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

P. Skott (✉)
Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden
e-mail: pia.skott@pol.umu.se

K.K. Kofod
Department of Education (DPU), Aarhus University, Copenhagen, Denmark
e-mail: kako@dpu.dk

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

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

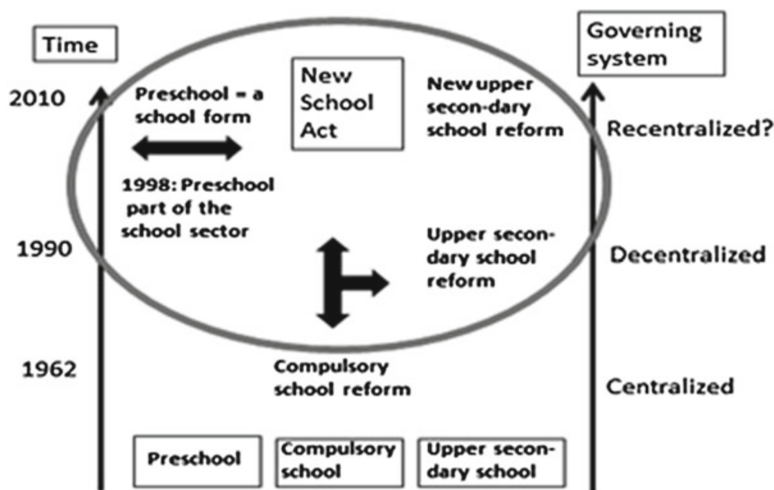

Fig. 7.2 The complexity of reforms in Sweden

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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