the curriculum reforms of the 1990s, showed dysfunctional within-class variation in achievements (Haug and Bachmann 2007), alongside a large portion of male students in the *alarm zone* with regard to literacy skills (Dale and Øzerk 2009). Additionally, a substantial body of research has shown a high and stable dropout rate in upper secondary education over the last decade (Markussen et al. 2011; Helland and Støren 2004; Opheim 2004). The most important reform component was thus a comprehensive curriculum reform with enhanced emphasis on academic basic knowledge and ICT skills. Second, a quality assurance system was introduced, and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training became responsible for monitoring, reporting and following up the municipalities' work as school owners. Third, and embedded, the Knowledge Promotion was also a governance reform, implying substantial delegation of authorities and responsibilities to the municipal sector. It means by implication that the state expects the 429 municipalities to take on more responsibility concerning reform implementation and quality initiatives towards each school principal.

The Danish Ministry of Education has been busy in the 9-year period from 2001 to 2010; it has amended the Folkeskole Act 18 times. The most important of these amendments was made in 2006, when the aim clause was pointed more in the direction of making students employable in a competitive economy than making them participate in a democracy, which was previously the main aim. Following this decision, a number of relatively new tools and technologies for accountability were introduced for quality assurance.

The political governing system in Sweden has been built up during a long period of time. The superintendent became a part of the national governing system a few years before the 9-year compulsory comprehensive school was introduced in 1962. This position was regulated by law, and part of the role was to guarantee equal education in the municipality. A bigger change occurred in 1989/1990, when the municipalities' responsibility for education increased, as did their right to decide how to organise and administrate education. The superintendent disappeared at the time as a national agent in the chain of governance. From 1989/1990 until today, around 55 educational reforms have been decided by the Swedish Parliament. Together with a new distribution of power between the national and municipality levels, the municipalities as well as the schools are supposed to implement new curricula in all school forms, new marking systems, a new education act, etc. At the same time, new teacher and principal educations have been introduced. The reforms show a move from centralisation to decentralisation, combined with stronger national control.

The office of the superintendent disappeared from Swedish legislation in 1990 (Nihlfors 2003) and from Finnish legislation in 1992 (Risku 2011), but today most of the municipalities have somebody perform the work of the superintendent. Superintendents' job descriptions vary a lot (Kanervio and Risku 2009), as do the prerequisites.

12.6 Superintendents' Work and Roles

Superintendents work in multiple fields and with many different stakeholders in a highly political system. One main function is to mediate between political and administrative managers, on one side, and educational practitioners, especially school leaders, on the other. This pattern is laid out theoretically in an earlier paper (Johansson et al. 2011). To give some examples of the superintendent's role and work in the context outlined above, we concentrate on the relations between the superintendent and the chairperson and between the superintendent and the principals, respectively. We also compare what different superintendents see as the most important educational reforms as well as their most important work.

In the surveys, only a few respondents fit our initial description of a superintendent, 'being directly subordinate to a political committee and being in charge of all municipal education'. Most of them have as their field of responsibility a broad field of education: childcare, adult education, culture and social affairs; and they are subordinate to other managers. They are all, however, in charge of the municipal education.

In Denmark only 11% fit our initial description, while in Norway the superintendent role is closer to the conceptual definition. About 60% are subordinate to a school policy board. At the same time, more than 80% in Norway and 56% in Sweden are directly subordinate to the CEO of the municipality. In Finland 21% of the superintendents were also principals, working mostly in schools. In practically every Finnish municipality, superintendents serve on a separate board for education. Significantly, boards in rural municipalities had more often a broader remit than boards in urban and suburban municipalities (Kanervio and Risku 2009).

Another difference is that there are clear indications in the Danish material that the people in the higher-level management posts are not educators by profession, but economists or lawyers, like the managers in ministries. The initiatives can be seen as a case of homogenising public leadership, adding more management powers and taking out educational subject expertise. This is not the fact in the rest of the Nordic countries.

12.6.1 Educational Reform

Initially, we can conclude that the superintendents in all the countries express a high level of reform consciousness. When asked what reforms they would welcome, the superintendents in Denmark answer:

1. More autonomy to municipality and schools
2. Whole-day schools
3. Local quality development

4. Revision of subjects
5. Better coherence in education years 1–18

The top priority is the demand for more local autonomy. This can be interpreted as opposing the current educational politics of recentralisation seen in governance in Denmark. The whole-day school is opposed to the then liberal-conservative government's (2001–2011) politics to have school and day care, and after-school centres operate independently of each other. Local quality development again opposes the recentralisation of governance.

The respondents in Norway answered in an open response category that the educational reform that had the greatest impact on their work as school superintendents was the curriculum reforms in 1997 and 2006. Both reforms are systemic large-scale reforms, where comprehensive changes in curricula at all form levels are the key component.

The Swedish superintendents answer, in 2009, that they look forwards to the implementation of a new education act and a new regulation for upper secondary school. Both reforms had been discussed for several years. Next in priority is implementing curricula for all school forms (from preschool to adult education). When we asked which reform they saw as the most important reform for their work, they emphasised individual development plans for each pupil. This is a change from group thinking to individual thinking.

The answers of the superintendents in Norway and Sweden can be interpreted as a function in the chain between the national and local levels, where many seem to be in line with the national level, while the superintendents in Denmark seem to be more in opposition to the national level. The superintendents in all three countries vary greatly.

12.6.2 Relation between Superintendent and Chairperson

Municipalities must run their operations based on objectives and frameworks established by parliament and government. There is discretion in determining how the operation is to be organised in order to achieve the objectives. For example: What resources shall be used? How shall the provision of education be organised? How shall the premises be designed? And, to some extent, what staff shall be employed? Regardless of how a municipality decides to run and organise the work, it must guarantee all children and students the same education.

It is interesting to examine what superintendents think the school board chair expects of them. The chairperson and members of the committees are proposed by their respective political parties at the local level. Members are appointed by the city council. The proportion between the different parties is based on the number of votes each party receives in the general election that takes place in the municipality every 4 years. Most of them are spare time politicians.

In Sweden the three most frequent answers are to take responsibility for the budget, to lead the work out of the board's priorities and to prepare good material for the boards decisions. Superintendents in Denmark give another picture of what they think the chairpersons give priority to:

1. Taking care of complaints
2. Giving a professional description of issues to the committee and preparing clear and worked-through descriptions to the agenda of the committee
3. Giving a good orientation of what is going on in the district and following up on individual cases
4. Establishing links between politics and citizens' needs
5. Monitoring schools
6. Loyally working to implement the political decisions in dialogue with leaders of institutions

The second and third priorities are important leadership tasks. This is where decisions are prepared, because the premises for decision-making are being constructed, indicating the field and the persons where (political) decisions can be made. The next priorities point to the connection phase of decision-making processes: what is happening to decisions, and who is monitoring and leading these processes?

In the light of decision-making in a three-phase process (constructing premises, decision-making and connecting), we can see that the superintendents, regardless of which country they operate in, place themselves or are being placed in very important functions in relation to policy-making (Moos 2009), much in line with the preparation of legislation and regulations made in formal and informal networks, as described by Torfing (2004).

12.6.3 The Most Important, Most Interesting or Most Time-Consuming

The superintendent position does not always allow the superintendent to prioritise work according to wishes. We asked the respondents in the sample to rank the five most important tasks in their job, the five most time-consuming tasks and, finally, the five tasks they found most interesting. Rankings were collected by multiple-response questions based on predefined response categories. The latter point might be noteworthy, since the number of alternative choices is restricted by the stock of available categories.

The overall pictures are much alike, but the convergence and differences between the replies to the three questions (meaning, time and interest) can be rather astonishing:

- Budget is given high priority in all countries and is the most time-consuming task.
- School development is the most interesting task but takes too much time.
- Planning and working with the goal formulations is also an interesting, meaningful and time-consuming task.

- Pedagogical leadership is high-ranked as meaningful and interesting in Norway and Sweden.

  The Danish superintendents are the only ones who say that:

- Political matters are meaningful, highly time-consuming and interesting.

  This seems to be the overall favourite of the superintendents in Denmark. The Swedish superintendents say that political matters are time-consuming, but they do not rank it high, when it comes to meaningful or interesting.

12.6.4 Relation to Principals

School leaders are the primary subordinates or collaborators to superintendents, who explain that they manage educational leadership, sparring, school development strategies and student learning. They communicate person to person in mentoring and sparring processes. And they support school leaders in thinking strategically.

Danish superintendents prioritise face-to-face interaction with school leaders: communication and sparring, but also through work concerning the school and municipal organisation and quality reports. The communication is based on both parties' educational professional backgrounds. Respondents were asked to write the three most important tasks in their work with school leaders. The highest priority is given to the focus on communicating with school leaders and on advancing their development. Superintendents here indicate their interest in leading the leaders of schools and giving them support. The second highest priority is given to developing the school organisation and school district, attitudes and resources, and lower priority is given to working on quality reports. Relations between superintendents and school leaders are direct, as only 7% said there was another level of leadership – like district leaders – between themselves and school leaders. In other research projects (Moos et al. 2007), we hear school principals in the new, larger municipalities complain that the ongoing and direct communication between school management and local administration/superintendent has been transformed into written communication. They complain that they seldom have a chance to meet with the superintendent, because they have many institutions to look after and, therefore, write many policies and principles.

Superintendents regularly hold conferences with school leaders, once a month or less often. The themes for these conferences cover a broad field. Four items are mentioned more often than others by the Danish superintendents: discussing how to improve student outcome, discussing school leaders, discussing teacher empowerment and discussing strategies for implementing national decisions. When the Swedish superintendents were asked about the most time-consuming tasks in their job, as shown above, the four top-ranked tasks were, not surprisingly, financial management, change processes in the schools, goal formulation and planning and policy issues. However, when the same superintendents were asked in their own words to

define the most important issues in their day-to-day dialogue with school principals, the answers mirrored a more pedagogical discourse: local strategy about national educational policy and school improvement towards raising student performance. Superintendents are very much aware of national reforms and how to implement them, both by influencing school leaders through discussions at conferences and by empowering leaders and teachers to take on new expectations.

Three main trends emerge from the data on Norwegian superintendents' task profiles. First, there is a strong emphasis on organisational management tasks, such as financial management, human resource management and planning and goal formulation. Second, when the superintendents were asked to rank the themes on the agenda with their principals, school development, supervision and guidance of principals and leadership development counted for 27% of the observations. Third, and interestingly, quality control issues are typically low scorers in the same data set, counting for only 12% of the observations. Furthermore, following up on national test data, improving pupils' learning achievements and parental involvement score even lower. Given the high-priority quality assurance and parental involvement in policy documents, the superintendent study gives rise to an interpretation that certain demands are mediated by them.

Finnish superintendents seem to correspond well to the task profiles of the other Nordic countries. Different kinds of managerial tasks dominate the superintendents' job descriptions (42% of the data involve, e.g. financial management, management of teaching and administration). Although Finnish municipalities are facing intensive and radical changes, strategic leadership and planning are not mentioned as common tasks in the superintendents' job descriptions. Pedagogical leadership is left to the principals, and the management of teaching and pedagogic leadership again seems to have a minor role in the superintendents' work (Kanervio and Risku 2009).

12.7 Nordic Similarities and Differences

As described, the Nordic school systems have been affected by comprehensive civil service reforms during the last two decades (Moos 2006). Decentralisation of powers, authorities and responsibilities from the state to the municipalities has been a major trend in all Nordic countries (Tanggaard 2011), which in theory should lead to more freedom and scope for problem-solving and policy-making at the local level. On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the state to some extent only has changed the mode of regulation to more subtle and indirect steering instruments (Pedersen 2010).

Municipalities, schools, teachers and pupils are subjected to external evaluation and assessment (Day and Leithwood 2007). Moreover, accountability is strengthened through results from national tests and evaluations available on special websites, paired with the formation of central control agencies, where the streams of reports, assessments and performance data are assembled. A mix-mode system of hard and soft governance in the relation between central agencies and local agents is, thus,

evident in the Nordic countries (Pedersen 2010). In theoretical terms, this means coexistence of loose and tight couplings between the state and the municipalities (Weick 2001; Meyer and Scott 1983).

The Danish contract seems to function as a soft governance tool, placing the responsibility and thus the blame on leaders at several levels. The form of the contract underscores this trend; institutional leaders formulate the contracts themselves – presumably in collaboration with their staff – and they also evaluate the results themselves. Thus, they are the only agents responsible and accountable.

Weick (1976) has an important, however overlooked, point that loose coupling is a dialectical phenomenon; organisational systems are typically both loosely and tightly coupled. This mixed pattern is visible, for example, in the Norwegian system, when it comes to quality reporting. The couplings between the state level and the county level are fairly tight, whereas the couplings to the next layer, that is, the municipalities, are loosened. Moreover, the relation between the municipalities and the schools is further loosened, in terms of mediating practices, for example, filtering, buffering, selecting or bridging, which makes sense, given the diversity in size, demography and political persuasion in the Norwegian landscape. Thus, the nature of the couplings between the layers in the quality reporting system emerges as a theoretical variable for comparisons across the Nordic systems.

A second variable for cross-system comparisons might be the level of political empowerment in agenda setting in municipalities. In the Norwegian case, the municipality organisation enjoys certain degrees of freedom in selecting the content of their status reports. The reports, in the next round, form an agenda for supervision and monitoring from the regional level. A third variable for cross-system comparisons is the level bypassing the municipalities; here several examples can be taken from the Swedish context, where principals have the power under the Education Act to impose the municipality from below. A forth and embedded variable might be the nature of mediating practices in the relation between the superintendent and school principals.

Leading school leaders with respect to student outcome is heavily influenced by contemporary accountability instruments, social technologies, like tests, quality reports and *best practice* and continuous professional development (CPD). The priorities include evaluation, outcomes and quality reports; school development and learning environment; resources/lessons and CPD of teachers and leaders. A prominent function is given to some of the contemporary quality tools. At the same level, we find general development and, next to it, the resources and CDP of professionals at the school level. Superintendents indicate that a mix of general structural, school and personal development on the organisational level is in focus. There is no emphasis on individual student learning, but on the means by which school districts can influence learning: through supporting and organising the professionals and the frames for learning.

The shift in governance contextualises superintendent leadership in the *crossfire* between accountability, quality control and indirect steering from the state versus local government priorities. The move from central to local governance sharpens the question of who is responsible for what (Lundgren 2007). The present situation

gives rise to the following question: Is the superintendent typically a quality control agent on behalf of the state or a local leadership facilitator who advocates professional school interests? The duality embedded in the school governance context finds resonance in the reported data on the superintendents' individual role, interpretation and priorities concerning leadership tasks. On the one hand, the current study portrays as a prototype superintendent, a profession-oriented learning facilitator. This image is manifested in the contents and priorities of the superintendents' regular meetings with their school principals. For example, the data describes frequent discussions on pedagogical *investments* to reach better results for the pupils, paired with discussions of development of school leaders' competencies. On the other hand, more managerial issues, such as economic challenges, financial planning and implementation of strategic decisions, are also frequently reported themes taken up with school principals (Johansson et al. 2011). Overall, among superintendent respondents, the dominant image of a self-preferred leadership style is the one of a professional learning facilitator who focuses on pupil orientation.

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Chapter 13
Postlude: Wrap Up of the Argument

Lejf Moos

13.1 Nordic History: Collaboration and Values

It was argued in the Prelude that the Nordic countries in many respects are similar, but different from the UK and the USA. The Nordic similarities have a long history. From around 1380–1523, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden formed a union under one king/queen. In 1523 Sweden left the union, while Denmark and Norway continued to have close relations. Norwegians name this period the *400 dark years*, indicating how they felt about these relations. When Denmark left Norway in 1815, Sweden took over the rule of Norway until 1905. From 1600 to 1800, Sweden ruled Finland, but Russia took over Finland in the period 1800–1917. During the whole period, Denmark considered Iceland a part of Denmark. Iceland gained independence in 1944. It is worth mentioning that all mergers were made as a result of war.

By 1944 Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden were independent countries. In 1952 they formed the Nordic Council, where cultural and educational matters of mutual interest are discussed. In 1971 the Nordic Council of Ministers was formed in order to somewhat formalise coordination from the Nordic Council to member governments. The Council established a number of Agencies, e.g. the Nordic Research Board (2004), in order to fund Nordic research studies. The network which initiated and collaborated on this volume has received support from this board.

History and parts of culture have been intertwined across the Nordic countries. This is illustrated in the present country cases and thematic chapters. This is also the case with post-war politics. The basis for the Nordic (and other) welfare states is the Bretton Woods system of monetary management, which established the rules for commercial and financial relations among the world's major industrial states in

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_13, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

1944 (Pedersen 2010, 17). As the international basis for national economic systems was the same and as politics and culture are so interwoven, it is not surprising that the conception of states and education was developed in such similar ways in the Nordic region.

13.2 Transnational, UK/US Influences and Nordic Values

Country reports argue that the construction of the *Nordic welfare state* model and the comprehensive school is a central to contemporary school leadership thinking and practice. Both of these developments have their roots in nineteenth-century societal, political, cultural and educational discourses and practices. Societies were seen as basically equal, socially just and democratic, and education was seen as a means to sustain and further this kind of society. This is the case, although in different forms, in all Nordic countries, as the balances between local and national governance differ.

Nordic social democracies focus on the welfare state thinking of social rights and equality (Andersen et al. 2007) within a cohesive community. A strong state that is able and willing to redistribute some of the wealth is necessary. Often the idea of social democracy is combined with ideas of participation. Citizens are supposed to participate in discussing and deciding on matters of common interest.

Democratic thinking is different in the UK and the USA. Most well known is *liberal democracy* that built on the premise that the purpose of society is to benefit the individual in her/his development. In these societies, the role of the state is to ensure that institutions and communities do not obstruct the liberty of individuals (Louis 2003).

Tendencies in society and education and a general image of NPM can be described in this way (Fig. 13.1).

History shows that UK/US education was well prepared for the contemporary forms of accountability promoted by transnational agencies. The Nordic systems were not that well prepared. Not only did new transnationally inspired expectations meet the social capital outlined above: the traditions, structures, norms and values of the education systems and its practitioners. They also met decades-old structures in public governance. They can be found in educational legislation, in legal staff regulation and in the ways working conditions and wages are regulated or negotiated.

Country cases give examples of this historical understanding. The societal and educational state of the art that met global influences was in many respects Nordic: the social democratic welfare state, the endeavour for participatory democracy with loose couplings between state and institutions, the *school for all* with no streaming and the comprehensive curriculum with room for professional discretion, manoeuvre and collaboration. These are shared Nordic values with room for national interpretations in practice.

Strong tendencies in discourses and public management			
	Nordic tendencies post-WWII to 1980	**UK/US tendencies post-WWII to 1980**	**New Public Management 1980-**
1	The Nordic welfare state believes in a strong state and strong local communities.	The UK/US liberal state believes in a strong market and a weak state.	Economic incentives to maximise personal gains: marketplace, economic theories.
2	A strong trend is the belief in comprehensive education and in education for participation in a democracy, equality and comprehensive *Bildung* (in order to educate human beings).	Strong trends are scientific curriculum thinking with focus on national goals and measurable outcomes (Taylorism) in order to educate a competent and employable workforce. An example is the National Curriculum in the UK.	Focus on detailed national performance standards and on competition (scientific management theories).
3	The democratic aim and approach left many curriculum decisions to professional leaders and teachers in collaboration with students and parents. Leader-teacher relations built on trust and professional expertise.	This scientific curriculum thinking leaves little room for professional leaders and teacher interpretation, discretion. Leader-teacher relations built on monitoring and standards/manuals.	Strong leadership (principal-agent theories: top-down setting of direction and accountability).
4	A comprehensive, non-streamed school was constructed.	Segregated school systems are common, both public and private.	Free choice of services (rational choice theories: rational thinking, maximising personal gains).

Fig. 13.1 Strong tendencies in discourses and public management

13.2.1 Transnational Influences

Global and transnational influences that were very similar in their basic thinking were incorporated in all Nordic societies. National responses were similar, but not identical. The basic logics of globalisation are, as introduced in the Prelude, the logics of the neo-liberal marketplace: strong market and weak state, consumer choice, competition and therefore comparison, strong leadership and focus on output with accountabilities. It builds mainly on *principal-agent* theories (basic assumption: the principal delegates work to an agent and uses, preferably, economic incitements), *rational choice* theories (basic assumption: people act rationally in order to maximise their self-interest), *transaction cost* theories (basic assumption: the state must cover some of the cost generated through transactions on the marketplace) and *scientific management* (Taylorism: workflows can be split into small fractions and analysed in order to standardise the work of each operation).

13.3 Important Perspectives and Themes

National responses are described in the country cases as well as in the thematic chapters. Here we have chosen themes in which transnational influences are very clear, because they all analyse and discuss school leadership positions between external – national and local – expectations and demands, on the one hand, and internal expectations and dilemmas, on the other. New balances between public schools and independent, free-standing schools influence the position and role of school leadership differently. Leadership functions change, when schools move from state regulation towards marketplace regulation. Looking at school leadership from a democratic perspective, we see that its roots in the welfare state's participatory, democratic thinking and practice are transmitted into the new, more business-oriented ways of thinking, because the wish for democratic participation changes. School leaders are not the only ones who carry culture and tradition, so do teachers. Contemporary initiatives to reprofessionalise teachers and teaching are based on neo-liberal thinking, but also on democratic, equal and compulsory school. Successful school leadership looks at changes in leadership when the aim of schooling changes. Analyses demonstrate that underneath some of the NPM trends to homogenise school leadership concepts, cultural basics still form actual practices and thinking. Two chapters look at the greater governance image, from national and municipal to institutional accountability and steering.

The next section teases out general trends and tendencies from the thematic chapters, and in so doing it will probably not do justice to the analyses and arguments in the chapters themselves. They are now included in an overarching exercise that ignores many details and nuances. This is the logic of synthesising: by highlighting some aspects, we underexpose others. I hope to highlight important analyses, arguments and trends and thus get a clearer image.

13.4 Trends in the Thematic Chapters

13.4.1 Independent Schools

The Nordic countries are in many ways very similar. They are small countries with strong emphases on compulsory schools, for all children. One main characteristic of the countries' development is that the school systems are decentralised with strong focus on municipalities. The discourse of democratic education and decentralised systems are thus two important aspects of education in the Nordic countries. The development over the past 20–30 years has in different ways also meant more focus on independent schools. They are part of the public system, as they are to some extent financed, regulated and controlled by state or municipal actors. The picture is country specific. Denmark builds on a 200-year-old history of free-standing schools and has by now a liberal model that is based on the concept of freedom: a high degree of public funding and a low degree of public accountability. Sweden has for some years increased the move to more independent schools, built on the concept of

equivalence, leading to more public governing. The development towards independent schools is slower in Iceland, Finland and Norway. As mentioned, the picture is country specific, based on history. The Nordic education systems have underscored the privatisation of schools differently in the past, and they still do.

13.4.2 Leadership for Democracy

We have been looking at traditional values in education systems and institutions, at contemporary transnational influences and at current systems and values in education in Nordic countries and around us. We have seen that the foundation for the incoming transnational influences were different two decades ago. Structures, culture, values and norms were different at the time, and although much has changed over the years, much has remained the same as the basis of contemporary interpretations and developments. The traditional Nordic welfare state discourse of an egalitarian society and education system is endangered by a competitive state discourse. One example of this can be seen in the approach to independent schools illustrated above. Another example is the comprehensiveness of education systems, where England and other countries (e.g. Germany and France) have preserved a divided, streamed system. Once put into one line of education, young people had to stay in that line. The Nordic countries have strived to abolish streaming and have succeeded to a great degree. Public schools are non-streamed and comprehensive. Hierarchies in schools are still different. In England, Germany and France, we see more layers in staff, and thus in career paths, in schools. In the Nordic education systems, we were used to few levels (teacher, middle leader and leader). This made it easier to establish communities of practice in schools. Until the beginning of the 1990s, teacher committees were powerful, not so much formally, but informally. A school leader would very seldom make big decisions without discussing them and consulting with teacher committees. This tradition has been continued in the self-governing teams; leadership decisions have been distributed to teams of teachers (e.g. annual and weekly planning and leadership substitute teachers). The purpose of schooling was different too. In England, Germany and France, there was a very strong focus on academic attainment within sharply separated subjects and outcomes. In the Nordic systems, there was much more focus on comprehensive *Bildung*, coherent education of subjects and personal and social competencies. Although major transnational influences and social technologies support UK/US tendencies, we see in the empirical sections of this chapter that Nordic interpretations and development try to balance back-to-basics demands with comprehensive educational demands.

13.4.3 Professionalisation of Nordic School Leadership

The chapter investigates how and to what extent the professionalisation of Nordic school leadership may be in conflict with images of teacher professionalism as an ongoing reconstruction process or (re)professionalisation of school leadership.

It seems to some extent to be coherent with the renewed education policy. On the other hand, the leadership type, tasks and role resulting from this (re)professionalisation may conflict with the teacher ideal that has increasingly been promoted by teacher education in the Nordic countries since the 1970s. Overall, the teacher ideal was developed first as a consequence of equal and compulsory education for all, led by democratic ideals, and later as a response to various steps in the decentralisation of curriculum planning and other forms of deregulation during the 1980s and 1990s, which required an independent professional. Principal education has developed and expanded slowly in many Nordic countries. So far, it does not appear as though the negative sides of the accountability paradigm have pushed through in Nordic principal education. This is illustrated by referring to a general Nordic response to new accountability expectations as *muddling through*, that is, planning, negotiating, coordinating and reporting on a local level with no high stakes. While some UK/US trends point to deprofessionalisation of teaching, because more detailed aims, standards and benchmarks are issued from the national level, there is a common trend in the Nordic systems to – also – leave room for manoeuvre at the local, school and classroom levels.

13.4.4 Successful Nordic School Leadership

Three trends appear to be common Nordic features in successful school leadership: school leaders' translation and mediation of external expectations to internal meaning, balance between leadership ways of influencing staff and relations to school environment. External stakeholders (government, municipality, parents, etc.) have legitimate, although often contradictory, expectations of schools. School leaders seem to take on the responsibility of *mediators*, which means that they translate these expectations into a language and a practice that are acceptable and legitimate to the teachers and other staff. Moreover, the school leaders in the case schools prioritise developing internal capacity as a strategy for responding to external expectations. For the school leaders, this implies creating suitable structures and nourishing cultures that support internal capacity building, e.g. professional teams and trust.

Comparing the Nordic reactions to external expectations with UK/US reactions in the first case stories, we see an important difference. While Nordic school leaders mobilise teachers and middle leaders, there is a strong tendency in the UK and the USA that school leaders take over the command. These patterns are in line with the traditional norms and values described in the Prelude. All the schools are profoundly dependent on their environments, be they political, administrative, community, professional, cultural or other. On the one hand, Nordic school leaders seem to focus on understanding and interpreting signals and expectations from many stakeholders. On the other hand, they have to be able to communicate and legitimate school priorities and practices in relation to the results achieved to relevant stakeholders. While UK/US school leaders tend to be more compliant with external expectations, like high-stake accountabilities, Nordic school leaders try to respond

to both short-term accountability demands and long-term comprehensive education demands. They try to bridge expectations from both welfare state and competitive state governance, when strengthening relations to parents.

13.4.5 Local Decisions Under Central Watch: A New Nordic Quality Assurance System

In the past few decades, we have seen that Nordic education systems are some of the most decentralised education systems in the world. This chapter compares recent initiatives to reassert central control through national quality control in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, with a focus on three dimensions: the national standards, the procedures used to determine whether the standards have been met and how national actors might intervene in loc.l leadership, where standards are deemed unfulfilled. We show that the Nordic states have all taken steps to reinforce hierarchical relations, but also that there is cross-national variation in the scope and form of the strategies used. Nordic national educational standards tend to be less ideologically coherent than they once were, as social democracy has come to be increasingly challenged by liberalism and conservatism. The conduct and characteristics of local actors are evaluated through a variety of procedures, including screening, contract design, reporting requirements and monitoring, and the Nordic states employ both *soft* and *hard* social technologies to act on the judgement. There is generally a preference for leading schools indirectly, e.g. through benchmarking, consultancy, guidelines and skill development, and the legal will and capacity of national agencies and politicians to intervene directly in the day-to-day work of teachers and school leaders, for the most part, remain very limited. In all four countries, there is still focus on local governance and room for manoeuvre, but the state remains an active player. The future is likely to see further tensions in central-local relations.

13.4.6 The Nordic Superintendents' Leadership Roles

Nordic school systems have been affected by comprehensive civil service reforms in the last two decades. Decentralisation of powers, authorities and responsibilities from the state to the municipalities has been a major trend in all Nordic countries. On the other hand, the states have only changed the mode of regulation to some extent towards more subtle and indirect steering instruments. A *mix mode* system of *hard* and *soft* governance in the relation between central agencies and local agents is, thus, evident in the Nordic countries. Relations between the municipalities and the schools are loosened, in terms of mediating practices, e.g. filtering, buffering, selecting or bridging, which makes sense, given the diversity in size, demography and political colour. Thus, the nature of the couplings between the layers in the quality reporting system emerges as a theoretical variable for comparisons across

the Nordic systems. A second variable for cross-system comparisons might be the level of political empowerment in agenda setting in municipalities. This can be seen in the demand for quality reports. A third variable for cross-system comparisons is the level of bypassing the municipalities, either by acts or by constructing special relations to independent schools. A fourth variable might be the nature of mediating practices in the relations between superintendents and school principals. Leading school leaders with respect to student outcome is influenced by contemporary accountability instruments, social technologies like tests, quality reports and *best practice* and through continuous professional development. But as none of the tools are high-stake accountability with direct consequences for financial funding or for maintaining leadership, it seems that responses are rather vague. Instead, superintendents indicate that a combination of general structural, school and personal development on the organisational level is in focus. There is no focus on individual student learning, but on the means by which school districts can influence learning, supporting and organising the professionals and the frames for learning. The dominant image of a self-preferred leadership style among superintendent respondents is the one of a professional learning facilitator with focus on pupil orientation. Tensions between national and local (municipal) levels still exist. Given that competitive states tend to centralise more, some room for manoeuvre and interpretation is still left to local levels.

13.5 Trends and Tendencies in Contemporary Nordic School Leadership

Returning to the frame and concepts of Fig. 13.1, including findings and arguments mainly from the thematic chapters, we get the following picture of the current state and thus arguments for answering the question: is a Nordic model of school leadership (re)emerging?

13.5.1 The Concepts of Relations Between State and Local Authorities

The Nordic welfare state believes in a strong state with strong local authorities. The balance has always been and is still delicate, and the neo-liberal NPM trend to minimise state influence in favour of individual freedom leaves local authorities less powerful and gives much influence to consumers on the public service market. This has changed some of the relations in the Nordic area, but the core features (strong state and strong local authorities) are preserved. In some cases, like Denmark, there is now more emphasis on the consumer, parental choice, but this is not a strong Nordic trend.

This can also be seen in the survival of local interpretation of curriculum. It is being attacked by demands for evidence-based practice and best-practice technologies, but it is still rather strong.

13.5.2 Comprehensive Education or Back-to-Basics

Again the Nordic picture is varied. On the one hand, there is more emphasis on outcomes, measures and accountability, which can be seen in the increasing number of national tests, but they are not high stakes, so in many cases, practitioners are relaxed when it comes to tests; they are also devised differently, e.g. as adaptive tests. On the other hand, there is still – in legislation and practice – a strong focus on the comprehensive education for democratic citizenship.

It has been underscored that there are differences between traditional Nordic comprehensive education and NPM back-to-basics education that focuses on outcomes and tests. To understand differences in school leadership between these two analytical, educational modes, one should recall the argument put forward by Michael Barber, former Chief of Delivery in the English government, in a breakfast talk given at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, ICSEI, in Sydney in 2003. The title of his talk was, to the best of my recollection, *Driving a car at high speed in the Alps*. The argument was that when stakes are high, you need, as a driver, to pay close attention to the instruments – petrol meter, battery level, hydraulic break system, etc. – as your driving could be endangered, if any of the functions failed to function. Drawing on NPM, he pointed to the instruments that measure aspects of education, like national tests. Transferring this metaphor, like Michael Barber, to school leadership, it means that leaders need to pay close attention to test results to be able to adjust the teaching accordingly, informing teachers of required adjustments. If one were to extend the metaphor to a comprehensive educational situation, one could say that driving a car at high speed in the Alps requires that the driver pays close attention to the road and the traffic. Again returning to school leadership, it would mean paying attention to aspects of education and teaching that are not easily captured by national tests and communicating observations to teachers in different ways.

13.5.3 Tough or Collaborative School Leadership

Inspiration and influences from neo-liberal political thinking and NPM governance tendencies are obvious in the Nordic public sector and educational politics in many respects. A strong top-down concept of leadership has been implemented formally in schools. This has, among other things, meant that the formal influence teachers used to have in teachers' councils had been removed. Formally, teachers have no influence on the development and running of the school. On the other hand, new social technologies, like the contract, have been developed and implemented. Most of the

contracts are based on political aims and frames; they are tools of governance. However, as they are also based on local detailing of aims, self-evaluation of outcomes and the tradition for trust, they open up for local negotiations and translations. This gives some power to teachers and, on the school level, to school leaders. Another contemporary feature of schools is team building: leadership teams, teacher teams and student teams. Leaders very often build teams around them. Middle leaders, department leaders, administrative leaders, etc., are included in continuous negotiations, deliberations and decision-making, so even if the school leader is formally the decision-maker, she/he involves leadership colleagues in constructing the premises for decision-making through deliberation and negotiation. Middle leaders have little formal decision-making power, but in practice they have much power. This social technology also implies taking on personal as well as professional responsibilities.

The role leaders are supposed to take on, when drawing on principal-agent theory, sets the direction for the organisation. This is also part of the official construct of school leadership, but often not of real-life situations in schools. Most school leaders know from experience that it is very difficult to have teachers change practice, if they have no *ownership* of the development. Leaders also know that teachers need to have room for manoeuvre, when practicing in classrooms. They need to be able to interpret the aims, the situation and the student motivation and proficiency levels in order to make wise choices of teaching methods and communication. Therefore, school leaders try to translate external expectations into institutional and professional meaning by involving teachers in describing new practices and in adapting them by reinventing well-known practices.

13.5.4 Comprehensive School or Streaming

A major trend in welfare state education is that social justice, among other things, must mean that children from all parts of society are brought together in the public school, because they need to know, respect and acknowledge each other. This is seen as important to both individuals and to social cohesion. The competitive trend in NPM and accountability systems is putting this feature under pressure, but the Nordic education systems are still firm on this. Some cracks are evident: e.g. the rising number of independent schools and new forms of inclusive schooling. Generally, however, cohesion and comprehension are strong Nordic tendencies.

13.6 So, Is a Nordic Model in School Leadership (Re)emerging?

A number of Nordic trends are strong and different from mainstream NPM: strong state and local authorities, clinging to comprehensive education, collaborative and deliberative leadership and cohesive schools. These are strong trends, building on

traditional values, but whether they form a shared Nordic model depends on our conception of a model.

The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary offers a series of definitions:

- 2: A model is a system that is being used and that people might want to copy in order to achieve similar results; a formal use. […]
- 4: If someone such as a scientist models a system of process, they make an accurate theoretical description of it in order to explain or understand how it works. (1995, 1066)

It is not easy to decide if things like education and educational leadership constitute a model. Education and leadership, as they have been discussed in this book, cover a very broad field of theoretical, discursive, political, historical and practical understandings and practices. Thus, we need to determine in which scientific and practical fields we want to point to a model.

If we draw on definition number two above, we encounter difficulties, because results are not precisely defined; this is a political struggle. So, one can choose to copy it, like policy borrowing, without being explicit as to the results. This is very common in politics.

If we instead draw on definition number four, we again run into trouble; now we need 'an accurate theoretical description'. It has been the intention here to produce a more accurate theoretical description by including the *sounding board for new influences*: history and traditional values in a field that is normally described in the present time and analysed via sociological, political and leadership concepts and theories. In analyses of discourses and practices, we often miss the deeper layers that are formed by history, and therefore we often find it easy to analyse and compare educational leadership across nations, cultures and systems.

It has for years been a challenge to describe Nordic education or Nordic school leadership as a clear-cut model (Frimannsson 2006; Telhaug et al. 2006). Maybe it has never been possible. But there are certainly a number of common traits or trends, a pattern or model that we – with hesitation and prudence – may call Nordic educational leadership.

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L. Moos (ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership: Is there a Nordic Model?*, Studies in Educational Leadership 19,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8, © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

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