

SENSE-MAKING IN DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

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This article describes and discusses cases of distributed leadership at several levels in schools in the light of changing political discourses and changing relations between the state and its institutions. It focuses on relations, leadership influences and communication in the whole school and in the classroom and by extension also discuss relations, influences and modes of instruction in the classroom. The empirical basis for the discussion is school leadership in the Danish context. It explores how contemporary government and management manifests itself in schools, how agents in schools react to it and how room for manoeuvre is being formed in order to give students conditions and frameworks so they can develop a 'Democratic Bildung'.

NEW FORMS OF BALANCE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON EDUCATION IN DENMARK

In Danish society, as in many others societies and educational and political systems, there used to be an understanding that school was the major cultural institution to be established and maintained by the society, because there was a desire to ensure that the next generation of citizens were brought up and educated to take over, maintain and develop that society. Thus educational purposes were often described in broader terms: schools should educate students to become enlightened, to participate, to be active and collaborative citizens. Major aims of schooling were, therefore, regarded as being social justice, equity, empowerment and community. In most places these notions still exist in schools, but they are not always furthered at the political and administrative levels. Here we find tendencies towards greater accountability, performativity and mercerization in the use of discourse, regulation and technology. The 20th century Danish comprehensive school evolved out of the development of the Danish welfare state that was largely a Social Democratic project built on a consensual dialogue across political parties. The school is looked upon as a vehicle for promoting equal opportunities for all and as a place for acquiring knowledge, skills and values that prepare the student for life in a broader sense. That is done with reference to the aim laid down in ("Consolidation act no. 170 of 2nd June 2006", Act on Folkschool 2006) that '*the school prepares the students for co-responsibility, rights and duties*', which is the concept of 'Bildung', traditional egalitarian and nation-building school ideas in line with traditional welfare thinking. Since the beginning of the 1990s, however, the Danish comprehensive educational system has been undergoing a process of transformation under the influence of strong international currents. A neo-liberal current has linked educational thinking closely to the economy by means of a whole series of developments – a push towards making schools dependent upon parents' demands, towards more subject-oriented teaching, and towards the re-introduction of testing at all levels of primary school, alongside pressure to harmonize within the European Union, inspiration from and fear of the OECD PISA programme (Programme for International Student Assessment), and increasing individualization. (Krejsler 2005; Moos 2003; 2006). Responsibility for substantial areas of the finance and administration of the 'Folkeskole' (primary and lower secondary school, students aged 6-16), for example, was devolved to municipalities and from there to schools. Traditional site-based management was redefined when schools were made financially autonomous and accountable. The head of the school now manages very large parts of the budget in collaboration with the board of governors, which has a parental majority membership. The Acts of Parliament, and therefore the overall responsibility for objectives of the schools, remain in the hands of Parliament/the Ministry of Education but the interpretation and administration of the curriculum – which is fairly broad in its

demands – are devolved to municipalities, which very often choose not to be involved, and to the schools themselves.

The New Public Management (NPM) movement, which promotes a focus on outcomes and on accountability and away from more comprehensive aspects of learning processes, is gaining momentum. Since 2002 the schools in Denmark must post the results of school-leaving tests on the Ministry's website. The government issues binding national 'goals', usually every two years, that are much tighter and more prescriptive than the curriculum used to be, and it has also introduced plans for more testing of students in grades 2, 4 and 6 in addition to the end of school test in grade 9. There is also a focus on economic incentives such as merit pay for teachers and principals. In addition there is a focus both on top-down management and on decentralisation. Administrators and politicians look to the private sector for inspiration. What we are witnessing is a profound and dramatic change in the political discourse on schools and educational systems, not all of which was visible in the case schools in this project. We were used to the vision of a comprehensive and inclusive 'Democratic Bildung.' Now there are strong tendencies towards a mode of thinking characterized by 'school effectiveness' and 'Back to Basics' policies with an emphasis on attainment of national goals and standards. We have been accustomed to a system in which national and local authorities trusted schools and their professionals to make informed and wise decisions and choices as regards working methods and themes on the basis of thorough knowledge of and loyalty towards the school's aims and ideals and the students' level of knowledge and interests. Now we are adjusting to an atmosphere of mistrust that builds on nationally formulated and very detailed goals and standards. One sign of this tendency is the increase in the number of national tests to which schools are being exposed.

These tendencies can be exemplified at school level by the recently implemented social technology of 'student plans' (Foucault, 1983) that teachers write for each student in all subjects stating how the student shall attain national goals. These mean teachers increasingly being placed more in the role of experts, students in a role of receiver and parents in a role of school assistant than they used to be. The student plan also stresses the individual student, giving a lower priority to social aspects of learning: Students learn while communicating and interacting with peers and teachers. There often used to be an emphasis on shared learning situations such as peer work or project work in groups. This development means that the meaning of leadership, of the professional and of learning is under profound change. School leaders, it seems, (Moos, Carney, Johanson & Meehlbye 2000) are caught in the cross-fire between three factors. First there are the national objectives for schools, which focus on liberal education, i.e. the 'Bildung' of children to become citizens in a democratic society; second, there are the local authority's demands for financial accountability; and third, a prevalent school culture in which teachers, accustomed to being autonomous, were not eager to be managed or led by the 'new, strong, visible' school leaders prescribed by Government and other political agents. Danish society and culture used to be homogenous by virtue of the fact that this is a small society (5.5 million inhabitants in total) with a liberal and social democratic political system and a generally low power distance (Hofstede 1980), which had been in place for more than a hundred years. Only recently have we experienced a development towards a more diverse society because social gaps are growing and more immigrants are making their mark on society. This has in many places given power to nationalistic politics with a strong tendency towards xenophobia.

THE PROJECT

We began the empirical part of the project by asking local education authorities (LEA's) in eight school districts (that is municipalities in Denmark) to point out one or two successful school principals in their districts. All of the eight principals were willing to take part and so we began by making the first descriptions of the schools and the principals based on interviews with LEA's,

principals, groups of teachers and students and with parent representatives from the school's board of governors. Later on we picked three schools and took a closer look. We interviewed professionals and students, followed the principal and other members of senior management, and observed meetings and lessons. The three of us also 'shadowed' the principal, the deputy, a teacher and a student for a whole working day. In all cases we ended up by interviewing the person that had been followed around for the whole day in order to get their story of that day. As we were at the school on the same day, we were able to collect good material for intensive reflection on observations from the researchers' group (observations). That provided the material and background for a number of case stories (Moos, Krejsler, Kofod & Jensen 2005) and for the thematic analysis. When we came to choosing three case study schools (The West School, The Commuter School and The North School) from amongst the eight initial schools, we were able to make our selection from institutions that we knew were different in several respects. The West school is a school situated in a suburb of a larger city with an socio-economic status (SES) comprising a large number of workers, white collar workers, and with a proportion of students from minority groups of approximately 25%. The school's principal has been in the post for only a few years, and she took over from rather a charismatic predecessor and has therefore been working to make her own mark on the school. The head is working to modernise the school's organisation, and the discussion of newer organisational forms has just begun considering a team-based organisation. The Commuter School is situated in a smaller municipality that has over the years become a sort of suburb to a larger adjacent city. The school's catchment area is characterized by children from homes of white collar workers. It has been known to be a rather progressive school, and the principal acts as an adviser to the municipality on matters of education and school management. The discussion of new structures using team-based organisation has been going on for quite a while, and the school is organised in three departments inside the school with self-steering teams. The North School is situated in a wealthy suburb of a larger city. The students' parents are well-educated, self-employed, employed in the private sector or civil servants. The principal has managed the school for approximately 15 years. When he took office, he embarked upon the task of reorganizing the school and has made the school a team-based organisation, the teams having a high degree of independence because they are self-governing. The school's ideology is based on a conception of the students' multiple intelligences, which means that to a fairly high degree they are involved in the planning of instruction. We could see how the schools reacted differently to the demands made of them by the modernization of the public sector taking place outside them. This development means that government and local authorities are implementing new kinds of management and government. Schools, therefore, also develop diverse forms of relations between management, teachers and students. These three schools also have chosen different balances in focusing on the traditional, Democratic 'Bildung' and focusing on more contemporary demands for basic proficiencies.

AN OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXTS

As regards the discourse of a learning organization with close-knit teacher collaboration, we can roughly describe the West School by stating that forms of collaboration and management used here are rather traditional. Forms of collaboration and management generally practised nowadays such as team work are not that well developed, but the head is focusing heavily on exactly this aspect of school life. Some areas of instruction seem rather solid and traditional. This is not where the principal is focusing her work for the time being. The Commuter School has advanced a long way in developing forms of instruction and of collaboration and management. The principal is placing strong emphasis on developing these aspects of school life, in setting clear agendas, and in giving detailed feedback to teachers about their mode of instruction. The North School has worked intensively for a number of years with up-to-date forms of collaboration and management. Binding collaboration and networking are, therefore, fundamental characteristics of this school. Contemporary methods of teaching and learning focusing on students' individual and

independent work are also widespread. The principal has clear and distinct opinions on such matters and, while he does not intervene much in practice in class and teamwork, he does make his position clear to the staff.

NEW RELATIONS, GOVERNMENTALIZATION AND COUPLINGS

We build on theories of the modernization of the public sector and democracy in schools because it is clear that modernization has reached a new and more radical phase, where the logic behind political and administrative decision-making is penetrating public institutions to a far greater extent than we have been accustomed. That seems to present both new opportunities and new limitations for democracy in schools and for Democratic 'Bildung'. As it has been one of the main objects of our investigations to find out how current day government and management appears in schools, we are interested in how agents in schools react to it and how room for manoeuvre for Democratic 'Bildung' is being formed. The ways the schools are organized are the results of meeting the challenges of leadership. How they choose to organize themselves varies from school to school. While no two schools are organized in exactly the same way, there are some factors that pull in the same direction. We can point to the tendencies towards individualization and the focus on the individual child that is written into the law on the Danish Folkschool § 18.1: *'The planning of the instruction... must...be diversified so that it corresponds to the individual student's need and background'*. ('Consolidation Act No. 170 of 2nd June 2006', Act on Folkschool 2006). It is not possible to live up to this goal if organization is centralized; it is not possible centrally to steer individualization and differentiation of instruction. Therefore there is a tendency in the Danish Folkschool towards decentralization of the power of decision-making from management teams to teachers' teams, and towards more or less self-governing teachers' teams. Schools are organised in the same direction and have a certain uniformity or isomorphism. There is an interdependency, so that when a certain organisational path is laid down there is a tendency for others to follow (Antonsen & Jørgensen 2000), even if this specific mode of organizing is not necessarily the most efficient one (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). It could be otherwise. Team organisation is only one among a number of possibilities.

The schools are organised in a mixture of tight and loose couplings. On the one hand a decentralized structure with almost self-governing teams is an example of a rather loose organizational coupling between the school management and the teachers. On the other hand a tight meeting structure is an example of tight couplings.

At the North School the teachers have to document their results, but it is up to individual teachers to decide how they will do so, and this opportunity for free choice of documentation method shows that the organizational couplings in this area are fairly loose. One can say that the organizational couplings are loose because there are not many rules governing the way individual teachers' instruction shall be planned or how concrete coordination or documentation should take place. We have already noted that the principal of the North School does not interfere in procedures relating to the teachers' collaboration. He only interferes if there are conflicts that the teachers cannot solve themselves. He is regarded as a skilful problem-solver. Things are done differently in the different teams. There are, therefore, no strict rules for how the collaborative relations should be handled, and this is another sign of loose coupling. If a team has come up with a new initiative or invented a new tool for instruction, it does not necessarily spread to the other teams. Initiatives taken at one place in the organisation do not necessarily have repercussions in other parts precisely because the organizational couplings are loose. Such things are apparently not debated at the school, which is another sign of loose organizational couplings. All these traits hold true for the Danish schools in the project. So in the relationships between the school management and the teachers, between the teams across age levels and between individual teams and the management team the organizational couplings are loose. The disadvantage of this feature is that the organisation is at risk of falling apart, and that both the management team and the

teachers are at risk of having only a loose overview of the school. In order to keep the organisation together, there are on the other hand certain elements that are more tightly coupled and manage to hold the system together. The North School can serve as an example. The meeting structure that decides who is to participate in the various meetings is a means to keep the school together. It plays an important role in creating a sense that the individual is part and parcel of the same organisation, the same school (Kofod 2007b). One teacher has told us that the school's management team does a lot to promote the feeling that everyone is part of the same school. Another teacher told us that the management team stresses the importance of having many different teachers participate in the set meetings and in the committees that exist at the school (Kofod 2007c). This organizational trait helps participants to have a sense of what is going on in the whole school; and it helps good ideas and experiences to be disseminated in the school in spite of the loose couplings. These organizational features are means to tighten the organisational couplings.

The management team is represented at most of the meetings and on most of the committees. This makes the couplings between the management team and the teachers tighter in these areas. This representation helps to make the school more transparent, and the tighter couplings reduce parts of the complexity that are otherwise enhanced by loose couplings. If these tighter couplings were not also present, it would be impossible for the management team to fulfil its function with responsibility and to determine the organization's direction, and to ensure the development of the organisation and its employees (Leithwood & Riehl 2005). They make it possible for the management team to see through organizational processes. Due to these tight couplings that are also part of the school's organisation, the management team is probably the one group that has the best overview of what is going on in the school – and is perhaps the only one to have one. Weick (2001) has pointed to the fact that when couplings are loosened at one place in the organisation there will be a tendency that they will have to be tightened in other places. Having tight and loose couplings simultaneously is an intelligent solution to the dilemma of how to enable self-organizing processes and at the same time keep an overview of what is going on in the organisation. Such a solution is a precondition if the school is both to be managed and to liberate free organizing forces.

We can describe how the process of modernization works in the interplay between decentralization and the loosening of couplings, between central agencies and local agents that produces fewer prescriptions from central government directed at the municipal level and the school level (regarding, for example, finance and administration). We can observe similar processes within schools as management is decentralized, re-distributed from principal to teacher teams and to individual teachers. It is new for teacher teams to be inserted as a permanent link between management and individual teachers. New tasks and duties are being distributed and so loosening the coupling (in relation, for example, to practical year planning and timetabling, or to parts of finance management), while other tasks are being re-centralized (for example, the setting of targets and the evaluation of instruction and learning), and in this way the couplings are being tightened. We see clear signs of re-centralization on the part of the government, as it has presented much clearer and more detailed goals for teaching and learning on a national basis. The Ministry is also constructing new systems for testing and accountability (such as quality reports from schools to municipalities and on to a central agency). There are clear signals that relations between different levels of the public system are being based on a greater degree of mistrust. We interpret this development in tight and loose couplings as a move towards governing through network. This means that management is changing from prescriptive, direct influence/power towards negotiation through setting the agenda, and this involves more institutionalized power. Management from one level to the other is effected at a distance when the level determines the framework and the direction, setting the agenda for the organizational levels and leaving it to the

inferior levels to make things happen. At the same time we see more institutionalized management when social technologies such as contracts and procedures relating to standards and monitoring become more detailed and prescriptive.

NETWORK MANAGEMENT

In all Danish case study schools there is a growing focus on networks such as teacher teams. Teachers work in teams within the frameworks and directions given by, and often negotiated with, management. Management is conducted of the self-governing teachers at a distance. At the same time we see a number of social technologies. Many of those take the form of meetings: Education Council Meetings (all teacher staff and management meet regularly in accordance with school procedures), all staff meetings (teachers and other staff and management meet once or twice a year in accordance with requirements), team interviews (teacher teams meet with the principal), 'employee development interviews' (individual teachers met with principal once a year). There are also year plans (the year's instruction for a class put together by teachers and submitted to the principal), student plans (plans for individual student's progress) etc. That means that management influence is less direct and more in the form of sense-making, setting agendas and institutionalized influence. Within their teams, teachers have to collaborate very closely and therefore have to invest their personality in their work. It is not enough that they invest their time and presence; they must be motivated and engaged because they must collaborate closely and because they are given responsibility. The school's decentralized organization with its loose and tight couplings and the diffuse forms in which its exercises power is about somebody having power over others to activate sanctions, for example, or to create an secondary organization; and somebody has the power to make something to happen. One may say that the Danish schools are organized in networks, and that the teachers are self-governed. Elements of this self-governance derive from the consideration that the people involved, the teachers, are professionals and as such are quite capable of governing themselves precisely because they are professionals. The goal of teachers' self-governance is not forced through by means of orders or directives; it is effected by government in the form of a regulation of teachers' behaviour that has been called 'The conduct of conduct' (Sørensen & Torfing 2005).

Management is about mobilizing and strengthening the freedom of teachers in order to make it possible for them to govern themselves. The conduct of conduct aims at encouraging the teachers to participate in the school's management functions, and to place that responsibility on them without the use of force. Management takes place through common values that steer the conduct of conduct in certain directions. An example of this is at the North School where the requirement of the Folkschool Act that teachers' instruction of children must be differentiated and adapted to the individual child (Statutory requirement of the Folkschools Act, 2006) is met through the decision to rely on the theory of the multiple intelligences (Gardner 1997; Kofod 2007a). The conduct of conduct takes place by means of distinct statements by the school's principal about the direction he wants the school to move in, by means of certain instruction technologies (portfolio), and by means of the school's architecture with classrooms that are so small that it is impossible for a whole class be in them for any lengthy period of time. Classes are forced out of the classroom and are thus induced to work in smaller groups in order to allow a better individualisation of instruction and focus on the single student's special intelligence. The principal's distinct statements set the agenda, and in this way he uses the indirect power of setting the agenda (Christensen & Jensen 1986) to decide what is to be focused on. This happens through debates about values, in which the school's leadership team makes presentations that are to be debated, through arranging theme meetings for the teachers, and through organizing projects that are going to be worked on throughout the school.

There are two central demands if we are to speak of network government. The first is the demand that management must influence all individuals at the school and from the possibilities and decisions that the individual chooses to use as his decision platform. Network government must relate to every individual teacher and strengthen their ability to act freely inside the decided framework that the school's management team has built up. At the North School, The Commuter School and the Inner City School the management team have very clearly communicated the school's value base so that nobody can be in doubt as to what these values are about and so that each and every teacher knows how to act accordingly (Kofod 2007d). Secondly the government must be economical in such a way that its goals can be realized with as sparse a use of resources as possible (Sørensen & Torfing 2005). Both the loose and the tight organizational couplings in the schools are each in their different ways aspects of the reduction of organizational complexity for both the teachers and the management team. Leadership in networks at a distance presupposes a distant leadership, and the loose couplings are a means to produce this. This reduction of organizational complexity is, in fact, an example of economizing the management and leadership effort, in that the governing network draws on the participating members' efforts, skills and experiences at the school. A precondition for successful management of the teachers at a distance is that it is possible to make the teachers active contributors to the schools work and management. At the Commuter School, the West School, the Inner City School, and the North School the teachers have taken the responsibility to be self-governing and they are very active in this self-management process (Kofod 2007d). The governance part of network management has two meanings. The first is the structural one. It is about the organization being organized heterarchially, horizontally, in more or less autonomous networks with decentralized centres and cross-organizational networks with their own decision units and decision platforms. This is the phenomena that can be observed in decentralized schools with self-governing teams. The other meaning is the discursive one. This is about creating a meaningful consensus about the social order that the management team and the teachers have created at the school. The hierarchical management that also exists in network organized organizations is overlapped by a heterarchical, horizontal management with discursive rationalities (Danelund 2005). A meaningful consensus about the social order expresses itself in the agreement about the division of labour with the distribution of leadership tasks from the management team to teachers as it has been seen happens in self-governing teams. The horizontal management of discursive rationalities is apparent in that the self-governing teams enter into mutual agreements about who does what and in that the leadership tasks in the teams typically shifts among the teachers in the teams. At the Inner City School and at the North School the management has succeeded in making the necessary common norms, values and goals accepted as common goals that the teachers work toward as direction finders. There is mutual agreement that the child shall be in the centre, that the instruction at the North School takes its point of departure in Gardner's many intelligences (Gardner 1997), that this point of departure means differentiation of instruction, and that this is achieved through a rigid focus on the individual child (Kofod 2007d).

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Network management implies distribution of leadership tasks (Spillane 2006; Spillane *et al.* 2004) down the institutional hierarchy, and the teachers managing themselves in doing their jobs. It builds on a certain form of governmentality, where leadership has changed from direct supervision to what can be called meta-governance. Meta-governance means that the management team defines the organizational frames for the work of the school and decides which elements are superior and which are subordinated. It establishes on the one hand partnerships, negotiations, choice possibilities and incentives for active participation, while on the other hand it is about establishing norms, standards, benchmarks, quality indicators and hierarchical instructions and control relations that make it possible to measure and evaluate governance. The meta-management is the means that creates the preconditions for teachers being able to manage

themselves, to be self-governing. Meta-governance lies, for example, in the meeting structure or the organisation of teams that has been decided upon by the management team. Meta-management sets the organizational frames, but these frames are filled out by the teachers using the behavioural norms, values and goals that govern the teachers. Meta-management runs along two tracks. Firstly it creates, develops and mobilizes the participating teachers' energies, resources and knowledge. This is done through actor technologies that promote these things. It may be such motivating initiatives as participation in determining your own working conditions, freedom to plan your own job, the opportunity to mark your influence on a common work place, all of which can be seen at several of the schools in the project. Secondly meta-management sees to it that the participating members of the network develop their governing activities inside a constructed scope of discourse that is verbally defined and accepted by the participants, and thus is part of the inner understanding of themselves and the others in relation to their mutual outside world. The dual character of meta-management is not only a matter between the school's management team and the teachers. The relationship is repeated in the relation between the teachers and the children. According to the law on the Folkschool ('Consolidation Act No. 170 of 2nd June 2006', Act on Folkeskole 2006), instruction shall be differentiated and adapted to the individual child's needs. At the North School there is widespread individualization of instruction and this is stressed both by the municipality's emphasis on the individual child's individual development and by the school's focus on differentiation of instruction and on individual contact between the single teacher and the single child. Here the frames are set for the development of initiatives from both teachers and children. The other side of meta-management, the part that influences attitudes, is also felt in relation to the students at the North School. It is stressed that the students must be treated as equals and as being responsible for their own learning. They are taken seriously and the teachers involve them in the planning processes regarding their instruction, the evaluation of their work and level of their attainment (Kofod 2007a).

In the case study schools we see that these issues develop differently. The management (head and deputy) of the North School is very clear when they state their position as to the direction in which they want the school to develop, and in collaboration with teachers they have developed a networking system where teachers in teams carry out all planning, all instruction and evaluation on their own. The managers only take part in team meetings, if they are called upon to do so by teachers faced with a problem or a conflict they want to discuss. Teachers are autonomous within two frameworks. On the one hand there are the directions and the social technologies set out by, and negotiated with, management, and on the other there is the tight and binding collaboration in the teacher teams. The autonomy among the teachers is collective. A phenomenon that binds the school into a comprehensive entity is the meeting structure, the school meetings, Educational Council Meetings and others mentioned above. It is clear that the principal exercises considerable influence in meetings about the whole school while he does not participate in team meetings. Here, we see leadership at a distance. We never found teachers opposed to the way the school functioned. Management (the principal and deputy) of the Commuter School are also very clear in stating their position on the values and the goals the school should be moving towards. They have developed several forms of self steering and various social technologies that on one hand give opportunities for teacher participation and on the other hand demand a high level of personal commitment. Leadership is working to develop the school into being a learning organisation. There is substantial but not unequivocal support from the staff. Some teachers still find that it is difficult to work under the superior lines of direction set by the leadership. In this school management is kept informed about classroom teaching. The deputy often visits classes and can therefore develop a rounded picture of the teachers' instructional practice and can act as critical friend to teachers. In many respect the two schools described so far are similar, but they also have their differences. Management at the Commuter School is not performed at a distance but is very close to teaching in classes.

In the West School the management team are distinct in their positions as to the direction the school should take. This is the case as regards teaching and students' learning and especially when it comes to changes towards more up-to-date forms of collaboration and management. The school's management is energetic in trying to persuade teachers to participate actively in establishing self-governing teams. Teachers are currently still employing many strategies that are designed and intended to obstruct or delay the implementation of this policy. Management is developing and implementing a number of social technologies parallel to this development, such as annual plans and meetings with teams. It is through those technologies that management keeps itself informed of developments in the classroom. The principal exercises her influence at the annual team meeting, when she sets the agenda and negotiates meaning. We observed, for example, a meeting at which she insisted that teachers should retain and develop their authority towards the students. In all case study schools we saw a very close collaboration within management teams. Management works as a team. They meet daily, they inform each other in detail, and they attune their interpretations and decisions before they announced them publicly. In most interactions within the management team there are symmetrical relations. They discuss at the same level and support and challenge each other. Another common feature found in all case study schools is that all principals are members of numerous networks involving both principal colleagues from other schools in the district and the local authorities. Some of the work that used to take place in the local authorities, such as writing common statements of principle and action plans or coordinating work between schools, is now done in the leadership networks. The head of the education authority delegates work here and therefore accepts that principals can influence the ways that work is done. This means that principals have to work outside their schools but at the same time they get the chance to influence the ways the education authority is run. We see this development as a parallel to the development in schools, in that managing at the district level is to a certain degree also based on networks.

LEADERSHIP IS CONTEXTUAL

The Danish project confirms international research (Leithwood *et al.* 2004) that management is very contextual. Being a successful principal in one school does not automatically mean that you will be successful in another school. In our case we see that the three schools are placed in a variety of socio-economical contexts. We also see that the principal of the West School has only been in that position for two years while the principal of the North School has been there for ten years and the principal of the Commuter School for thirteen years. In the North School there has been a massive turnover in teachers since the beginning of the period. There has been a gradual change in the Commuter School and almost no change in the West school, so there the teaching staff is aging rapidly. Those factors alone have meant that the principal of the North school or the Commuter school has been in better positions to influence the direction the school was going than the principal of the West School. This may be the reason why these principals have had to focus on different aspects of school life. While the principal of the West School needs to focus on the fundamental structures and culture of the school and on the public sector modernization in the form of team building, this is not necessary at the Commuter School where the development is more in place. Here the principal can focus on developing instruction. In the North School both team collaboration and up-to-date teaching methods are well established. Here the principal can manage from a distance. An estimate of the democratic room for manoeuvre for staff in these schools will show that formal rights, such as rights to be heard and to share in decision-making, have been taken away from teachers (in an Act of 1991) and given to principals. On this basis we might claim that 'formal democracy' has diminished. However we could also take a look at the 'experience of democracy'. What are the opportunities for teachers to participate and negotiate (participatory and deliberative aspects of democracy)? When looking at negotiations about matters relating to the whole school, teachers have lost their voice and find that it has passed to the

principal. In all case study schools, however, we see principals often involving teachers in negotiation, in discussion and in the development of plans before decisions are made. We also see that principals produce and negotiate frameworks and directions for teachers' work in teams. Here then teachers are autonomous.

GOVERNMENTALISATION AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

Foucault (1983) presented the concept of governmentality in order to describe the tendency for organisational techniques to merge increasingly with the personal features of employees and clients. In school terms this means that individuals are increasingly expected to manage professional challenges and developments by themselves. 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, then, teachers find that they have a world of possibilities both at the school level, team level and classroom level. Participation is not an option; it is a requirement. The school wants them, body and soul. Seen through the lens of governmentality, the conduct of conduct could be said to be omnipresent in strategies in all the Danish case study schools (Dean 1999). Teaching and administrative staff participate in educational days that help to create a mutually shared language about the purpose and targets of the school and to foster a framework for interpreting the vision in the 'right' ways to move forward. Many schools are organised as learning organisations with large elements of self-governance. There seems to be a general tendency to delegate the management of teachers' teams to the teachers. In some cases this management is mostly about the implementation of the curriculum as regards specific subjects. In other cases there are examples of extensive self-governance among teachers within self-governing teams. Here powers of decision-making are distributed to the teacher teams, which not only plan their own teaching but also manage their budgets, which are typically more or less decentralised to departments with the exception of the deployment of substitute teachers and the administration of wages. This structure is an example of the departmentalised school where students typically feel that they can acquire influence through the student council.

The schools have action plans where school values and key priority areas are formulated. At a team level meetings are held regularly to create shared ways putting the vision into practice. The principals keep up to date with team plans by having group appraisal interviews at intervals, from which they get feed-back, listen, give their approval and enter into dialogue with teams in order to be part of the process. At an individual level the principals make sure that they have committed employees by having individual appraisal interviews with each and every employee, usually following a detailed interview schedule that both parties partake in. The main focus here is on developing people. The appraisal interview is an opportunity for principal and employee to evaluate the preceding period and to express expectations and wishes for the time to come. It is also an opportunity for the principal to monitor whether employees are committed to the vision of the school, in that employees are obliged to justify how they operationalize 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 appears across schools in Denmark. The following represents a mapping of the extensive network of organisational structures at the North School that are aimed at committing students, parents and staff to a particular culture and vision with a wide variety of organisational strategies. At the top, the school board consists of parents, teaching staff and student representatives. The principal acts as secretary, and a parent representative acts as chair. The board meets once a month and makes decisions of principle.

Regular staff meetings serve to assemble all teaching staff as well as other staff in order to foster a sense of belonging while at the same time providing a venue to disseminate information. These allow the school's vision and targets to be constantly reiterated and give an opportunity for informal talk about this particular school's culture. Group as well as individual appraisal interviews serve as opportunities for teaching staff to legitimate and debate their thinking, actions and expectations and to receive the management's blessing that these are in line with organisational priorities. There are Educational Council meetings for all educational staff three to four times a year, where common strategies for developing and interpreting visions and targets are elaborated and strengthened. Beyond that there are a number of more specialized committees. The Educational Development Council, for example, meets six to ten times a year in order to coordinate the educational development priorities at the school. Weekly collaborative meetings take place within the individual teaching teams. Apart from that, there are gatherings focusing upon curricular issues as well as conferences on reading skills and the like, at which management staff, relevant teaching staff as well as a school psychologist are present. Furthermore at the centre for students with special needs there are regular meeting between the school psychologist, the management team and the teachers of that specialised section of the school. This list only serves to illustrate the advanced form of social technology constitutes by this extensive network of meetings and coordinative efforts. In Foucauldian terms one would talk of an intensive governmentality structure allowing a co-ordination of organisational technologies and demands with individual subjects' wishes and expectations as to what they think is expected of them.

DEMOCRATIC 'BILDUNG'

Our interest in looking at the democratic opportunities for teachers is due first and foremost to our finding that there are clear links between the conditions under which teachers work and the conditions and frameworks that schools and teachers give students so they can develop a Democratic 'Bildung'. This kind of 'Bildung' is a matter not only of knowing about democracy but also – and to an even greater extent – of acquiring democratic patterns of interpretation and democratic ways of life (Beane & Apple 1999; Dewey 1916). Democratic 'Bildung', therefore, must include opportunities to test those interpretations and ways of living in real life.

Teaching

In this project, we investigated the kind of invitations and space for manoeuvre provided by school to democratic instruction and to students' Democratic 'Bildung'. We focus on the ways schools support students in getting authority through acquiring knowledge about the physical world, by getting academic knowledge, getting knowledge about social relations at many levels and getting insights into themselves. We also focus on how schools work in order to help students to develop their autonomy and independence. It is important to focus on two aspects of social life in schools, namely opportunities to participate and be a member of a community, and for contributing to deliberations in the community. We sharpen this aspect in discussing how deliberation should be given room for critical reflection. In the North School, some forms of collaboration and management and the social technologies that are used at school and teacher team levels are also transformed for use at the classroom level. Students are given substantial responsibility for planning and managing their own work and learning processes in collaboration with teachers. This takes place in various forms of project work, in many different, floating groupings, and through independent work on the basis of two-week plans. The teaching we learned about at the Commuter School points to a parallel development in the relations between teachers and students. There is a focus on several methods to enable activation and the development of independence. But the teachers here are in closer contact with the students' work on a daily basis. There is not as much focus on individual work as at the North School. The instruction and learning in the West School was a mixture of solid academia and inspiring teaching. We saw class teaching, project work, other forms of group work and individual work. In

one class, a teacher who challenged students both socially and academically to take part in critical reflection.

Collaborative Learning

The students in these Danish schools seem to consider their classmates to be collaborators rather than competitors. Two of the Danish case study schools carry out a lot of project work. Teachers plan for a theme and students then have to choose an issue and decide to investigate that issue and how to present the findings to the student group. Project work is group work. Students stress that they have an influence on many decisions. They mention that they have voted on which themes to work with both in social studies and in science. Students also decide on the formation of groups for project work, but they consider it to be a difficult process and they need a lot of support from the teachers. In addition, teachers emphasize that students develop techniques and procedures for conducting meetings, for the use of agendas and so forth. They learn to master decision-making and prioritizing. This is often done in the form of role-play. There seems to be a widespread understanding of learning as being a social activity. One aspect of learning is commitment, and that is more often than not generated through sociality. Another aspect of learning is getting feedback on your expectations and experiences and on what you learn. The most important feedback, recognition and appreciation, is often given by peers in working groups.

Tendencies

As a whole, we see that modernization gives a new combination of tightening and loosening couplings. When we analyse opportunities for student negotiation, we can see that traditionally teachers decided on the issue taught and on forms of teaching and working. A good part of teaching was done as class teaching with the opportunities for teacher control and student participation and negotiation that this form gives. In modern teaching forms such as project work and group work, some of the couplings are loosened. The teachers still decide issue, but students or groups of students can choose the issue they want to investigate. The students also choose how to work, how to find solutions to their problems and how to present them to their peers. The teacher sets the practical framework and demands collaboration and a finished product. Those forms of working are parallel to some of the forms used at the school and team level, and therefore there is room for student negotiation in some phases of the work. Such negotiations can develop their communicative competencies and may allow them to advance a step towards a more comprehensive Democratic 'Bildung'. At the same time these forms of working reflect professional forms in that they demand of students that they are active and committed. In group work and in individual work it is difficult to hide or go into 'inner exile'. When it comes to participating in communities, there are differences from school to school. At the West School and the Commuter School more of the instruction addressed the whole class or student groups. At the North School whole-class instruction was abolished as a dominant work form, making space for group and individual work forms. This may give support to students developing greater independence and – maybe – lesser social competencies. As a whole we can see that the working forms used in the case study schools seem to be suited to the development of personal and social skills that are different from those developed in the traditional school. It seems, however, that those are the competencies that economic life in a global world demands.

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