ANIMATED IMAGES IN LEADERSHIP LEARNING

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This paper presents and discusses the use of 'animated images'(Moos 2005a) in two Danish schools participating in the Leadership for Learning project. The intention was to test whether this method can be used constructively in a leadership development process. The aim of the Leadership for Learning project was to examine and enhance school leadership for learning, which meant looking at the relations between leadership and learning at several levels. One of the basic conceptions of the project was that leadership is always distributed in schools and it should be distributed in ways conducive to learning. Hence, this article focuses on the ways relations and leadership were conceived and developed. The series of short narratives, excerpts from animated images from two schools, written on the basis of a series of interviews with stakeholders (superintendents, principals, deputies, teachers, students and parents) conducted on two or three occasions over a three-year period, give an account of how participants develop their conception of relations and leadership over time and how they therefore provide a basis for the analysis of how leadership was conceived and distributed in different ways over the years. To facilitate the reading of the narratives, a brief introduction to the Danish educational context and to the thinking behind this way of conducting research and critical friendship with schools is presented.

THE DANISH EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The Danish school system, and therefore also the Danish primary and lower secondary schools (*Folkeschool,* with students aged 6-16) is being restructured and decentralised as part of a restructuring of the welfare society (MacBeath, Moos & Riley 1998). One aspect of this is the devolution of administrative and financial power from the state level to the municipal level, and further on down the line to the institutional level and even to the teacher team level. As a result, site-based management of schools places more weight on economic and marketplace values and less on democratic, political values (Moos 2005b). In Denmark, neo-liberal policy makers put more focus on market values and less on political and civic society values, while neo-conservative forces simultaneously stress the need for central, state control over matters concerning content and quality assurance. In short, many aspects of what is termed New Public Management (NPM) are being initiated in the Danish context.

There is a long history of autonomy for schools in Denmark, but traditional site-based management was redefined when schools were made financially autonomous and accountable. Principals now manage large budgets in collaboration with school boards that have a parental majority. Legislative action and, therefore, responsibility for the public objectives of the schools still remain in the hands of the Danish Parliament and the Ministry of Education, but interpreting and administering the curriculum is the responsibility of the municipalities. At present, the NPM wave that is moving from focusing on processes towards focusing on outcomes and accountability is gaining momentum. School test results have been made public on the Ministry's web site since 2003. Since then, the majority of the parties in Parliament entered into an agreement to restructure parts of the educational system by introducing national tests in all grade levels.

Principals have apparently been caught in the crossfire between several competing interests (Moos, Carney & Johanson 2000). The most important once are the national objectives for schools that - beyond basic skill requirements - focus on a comprehensive education with a focus on *Bildung/Dannelse*, meaning the effort to assist and facilitate children to develop into being in authority and ready to become citizens in a democratic society (Moos 2003). Second, there are requirements from local authorities demanding financial accountability, and, third, there is a school culture where teachers are accustomed to being very autonomous and are not eager to be managed or led by the new, strong, visible principals described by national agencies.

ANIMATED IMAGES AS A METHOD FOR ACTION-LEARNING AND ACTION-RESEARCH
Within the framework of the Leadership for Learning project, the aim was to explore the portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis 1997) as a tool for multiple purposes: Can it function as a tool for reflection for participating principals, teachers and critical friends, i.e. as a tool for action learning? Can it, at the same time, function as a reasonable tool for data collection from a school development process, i.e. as a tool for action research?

In the process of attempting to answer these questions, it turns out that by repeating the process of constructing images at different points over time (Moos 2005a), the impact of the images can be enhanced because they turn out to work as 'trading points' between practitioners and critical friends/researchers. They become images that practitioners can use to reflect on the past and the way relations and practices developed, and hence aid in making sense of the present situation (Weick 2001).

The Leadership for Learning project is both an action research project and an action-learning project. In action research, there is a joint responsibility towards developing the practice of both practitioners and researchers. Some members of the research community who feel that there is often a lack of documentation in action research projects have voiced criticism against action research. Without documentation, it is difficult for both involved and detached parties to criticise the results claimed. This predicament can be clarified by distinguishing between action research I as identified with professional work in schools, and action research II as a research strategy (Kalleberg 1995). Action research I as professional work does not have the same claim on documentation and publications as does action research II as a research strategy, and can be more aptly described as consisting of critical inquiries in order to separate it from research. A better term that is often used to describe this type of professional work is action learning (Tiller 1998).

The aim of action learning is to assist participants of a community in becoming more conscious of what they know and more attentive to their own experiences. It frames and analyses experiences, through a lens of diverse perspectives. The role of the critical friend (for example, a researcher or practitioner from another school) is to assist the participants in documenting, synthesising and reflecting on school experiences in a systematic manner (Tiller 1998; Tiller 2000). Creating a *distance* to the experience is a necessary condition for critical reflection on action to occur.

One way of creating this distance is to construct the events in a *text*, which occurs, for example, when a critical friend collects and analyses information and provides feedback in the form of a written account of how key persons within the school describe themselves. By doing this, a new image, partly as seen from the outside, is produced of teachers and school leaders in order to *irritate* or annoy their preconception or cognitive maps, i.e. by producing an appropriate difference. A text works as an inspiration or a tool for reflection on practice. The theoretical basis for this procedure can be found in the above concepts of action research and action learning, which in turn are based on social constructivist conceptions (Qvortrup 2000; Qvortrup 2001).

The way we conduct this form of critical reflection is through the concept of animated images (Moos 2005a) inspired by the portraiture method devised by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). The animated images were developed from interviews with stakeholders and later condensed into short written images that were returned as feedback and discussed with the stakeholders. Approximately one year later, the same procedure was repeated, resulting in a series of animated images that were integral to the action process.

The portrait and later on the series of portraits, the animated images, proved to be adequate tools for recording perceptions and experiences, and thus for stimulating reflections in schools. Whether or not the qualitative portraiture method can produce a truthful report about a school has been questioned (English

2000). Our aim, however, is not to provide a picture of 'the truth'. Surveys offer one kind of truth framed within the selection of questions, and interviews offer another kind of truth restricted by the nature of the social interactions of the participants (Johnson, Clarke & Dempster 2005). In addition, the analytical lens we apply to the data sets offers differentiated opportunities for truth-making. As we see it, truth is negotiated, and there are a number of understandings and views that differ based on the viewer's standpoint. For instance, the school principal may understand the school in one way, the teachers in another, and the students in yet another and so on. Like anthropologists, researchers are part of the social world they are researching (Hammersley & Atkinson 1987), and are therefore also influenced by their preconceptions, perspectives and interests. Our aim is to produce images as portraits in progress that can be used not only by stakeholders in schools and by researchers, but hopefully also by the reader of this text as a basis for ongoing reflection.

Brief extracts from animated images from two Danish schools, labelled here as EAS and HGO, are discussed in the next section. Over a period of three years, we interviewed stakeholders (principals, deputy principals, teacher, student and parents) in the two schools two or three times. The notes and transcripts presented here have been compressed into a few pages as animated images and focus on leadership only, while the Leadership for Learning project as a whole focused on learning and leadership, and the relations between the two.

During the writing process, the author prioritised and selected statements and reflections from the corpus of data collected. The main guideline in making my selections was the general claim made in both schools that leadership is distributed among formal leaders, teachers and also students. The quotes and accounts given intended to catch statements that could illuminate that theme.

When the images were presented to stakeholders (school leadership and groups of teachers) a few weeks after the interviews had been conducted, they were able to recognise their schools, the relations and the leadership styles, which thus validates the images as valid descriptions of aspects of their school. Simultaneously, the images were used as tools for reflection and the negotiation of meaning within the school and the school development process as well as between the principal, teachers and a critical friend. Looking back in time from the present position also indicates a possible future (Weick 2001).

SCHOOL 1: EAS
Comprised from the images, the text in this section is based on document analyses and interviews with principals, teachers, students, etc. on two occasions in 2002 and 2005. A few weeks after the first round of interviews, I wrote the first image, pulling together the meanings and descriptions given in the interviews. Presented to and discussed with the school leadership and groups of teachers, the images functioned as a reflection on the school, allowing leaders and teachers to reflect on their praxis while simultaneously validating their account of the situation.

FROM OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS: TAKEN FROM THE FIRST PORTRAIT, 2002
A small school situated in the centre of Copenhagen, approximately thirty-five per cent of the student population are bilingual, and most of whom are of Pakistani origin. The staff consists of twenty-seven teachers, eight service workers, one school secretary, one principal and one deputy principal. The school website states:

> *EAS is a school where development is an integral, natural part of daily life for the staff as well as the school board. Both teachers and the leadership take part in projects with external partners. Every year we have a project or a course that includes the whole teaching staff. We do this to ensure that we all have a common understanding of the big issues, like values and goals for learning. By working with school development in this way, we have a well-defined learning strategy to build holistic team*

teaching on based on projects incorporating the practical and musical intelligence of both teachers and pupils.

All stakeholders describe the school culture as inclusive and friendly. Everybody knows everybody. The school district is composed of a mix of the working class people who originally lived there, immigrants and a new, resourceful group of people from the middleclass).

FROM THE FIRST IMAGE, 2002
In the first round of interviews, both new and older teachers are described as professional and committed. Everybody is prepared to do his or her best. Many teachers take part actively in the pedagogical debate but do so in different ways. Some are very structured, and some are project oriented, while others are content oriented and so forth. This diversity is considered to be an asset to the school.

The school leader says that parents and staff see him as the leader. It is difficult for him to say how students perceive him. He tries to make himself visible by standing on the playground every morning to say good morning to the students. The school leader and the deputy see themselves as a leadership team. The deputy carries out administrative jobs and the two of them share information as necessary. He describes his relations to staff as being collegial.

Using a metaphor, the teachers describe principalship by comparing the former school principal with the present one: The former principal was the captain who set the ship's course and praised teachers if they arrived at the destination. He facilitated the journey, but the course was his. The present school principal asks teachers about their professional trajectories. He gives the staff a lot of choice and opportunities to make decisions in self-governing teams and project work. Teachers are very autonomous, but this is difficult and dangerous. Although perhaps satisfactory and rewarding, it is much harder, teachers say. They explain that they could use more assistance and help from the leadership for the journey.

With a vague image of what and who the leadership is, some students say it is the school principals while others say that it is the teachers.

The school leader gives feed back to the staff in team interviews and in staff development interviews, but also on an informal level. Leaders are aware of the Rosenthal effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson 1992), which is when their behaviour and actions influence student performance, also on the class level. However, the school principal says that administrative tasks take more time than ever, limiting the time available for educational leadership. The leadership tries to create the room for the kind of school they want by hiring good teachers and collaborating with them to develop classroom practice.

Teachers find that the leaders influence all aspects of school life. Made for and with teachers, the visions influence what happens in class. Leadership supports the current agenda. The issue is not about developing a new one.

Comments – At Present
Over a protracted period, being the principal of this school has been extremely challenging. The deputy has been away from school for long periods because of ill health, leaving the principal with all of his administrative work on top of his own work. Consequently, little time has been available for educational leadership with teacher teams and individual teachers and classes.

As part of the Leadership for Learning project, the initial portrait and results from the survey were presented to the teachers' council, which every teacher is a member of, for discussion. Although the teachers participated in the discussion with interest, they did not feel the need to make decisions about

aspects of the school that could be changed and the senior management team (SMT) did not want to push the issue.

The first round of interviews was completed at the beginning of the Leadership for Learning project in 2002. Following the feedback on the images, a number of school development activities were undertaken over the next three years. At the end of the project, in 2005, I repeated the round of interviews, this time on the basis of both of the first images. The text was again forwarded to the participants prior to the interviews, which covered the basis of school development activities and on development in general.

FROM THE SECOND IMAGE, 2005
The principal explains:

> *We are working on implementing the new leadership structure with me as an educational and administrative leader in addition to being the overall leader. The educational leader is in charge of all kinds of 'normal education'; while I take care of the special needs education, the kindergarten class, the integration class and so on, all of the 'non-normal education'. Teachers work in department and in teams. Teams are made up of teachers servicing one class, and departments are composed of teachers around a number of classes. I attend department meetings and the educational leader attends team meetings. I do lead with the work I do in the educational committee, but not as much as I would like to. It is hard to get the teachers' attention. Teachers are of course polite and listen when I talk, but once they are back in class again, they do what they usually do. The feedback from the survey did not further the development. The school focused too much on problems in the SMT, which was once again highlighted with the results and is what put everything to a halt.*

The teacher representative on the developmental committee says that the school leader must have an oversight over what goes on in every class and be in good contact with the staff. He must be developmentally oriented and provide space for teachers' perspectives, their commitment and their need to experiment. Early on, signing teachers up for in-service courses was important, now the main issue is the individual development of each and every teacher.

One teacher explains:

> *Therefore, it is more important than ever that the principal gives clear signals, partly because we now have an educational leader. This often confuses the signals. The principal's influence on my teaching is minimal. He decides of course where I teach and what subjects I teach, but beyond that, no. There are meetings between the principal and teacher teams, but no class visits.*

A newly appointed, female teacher says that the school leader should have a heavy say in teaching, but that this is not the case. The SMT does not know much about what goes on. During her interview, she observed the following:

> *I get a pat on the shoulder from colleagues. Being a newly appointed teacher I miss the attention of the SMT. I would like to have discussion with SMT; they could pop in every now and then. As it is now, they only turn up when there are problems. The visits and discussions with leaders could be useful to me. Discussions with colleagues are useful, but to have a new set of eyes from the leaders could help in discussions with old colleagues. I think that our leaders know as little about my teaching as I know about their leadership. I can do whatever I want as long as the parents don't complain. That's not satisfactory.*

A male teacher with fourteen years' experience concurs with the above, stating that the school leader has no influence on teaching except that he is legally responsible. He ought to have real insight into teachers'

praxis in education, which he can only get by observing and by talking with teachers. In this regard, the teacher said, *I have never seen a leader in my class nor have I talked to them about my teaching. The SMT could influence teaching through the educational committee, but there is never an educational discussion there.*

Four students from grades six and seven say that they often work on projects. This is a good way of working if the project groups function well. The student in the group who is hard working or who has the paper with the assignment, says one student, is kind of the group leader. –Who the leader is depends on who has the energy to take the initiative. Different people take on the role, depending on the subject/theme or content matter. The student explains:

> *If you are good at it, you become the leader. It just happens. Suddenly you're the leader. It is something we do to keep control over things; otherwise there is chaos. The teachers don't ask us to take on a leadership role, but we are good at helping each other. The older ones help the younger ones.*

Comments -At Present

The first round of interviews present the image of a visible, active principal who initiates and takes part in educational discussions with teachers and acts as a critical friend at team meetings and during one-to-one dialogues. In addition, the teachers are said to be active and committed. Over the years, however, the situation changes and three years later, there seems to be a limited number of educationally relevant interactions between the principal and teachers. Both parties agree with this observation. Teachers regret the lack of attention and support from the principal, claiming that he has never visited a lesson and never talked to them about their teaching. The principal, on the other hand, regrets the lack of response to his ideas and plans introduced at meetings, claiming that the discussions are only too seldom transformed into educational action in classrooms. Part of leading the school is apparently based on routines that are not questioned by teachers or by the principal. Because the deputy principal is frequently ill, he is too busy with administrative tasks and the teachers go about business as usual.

At EAS, the principal and the teachers are apparently often functioning in a parallel performance arrangement. They are occupied with many of the same tasks and practices, such as constructing and negotiating the direction of education in school. Teachers do take care of these tasks and practices in class and during discussions in the educational committee and the principal does the same in meetings and in other situations. Nevertheless, the parties often seem as though they are not pulling in the same direction. The principal regrets to say that even though the teachers listen politely to him at meetings, they do not comply with his messages. When they get out into their classes, they continue to do what they usually do.

There are other kinds of division of labour at EAS. One example is the division of leadership tasks related to normal educational and special needs educational leadership, as well as the division of special needs leadership between the educational leader and the principal. Nevertheless, teachers complain that this division causes confusion, because the signals sent by the SMT do not match what is happening.

SCHOOL 2: HGO

The text in this section consists of a short account of the document analysis done prior to the first visit to the school in 2002. Thereafter, there are excerpts from the first image written on the basis of interviews completed in 2002. This image was returned as feedback to the school leadership and teacher groups.

One year later, in 2003, when the school development project began after the summer break, the principal re-read the first image and was really surprised by the development she found had occurred over just one year. As a result, we agreed to find out whether the other stakeholders felt the same way as the principal, i.e. that everything had changed over the past year Thus, the second round of interviews were conducted,

and I wrote the second image in 2003. The result, along with the first image, was also returned as feedback to the school leadership and teacher groups.

The same procedure was followed two years later in 2005.

READING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, FROM THE FIRST IMAGE IN 2002
Established in August 2001, the school only accommodates students in grades eight to ten in five large, flexible learning environments. At present, there are approximately 80 students in each grade and they work in multi-age groups of 60. Situated in a lower middle class area, very few parents have completed a higher education and sixty percent of the students speak Danish as a second language. The school's concept of education puts emphasis on the importance of enjoying school, mutual respect, and democracy in teaching and school life. The school website also stresses the fact that students have a number of different intelligences. The twenty-six teachers are relatively young and very committed to the school. The senior management team (SMT) comprises the principal and five department/team heads.

FROM THE FIRST IMAGE, THE INTERVIEWS FROM AUTUMN, 2002
One year after the school was established, the general understanding of leadership and of who exercises leadership functions and roles is ambiguous at this point in time. The principal and the deputy principals paint a picture of a relatively clear and transparent division of decision-making and devolution of power from principal to department / team head to teachers and to students. The SMT finds that the flat leadership structure gives a great deal of discretionary power to teachers and students, but that they are apparently unable to see that this is the case. Teachers say that it is hard to see which competencies each of the SMT leaders have. They are also uncertain as to the roles of the self-managing teams. Instructional leadership seems to be rather indirect. The principal is responsible for activating people and projects, creating the school vision, building up an appropriate working environment, and taking care of relations with local authorities and the local community. Although the department / team heads have other more direct educational responsibilities, most of this is left to the teachers. Leadership, it seems, is chiefly tied to the principal and the department / team heads. Teachers do not see themselves as leaders and neither do the students. Leadership is about administration, decision making and (for students) the enforcement of rules.

As the following quote shows, the principal believes that everyone employed on the staff should have a leadership function.

> *We have a flat structure comprising teacher teams, classroom support and administrative staff. Finances are delegated to our various departments. They have lots of autonomy. The lines of communication are therefore very clear. The department leaders have pedagogical autonomy within the framework of our policies and the 'project work' concept. Each teaching team controls the teaching programme.*

The *principal* says that SMT is concerned with clearing the path for learning to take place and that it is involved in the overall development process for teaching. The dispersal of leadership in the departments supports this. The *teachers* say that there are connections, but that they are hard to describe. Apparently, what they are referring to is the link between SMT and teachers, not the direct link from the principal to student learning. Student and parent representatives found it hard to answer these questions.

Comments – At Present
The first image clearly depicts a new school one year later at the time the interviews were conducted. Different from an average Danish school in that it serves a narrower age group, the school was also started with a new kind of leadership structure. The result is a high level of confusion when it came to finding and constructing relations and positions, procedures and practice from day one.

FROM THE SECOND IMAGE, AUTUMN 2003
The principal says that the leadership model was new to both teachers and leaders in the beginning, and finding new culture, procedures and structures proved to be difficult. Self-steering or self-management were not only a matter of taking charge of leading part of the education and the school, but also taking over responsibility for those aspects of school life. Self-management meant that the teachers and leaders had to develop new relations and new procedures for interaction between department and team leaders, between department leaders and teachers and between department leaders and the principal. In the beginning in 2002, some teachers felt that self-managing teams equated to total freedom for teachers. In the autumn of 2003, some of those teachers had either left the school or realised that leading is a combination of freedom and responsibility.

A teacher from the development committee says that HGO has developed an exciting educational climate in the interplay between the educational foundation, which everybody accepted when they applied for their jobs, and personal experience. It is a challenging enterprise, because time is a scarce commodity. This is not the case, however, because of the structure and culture of the school. One of the features of HGO is the flexible creation of classes that allows room for allocating more resources to some student groups if it is deemed necessary socially or for the subject matter. This feature is the basis for making HGO broader and more capable of making room for and taking care of all kinds of students. Teachers also feel that this aspect of HGO is a major element that helps students develop into being more self-managing and responsible. One teacher reports that:

> *Leadership is about overview, identification, empathy, the competence to lay down educational tracks, educational direction and to be visible…I like a leader who is committed to both structure and plans, and most certainly to education, and who has her finger on the pulse of what is happening.*

Comments – At Present
During the second year, teachers participated in many in-service courses and seminars at the school. The teams met at least once a week to make plans and evaluate instruction. Teachers and leaders alike welcome the many visitors that come to the school. The school's image and results from the survey were returned as feedback for discussion in the teachers' council, a mixture that, according to the SMT, might well have 'irritated' the teachers and leaders' perceptions.

FROM THE THIRD IMAGE, WINTER 2005
After reading the portraits from 2002 and 2003, the principal and deputy principal find that the biggest differences occurred from 2002 to 2003, to the point that it seemed like there were two different schools. When the school opened, there was a general sense of insecurity regarding the systems, relations and decision making. Now, a number of routines have been established, and that is *"a good thing, too".*

The teacher teams function much better now. Sometimes, when there are problems with relations in the teams, the SMT is called upon, but mostly the department leaders can lead their team productively. Teachers now understand more fully the space they have to manoeuvre within the teams. One reason for this development is that two-thirds of the teachers who were there when HGO started decided to leave and have been replaced by other teachers who are more willing and able to work in this unique school.

The SMT is present and visible in school and is often called upon to act as a sparring partner for teams and teachers, altering the view of the SMT as the boss to it being more like a group of critical friends. The leadership team (SMT plus department leaders) meets every two weeks to discuss day-to-day operations and long-term strategies.

In a group interview with teachers and department leaders from the developmental committee, teachers were described as the ones who lead classes and students as they plan and structure teaching and learning.

They guide students and carry the overarching responsibility for the situation. They pose critical questions regarding student work to provoke students into reflection. They work as critical friends.

Members of the committee find that collaboration between teachers, and between teachers and the leadership, has improved greatly since 2002 because the relations within the teams have been made clearer and the relations to the SMT are also more transparent, cementing a strong sense of being self-governing teams.

Five ninth graders explained in a group interview that student leadership exists within the group:

> *If somebody gets a good idea in relation to the task or has some kind of insight beforehand, it seems natural that he or she takes on a leadership role for a period of time.*

Teachers exercise leadership when they inspire and motivate students to work with an issue or a theme, and when they get students to follow up on a topic with their own ideas. Sometimes students come up with ideas. Teachers select the overall, thematic groups while the students form the working groups. Teachers also lead students as they work in the project groups by keeping an eye on the work they do. One student explains,

> *"If something needs to be corrected they always take you aside and ask you to assume responsibility for your own learning. It always takes place in a dialogue, not as a form of one-way communication".*

The influence and leadership of the SMT is not visible on an everyday basis, but "*they must have an indirect influence through teachers*" the students added.

Comments – At Present

When HGO was established, confusion reigned because positions and power relations were not yet transparent between teachers, department / team leaders and the principal. However, applying the animated image to look back over four years, practitioners were able to discover that the teachers had developed, understood and accepted the space available to manoeuvre within the teams and in relation to the leadership. Both teachers and the SMT claim that a culture, structure and relations have been developed and clarified in a continuous process of discussions, dialogue and negotiations between all parties.

Teachers maintain that the self-managing teams are working well and that both department / team leaders and other teachers take on leadership tasks. Equally as important is the fact that teachers now seem to accept the leadership of the department and the team leaders.

The first round of interviews showed that students found it difficult to talk about leadership. They were uncertain as to who exercised leadership in the school. "Is it the secretary?" one of them asked. That changed over the years and in the last interview, students were able to talk about the principal's and teachers' leadership in addition to student leadership. This may be the result of the schools' focus on the project work method and the development of that method to fit local demands, as well as the students' need to feel attached to groups of peers and the leadership roles and responsibilities they now and then take on. Leadership is claimed to stretch over (Spillane 2006) the whole school.

TO SUM UP

These short narratives show that leadership developed differently in the two schools over the three to four years, they participated in the Leadership for Learning project. Due to factors that are partially outside and partially within the realm the principal's influence, both leadership practice and leadership perceptions developed differently in each school.

It is fair to conclude that leadership is distributed in both schools. Distribution in this sense is not synonymous with an alienating and controlled distribution of labour, but includes both the democracy-doing and creation of autonomy because both responsibility and decision making are distributed (Woods 2004). But the distribution works very differently and has been developed in dissimilar ways in the two schools. While it seems that teachers and leaders at HGO have taken this situation on, this does not seem to be the case at EAS. Over the three year period, the EAS teachers and leadership have apparently separated their actions. They still talk with each other, but only seldom do the words turn into actions. They seem to have divided the school into two parallel spheres. One sphere comprises the classrooms and the teams where teachers lead, and the other sphere is the school leadership with the SMT at its helm. Nevertheless, the direction the SMT sets for the school does not affect teachers. This development emerges very clearly from the animated images, but discovering the cause has been difficult. The deputy principal's illness has meant a large administrative workload for the principal that has hindered him in communicating and collaborating in practical ways with teachers. His leadership and presence has diminished and that could be part of the explanation as to why teachers withdraw to their groups and classrooms.

At HGO, the distribution of leadership has developed differently. In the beginning there was a lot of uncertainty and confusion because of the very new situation everyone found themselves in, but the animated images show how both structural and cultural matters were sorted out so that teachers and students took over their leadership roles and the SMT worked to distribute the responsibility to them. This development seems to be a result of a targeted and active school policy. The principal openly and explicitly arranged courses, learning situations for teams, time for collaboration in teamwork etc.

Teacher teams are the one preferred social technology that these and many other schools use in order to further collaboration and disperse responsibility and leadership. In both schools there is an emphasis on teacher teams as a structural tool (as part of the formal structure of schools) and as a cultural community (actually functioning as communities for collaboration and interaction between teachers) (Gronn 2002). Teacher teams are intended to function as platforms or scaffolds for planning and evaluating instruction, discussing the direction of the school and for teachers' continuous professional development. Teams are thus expected to function as integral parts of the management and leadership of schools in collaboration with both the SMT and students.

At EAS, the teams seem to function on the basis of tradition, routines and teacher collaboration. The principal, however, does not interact much with teams. At HGO there is an intricate interplay among teams, department/team leaders and the principal in which all parties influence each other. Relations between teams and leaders often appear to be only structural in EAS, whereas they are both structural and cultural in HGO because agents interrelate their actions in a heedful way (Weick & Roberts 1993). Members of the team act jointly with the principal according to social norms - shared understandings of the space available to manoeuvre - which are created and negotiated as agents act according to them.

The author is not suggesting that the influence of the animated images or the action-research project as a whole is the sole source of influence on the participants in the schools. Many, many other agencies, authorities, processes, information etc. have an impact on the thinking of principal and teachers, but I think that this short article has demonstrated that the animated images method can be used for the purposes intended, i.e. action learning and action research. Action research needs methods that can both record the situation and the processes while simultaneously functioning as facilitators of the actions intended. The excerpts in this article demonstrate that the method works. When the images were presented to stakeholders, they were able to recognise their schools, the relations and leadership and in this way validate the images as valid descriptions of aspects of their schools.

At the same time, the images were used as tools for reflection and negotiation of meaning within the school and the school development process between the principal, teachers and critical friend. As mentioned previously, looking back in time from the present position also indicates a possible future (Weick 2001).

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