School Management: Norwegian Legacies Bowing to New Public Management

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The purpose of the study was to investigate the relevance of school management training programmes to current Norwegian education policies and strategies. A specific question was asked: How relevant is the teaching professors' understanding of school management competence? The findings indicate a split understanding of policy relevant understanding of school management. A majority of respondents had an understanding of school management coherent with the national policies and strategies. A minority did not. They saw the headmaster primarily as a communicative facilitator for teachers' work, and an 'administrative caretaker'. In an international perspective the findings represent a Norwegian particularity. There is a collision between Norwegian anti-management legacies of running schools and the Government's need for effective and accountable management. This may imply a slower speed of implementing educational reforms in Norway.

Key Words: school, management, training, education, reform policies, pedagogy
JEL *Classification:* I, O

Introduction

HEAD[1] is a Norwegian four years' comparative research project focusing on the quality of school management training in Norway, Finland, France, UK and US. The objective is to produce new knowledge about school manager training of quality internationally, which can be relevant for quality improvement in Norway. This objective will be accomplished by country reports taking stock of relevant knowledge in the five countries. In this report the focus is Norway. More specifically, the case of Norway will be studied by identifying how the function of school management is actually *understood* by those responsible for training school managers.

The rationale of the HEAD study is that the school manager is a particularly important link in what has been labelled 'the education value

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chain'. The chain's starting point is the goals of the current national education policies, and the end point is satisfaction among key stakeholders and Norway's ranking in international comparisons of school achievements.

THE CHAIN

1. National education policies,
2. university trainers' understanding of school management,
3. the professional quality of the school manager,
4. the quality of teaching and learning activities, and
5. the quality of students' learning achievements on the one hand

   and, on the other:

6. stakeholders' satisfaction (parents, higher education institutions and working life representatives) and
7. Norway's ranking in international comparisons of learning achievements as indications of the country's competitive edge in the global knowledge economy.

This study focuses on point (2.) in the Chain above, that is, *the understanding of the school management function among the training staffs at three main Norwegian providers,* The Norwegian University of Science (NTNU), University of Oslo (UIO) and Norwegian School of Management (BI). Although these three institutions are responsible for the bulk of training in the country, there are several other providers (colleges).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The overall research question is: *How relevant is Norwegian school management trainers' understanding of school management in relation to the goals and strategies of present national education policies?* Before responding to this question, two others have to be answered:

1. How is 'school management' understood by the trainers at NTNU, UIO and BI?
2. What are the similarities and differences in understanding school management at the three institutions?

Hence, the 'research object' of this study is delimited to the trainers' *understanding of the school management function.* One assumption made is that a particular Norwegian legacy of understanding the school management function as primarily an auxiliary for the teachers may now

be challenged by influence from corporate life, expressed in the principles of *New Public Management* (Pollitt 1995). These principles from market-based corporations (goal-orientation, client-centred, competition, assessment and accountability) are increasingly seen by mandators and clients as more valid for implementing current policies in the public sector. From this line of reasoning it is, moreover, assumed that there may be found differing understandings, and perhaps tensions, among Norwegian trainers of school manager trainees, which may be dysfunctional for policy goals.

KEY TERMS

Staff understanding of school management is the core element of a key link in the education value chain. For the effectiveness of the training programme's organisation it is paramount what sort of understanding the trainers transfer to the trainees. Two terms applied are school management/manager and school leadership/leader. Although their conceptual content is frequently debated, in this study 'management' is seen as a neutral, overarching term, comprising decision-making, leadership and administration tasks. These terms are used interchangeably in the literature and in policy documents. That is also the case in this report. School management is operationalised into three dimensions: Management of learning, personnel management and organisation management.

Norwegian National Education Policies from 2001

The national policy document Competence for Development[2] suggests directions in which the new reforms should be implemented, as well as describing the areas of responsibility for their realisation. Whilst recognizing that a network of providers who offer further education is already in place, the report suggests that there should also be: 'further development of the programmes, so that they cover both the competence required for leading knowledge organizations in a process of change and development, and the more reform specific requirements' (UFD 2004, 7). These developments are to be enacted in conjunction with a wider group of stakeholders than merely the programme providers embodied in higher education institutions. Moreover, this is described as a priority.

THE QUALITY REFORM OF TEACHER TRAINING:
'DIVERSE, CHALLENGING AND RELEVANT'

The white paper on teacher training reform (UDF 2002) reported important changes in educational policy directions, which have been further

applied and built upon in the 2004 white paper (UFD 2004). Chapter 15 of this official document outlines the purpose, character and practice of capacity building³ for both teachers and leaders. From this document it is clear that it is the overall responsibility of the employer⁴ to provide for, and encourage capacity development by mapping needs, assuring the availability of programmes and setting up opportunities for employees. The employers, in this instance, are the individual local and regional authorities. It is the declared responsibility of the higher education institutions to respond to these demands by offering programmes complementary to the owners' needs.

From the amended Education Act from 2005 (Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa) it is even more clearly noted that the responsibility for in-service provision lies with just the local authority.⁵ Whilst the State continues to control the direction of education policies, the greater freedom for local government ensures the development of an interesting education map of Norway. With greater demands for increased competence, institutions begin to compete for course participants, while at the same time many are involved in collaborative networks of providers. This is also now developing into competition for providing localized programmes for local and regional authority mandators.

A speech given by the Norwegian Minister of Education in June 2005,⁶ suggested that there would be a continued divergence from the traditional educational orthodoxy of Norway, at least as long as the Conservative Party was in power. Despite the introduction and development of more Master's degrees, and locally based programmes, the Minister referred to a continued dissatisfaction with the narrow recruitment base, constricted development of schools as knowledge forming, learning organizations, and concern over weak evaluation and limited capacity for observation. This led the Minister to hint at more focus upon developing the Norwegian national quality assurance systems. At the same time, the Minister implied that there would be no centrally steered plan for school leadership training, despite the suggestions to the contrary, outlined in *Culture for Learning* (UFD 2004).

POLICIES SUMMARISED

Since 2001, increasing developments in policy have changed the map of the educational field in Norway. The system is now characterized by a greater freedom for local school leaders, whilst simultaneously demand-

ing greater accountability. There is a greater focus upon the content and achievements of schooling. The ministry has highlighted curriculum knowledge, national testing, competition and privatization, as the key areas of change. The ensuing demands upon school leaders have been outlined in recent government white papers, particularly in the above-mentioned *Culture for Learning*. With the suggested requirements for greater competence within these areas, the Government has supported the development of Master programmes in the field of school leadership, with overall responsibility for the capacity building in the hands of the employer; the local and regional authorities. This has led to an increase in Master level programmes, which has in turn led to increased competition both at the home institution, and in locally based qualifications mandated by the local government.

Theoretical Framework

It has proved particulary difficult to find research directly focusing on *the training provider* (curriculum and organisation/staff). This fact is, however, highly stimulating for the HEAD programme. It is filling in on a knowledge gap. As proxy for such knowledge, existing studies about school management as such have had to serve. Findings from the HEAD Pilot Study (Tjeldvoll and Welle-Strand 2003) indicate that the bulk of research internationally on school management and management training is done from 'within', that is – by education researchers seeing the school from within and related to education sector specific conditions. The HEAD research initiative has, partly, been motivated by observed limitations of such an 'inside' approach, e. g. not taking much into account effects of globalisation and experiences from knowledge management in corporate life.

EDUCATION 'INSIDE' RESEARCH

According to reports from the HEAD Preparation Project (Tjeldvoll and Welle-Strand 2003; Tjeldvoll, Welle-Strand, and Bento 2003) research on education management is scarce in three of the five countries involved. In Finland, France and Norway not much systematic research has taken place. Among the few publications found, typical foci are case reports, technical evaluations and handbooks, and next to none published in English. For UK and US the situation is different. A considerable amount of publications have been identified.

In Norway between 1998 and 2003 39 publications were traced. Among

these 15 were evaluation reports and project case descriptions and ten were master theses (Paulsen 1998). Most of the remaining 14 were of the department/institute series-type, practical guides and working documents (Paulsen 1999). Only a few were ordinary research publications (e. g. Lillejordet 2003; Grøtterud and Nilsen 2001). No articles in referee journals were found. A careful assessment the of status quo in Norway is that hardly much systematic research has been going on. All of the works found applied an 'inside' and practical approach, and most of them have an unreflected normative approach, aiming at improvement of the existing system and 'unified school-thinking'. These understandings to a fair degree run contrary to the new public management thinking of the government in 2004 (UFD 2004).

As far as Finland is concerned, from online databases only two articles of interest were identified (Eratuuli and Nylen 1995; Leino 1984). Eratuuli and Nylen (1995) made a comparative study of school managers in Russia, Sweden and Finland. They found that Swedish and Finnish principals were more general and practical-oriented while the Russians were more concerned about the principles of leadership.

French studies are frequently concerned about the centralisation-decentralisation problems (Simon 2000; Louis 1994; Bonnet, Dupont, and Godin 1995), and the efficiency of leadership, sometimes in a comparative perspective (Jumentier 1995). French research has also focused on theories, methodology and practices in order to improve school communication. Head teachers are regarded as the main link of the communication chain and they are required to improve their skills continuously (Etienne and Amiel 1995). The French studies indirectly reflect an understanding of the school manager as 'an extended administrative arm of the Republic', not including much room of action for decentralised action by the school leader.

In UK there has been much written about the development educational leadership and management. Brundrett (2001) points out that unlike US, with UK it was only in the 1960s that programmes offering systematic training and development opportunities for senior staff in schools began to appear. The United Kingdom, like USA, has witnessed a period of intense concern about the quality of school management. Brundrett's recent research has revealed a patchwork of provisions including certificate, diploma, MA, MBA, MEd, MSc and EdD courses which provides a comparatively structured provision of progressive academic qualifications grounded in both theory and practice. Slowly the

purely academic basis was being changed. The concepts of 'leadership' and 'management' are being rethought.

According to MacBeath (2003) leadership is a term full of ambiguity and with a range of interpretations. It is a humpty – dumpty word that can mean just what we want it to mean. His essay goes on to discuss 20 different definitions of leadership, of which many are similar and overlapping. He discusses the trend in education over the last few years to shift from notions of management to re-brand movements, projects and organisations under the leadership banner. This is to create a distance between leadership and 'management', the latter seen as a more limited concept and too closely associated with managerialism, a somewhat discredited approach based on rational, 'scientific' principles (ibid.).

In the US, Studies of leadership have a long history. The first publications about educational leadership appeared by the 1950s. One important discussion throughout the years has been about the possibility of the implementation of management theory in education. While some authors have argued that schools should be administered like any other organization, others believe that the management of educational institutions is intrinsically different from other branches since their purposes are more difficult to conceptualize than the purposes of industrial organizations (Wagner 2001; Murphy 2001).

The last decade witnessed profound changes in how educational leadership has been regarded in the United States, with the establishment of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders,[7] developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and by representatives of 23 state departments of education. This document is composed of six standards, all beginning with the sentence 'a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

STANDARD 1 Facilitating the development, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the community

STANDARD 2 Advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning and staff professional growth.

STANDARD 3 Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

STANDARD 4 Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

STANDARD 5 Acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.

STANDARD 6 Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts.'

These six standards can be seen as education policy quality criteria for much of the research on education management training programmes taking place in the US, as well as influencing the rest of the world.

The 'Inside-Research' Summarised

The very scarce Norwegian proper research identified tended to be non-reflective, normative and practical in approach, aiming at an improvement of the existing 'unified school model'. *The relation* between teaching staff and manager was a key dimension. The international research field is dominated by studies from England and the US. The former is characterised by a centralised-decentralised strategy for effective implementation of national policies at school level. Effective school managers are seen as crucial. In the US a strong stress on a manager leading processes for improving local culture for learning and care in an ethical perspective is replacing a former more administrative model. International research has a focus on the strengthened manager, while the (scarce) Norwegian research is focused on improving the existing model.

CHANGE LEADERSHIP, KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION

At the end of the education value chain is now found the global, market-based knowledge economy with its users and customers. It requires the optimal growth of human capital from kindergarten to universities. Policy makers increasingly see knowledge as the core resource and dynamic of modern economies, and prerequisite of global competitiveness. The main source of productivity and competitiveness in modern economies is knowledge, both as input, but increasingly as production process itself (Castells 1996; Stehr 1994). Knowledge is seen as both scientific knowledge as well as know-how, or competence vested in nations' and firms' human capital (Gibbons et al. 1994; Fosstenløkken 2003). The quality of learning in kindergarten, primary and secondary schooling (K-12) is the

foundation for what a nation can harvest later in its higher education. In order to become learning and knowledge societies, the competence of *managers of schools as organisations for learning* become vital.

HEAD draws upon concepts of leadership developed in other organizational contexts, particularly situational/contingency, and transformational leadership (Yukl 2002; Bass 1996; Busch, Johnsen, and Vanebo 1999; Burke 2002), whilst discussing how the Norwegian school context functions as a setting for constructive and creative decision making. According to Bess and Goldman (2001) research on leadership in educational organization is often rhetorical, even moralistic, and empirically immature. Hence, they see the need for more empirical work, and particularly research that attempts to test common assumptions or myths of leadership in education organisations.

HEAD also draws upon theories of *knowledge management* and *change leadership* based on empirical studies of corporations, in order to establish their relevance for understanding what is happening to schools as organisations under globalization. One of the largest challenges in today's global competitive environment is to create innovations and changes for organisations to stay ahead in the competition, or to be able to cope with new demands from their stakeholders. According to Barney (1997) resources must be valuable, rare, imitable and organizational to create sustainable competitive advantage.

Only a few years ago there was almost no competition in some markets, while hyper-competition is now dominating (D'Aveni 1997). Decentralized organisations, networks and virtual organisations have been answers to recent competitive pressures. Especially Løwendahl and Revang (1998) have focused on increased complexity internally and externally, because of competitive pressure and societal changes in the post-modern society.

The HEAD Project intends to keep attention directed to the interface between new organizational forms, innovation and knowledge management, and relate these processes to the K-12 education sector. Especially important is the network form, as many organisations tend to change their view on organization towards network, as a more collaborative form has been recognized

Today there are two research areas of particular interest, first the knowledge orientation towards the enterprise, and second insights into change management. By combining these two it is possible to extend our insights into how knowledge management can be performed in innova-
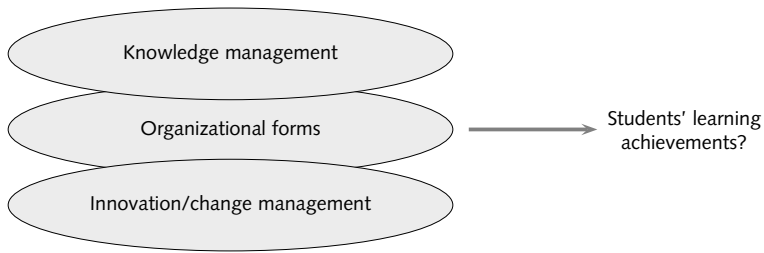
FIGURE 1   Knowledge management, change management
                     and organizational forms

tion contexts (Choo 1998; Nonaka, Ichijo, and von Krogh 2000; Wagner 2002). Burgelman (1980) has studied the relationship between strategy and innovations as the innovation system follows its own type of action rationality that is separate from the management system. It is on the border between these two systems that innovations are seen. To create changes involves exploring something new and unknown and not existing (Berg, Martinsen, and Thompson 1998). This requires analyses of knowledge management, change leadership and innovations (Friedman and Olaisen 1997, Araujo and Harrison 2002; Lorange 2002).

Summary of 'Corporate Way of Thinking Learning Management'

The focus is on relations between 'change leadership', 'knowledge management' and innovation. Typical for successful enterprises in the market is that the management is able to make and implement decisions and restructure in a way that produces learning/new knowledge among staff, as a foundation for being innovative. Learning new knowledge and being innovative are preconditions for survival in a competitive context. Knowledge management means leading by making staff learn – to see themselves what has to be done – to survive.

Literature Review Summarised – Assumptions Revised

While the 'inside' research over and above reflects what governments, communities and educational researchers think about how schools should be run to be goal-effective, the knowledge management view is roughly concerned about what are necessary conditions for encouraging staff to learn in order not 'to burn'. There are indications that especially the English public policies are beginning to be influenced by knowledge management thinking. This tendency is reflected in strong efforts to empower the school leader, e. g. by establishing the National College for School Leadership.

Managing Global Transitions

The overall research question of this study seeks response to the degree of coherence between national education policy goals/needs for school leader competence on the one side, and, on the other, university trainers' understanding of 'school management'. One assumption is that the Norwegian trainers have a bias towards an 'inside-education sector-thinking' reflecting a particular Norwegian legacy of seeing the school manager primarily as 'administrative care taker'. This implies an understanding of 'school management' as being a tool for teachers' work, more than the teachers being a tool for the management's efforts to implement national policy ambitions. However, there is also assumed to be found indications of a movement towards NPM-thinking (new public management), reflecting an influence from corporate thinking about knowledge management. Moreover, the Norwegian Legacy of understanding school management as a service for the teachers is assumed to be still very strong.

Trainers' Understanding – Assumptions Operationalised

Figure 2 is an attempt to visualize HEAD's framework of thinking about the links of the Education Value Chain, from national policies to the school managers as change agents at school level. The new national policies require reforms of the education system, e. g. the universities taking responsibility for training the school managers. Their training programmes (organisation, staff, curriculum/evaluation, training methods, use of ICT and stakeholder relations are expected to change. Within this framework the present study concerns two areas: a) Understanding of school management among the trainers at the university, and b) the content of the school management function, or the competence that is expected to be achieved in the training programme, and to be applied at school level.

OPERATIONALISATION

The overall research question is: *How relevant is Norwegian school management trainers' understanding of school management in relation to the goals and strategies of present national education policies?* The Government has stated the following specific strategies in order to reach reform goals:

- Legal room of action – the leaders' autonomy, for implementing quality schooling taking local conditions into consideration.
- Understanding of national goals.
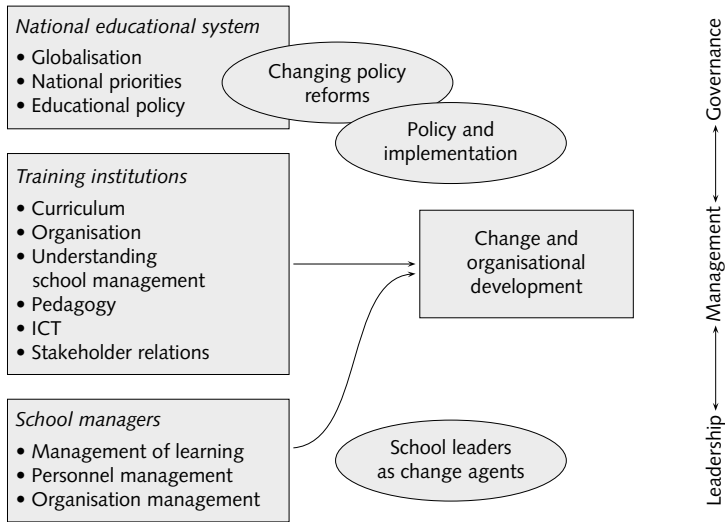- Understanding of 'quality'.

FIGURE 2   Framework for understanding school management
            in the education value chain

- Use of ICT.
- Competence for 'didactical effectiveness'.
- Competence for 'organisational efficiency' – effective use of resources.
- Practical skills to restructure the school to meet new national policy goals in the local school's context.
- Competence to develop schools as 'knowledge organisations' becoming 'learning organisations' and the leaders becoming 'learning managers'.
- Competence in 'evaluation of staff and achievements'.

Understanding of the content of three sub-functions of the school management function is assumed to illuminate a trainer's understanding of the nine Government strategies. The three sub functions are *learning management, personnel management* and *organisation management.* They are operationalised by certain issues substantiating each sub function. The issues are:

1. Management of learning
   - Research-based knowledge
   - Education policy goals

- The national curriculum
- Planning skills
- Implementation skills
- Assessment skills

2. Personnel management

- Care
- Personal crisis
- Personal and academic development
- Improve own competence
- Health

3. Organisation management

- Financial resources
- School context
- Organisational restructuring
- Stakeholders' involvement in key organisation processes
- Appointments and dismissals of teachers
- Legality and accountability
- The superior administrative level
- Interactive communication with stakeholders
- Network relations
- ICT and Internet

Methodology

This study is rooted in two sociological paradigms (Burrell and Morgan 1979). Its rationale is anchored in a functionalist paradigm, because national education policy goals and strategies are a frame of reference for investigating how consistent university school management trainers' understanding is with policy goals and strategies. This is the logic of goals and means. Simultaneously, the study is rooted in an interpretative/humanist paradigm, when it comes to methodology. The overall research strategy is qualitative. A research 'object' like 'understanding of school management' is not seen as convenient to be measured and counted. It has to be interpreted.

In addition to 'trainers' understanding of school management', another research object is 'policy documents'. These are not measured quantitatively, but interpreted qualitatively.

The data collection technique is on line with interpretative think-
ing. The interviewing of the trainers was based on a semi-structured
interview. For each of the issues operationalising the school manage-
ment function, the interviewee was asked an introductory question
about knowledge and/or skills needed for a school manager in relation
to the specific issue. Following, the respondent was free to give all the
comments he/she found necessary. After the interview, there were tran-
scribed, and returned to the interviewee to be corrected or supplemented
with more opinions, if they thought it necessary. Among the 22 respon-
dents only two had comments on their interview and were given the
opportunity of supplementing more information.

Internal validity in a qualitative study normally has limitations. The
specification of the management function into three sub functions is
based both on 'grounded experiences' from management practice, as
well as from traditional organisation logics. In terms of interviewees' re-
sponses, interpretations by their own nature vary. However, the way the
22 interviewees responded to the sub function issues was mainly quite
similar, indicating a common understanding of the contents. That said,
there was a tendency towards more direct 'communication validity' by
interviewees who had themselves served in a school management po-
sition. In terms of external validity it is claimed that the information
collected is valid for the staffs of the three institutions, only, not for the
whole country. Moreover, in terms of reliability, there is fair reason to
think that the same questions given to the same respondents once more
in the near future would have given roughly the same answers.

Findings

NTNU's UNDERSTANDING

Summarized, a rough dichotomy is found in the understanding of
school management competence amongst respondents. In terms of
seeing the leader as a *learning manager,* the majority of respondents
stressed competence based in research on learning. They favoured a
functionalist-rationalist consistency between curriculum and school
organisation/management. Moreover, they saw the present policies as
subject-oriented and with strong emphasis on quality and assessment.
These policy orientations expressed in the national curriculum were
taken as a positive challenge for societal interests. They wished to have
rational planning, long-term strategies and systematic goal-relevant as-

sessments. The minority group stressed the school leader's learning from the practice of the teachers. He or she ought to be critical towards the new policies, applying a social-constructivist theoretical frame of reference. The new policies might be threatening to democracy in schools. The national curriculum implied more decentralisation than schools could yet cope with. The leader ought not to be a 'manager', but a facilitator in teachers' work. Evaluations ought to be based on a 'goal-free' model, and primarily based on reflexive discussions between manager and staff.

For views upon the school leader as a *personnel manager* there was also found a dichotomy. A minority group was clearly more teacher-centred than the others. One person put very high priority on the care dimension in its own right, compared to all other tasks. This priority was even stronger if a staff member was in a personal crisis. In terms of personal and academic development the minority group saw this as an effect from an inspired collective, left to be decided upon by the single teacher, and without any feeling of competition. Most important for the leader's health was the inspired strength following from work with children and from social communication processes. The majority group saw the staff's need for care in relation to professional demands, and a task that could be delegated to other persons in the leadership team. When a staff member experienced a personal crisis, and the leader was trying to solve this problem, the leader also had to take into account effects for the rest of the staff. In terms of the staff's personal and academic development the group saw this as a policy issue for the school leader. He/she ought to have a policy for in-service training, anchored in the school's rationale and ambition for quality results among students. In terms of protecting the leader's health, those who had themselves been in a leadership position expressed that they enjoyed the position, and found this joy as a main condition for staying healthy.

The dichotomy in understandings of the school manager continued when asking about the function of *organisation management,* except for the issue of financing, where there was total agreement about its importance. The divide within the group came to the surface in views upon the school context. A minority was most concerned about the actor-level; communication ought to be directly between the actors in the school (teachers) and actors outside, e. g. parents. This group was reluctant or apprehensive towards school restructuring. In terms of involving external stakeholders this ought to be done by the teachers, more than

the leader. While there was considerable agreement about being careful and having well prepared procedures for appointing teachers, this group was reluctant to consider sacking a teacher, even if the person was professionally weak. For these respondents the superior level (municipality/superintendent) was felt as somewhat 'a danger from above'. IT-based professional networks might have some merit, but could easily have dehumanising effects. The majority group of respondents had a system rational approach and were clearly concerned about accountability towards external stakeholders, also those other than parents. They were open to school restructuring, if this would make the school a better instrument to become more goal-effective and accountable. It was seen as a leader's responsibility to involve external stakeholders. In terms of appointments/dismissals of teachers, this group expressed a more managerial attitude. In order to better serve students and other stakeholders it ought to be easier to dismiss a professionally poor teacher. A positive attitude was expressed to the level above, considered important to develop creative links with e. g. the municipality education office. There was a generally positive attitude to applying ICT, given that the use was goal-effective for either learning or administrative purposes.

UIO's UNDERSTANDING

Among the nine respondents there was agreement about several aspects of school leadership, but the group splits into two subgroups on several issues.

Common Understanding of School Management

There is shared understanding of the present national education policies as focusing knowledge, testing and accountability, and about the national curriculum as mainly concerned about knowledge-based competence, basic skills and individualised learning. Moreover, there is full agreement about the need for further education for school leaders, for their participation in professional networks and for setting boundaries and for creating free spaces off job. All respondents see externally funded projects as a main extra source of funding. There is agreement about the necessity of organisational restructuring and about involving stakeholders into the school's work in order to create a school culture. Further there is agreement about the main steps to take when appointing or dismissing a teacher. The unions are normally no problem. There is agreement about the problems of communication with the school's owner,

due to lack of understanding at this level of specificities of the school's mission, organisation and curriculum. Implied here is agreement about the need for the school 'to educate' the school owner. Networking activities are important, but the leader should not be too much absent from school. ICT is an advantage, but there should be awareness of the darker side of the technology.

Differences in Understanding of School Management

In terms of research-based knowledge about learning, a majority is focusing on the classroom level, and some of them see socio-cultural learning theory as the primary research knowledge foundation for understanding learning in schools. Others include learning in the school as an organisation, and it is stated that a sociological/system perspective is necessary for understanding learning. In terms of how the recent educational policies are assessed, some fear negative effects from underlying ideological tensions as well as from system rigidity. The majority of respondents express a constructive attitude to the new policies and the curriculum, and one favours NPM as the relevant leadership thinking. When it comes to planning, implementation and assessment there are two principally different opinions in terms of placing either the teachers or the school leader as key actor in these processes.

In terms of personnel management, there are distinct differences in the group when it comes to care, crisis situations and teachers' personal and academic development. One sub group stresses the stronger role of the leader and necessity to take the school's goals as frame of reference for actions, while the other stresses the role of the staff and the needs of the individual teacher.

There are different views in terms of getting extra funding. Some state clearly that all public education should be publicly funded. Others are open to sponsoring and cooperation with different external agents in a way that would provide extra revenues for the school. In terms of context some are mostly concerned about the parents, while others take a wider view. There are different views about conditions for organisational restructuring, and which role external stakeholders should play. Some are reluctant towards external influences, while others express a market-oriented thinking. Several are in favour of trial lesson for new teachers, but one is strictly against. Some are thinking that too much care for the individual teacher may harm the school as a collective. The relation to the superior level (the school owner) is also seen differently. Some are

reluctant, advising scepticism, while others are suggesting active means to make this relation productive.

BI'S UNDERSTANDING

Among the five respondents there is much agreement about how to understand school management. However, certain aspects are emphasised.

Common Understanding of School Management

There is overall agreement in the group about the necessity of solid research-based knowledge about learning for school leaders. And, they all think that current national education policies are focusing on knowledge, personalised learning, accountability and the economical dimension of education. There is agreement that curriculum consequences are decentralisation, local adaptations, individualised learning and more effective assessment/measurement of achievements. Teachers should have great freedom in implementing goal-effective policies.

There is general agreement about the personnel management issues. It is a leader's responsibility to be visible, accessible and be demonstrating concern for what teachers are challenged to. Concrete actions could be appraisals, regular visits to the class room and follow-up meetings with the team – or 'management by walking around'.

The leader should be aware of existing staff competence. Each teacher should have a career plan. Teachers' professional development is cheaper than changing personnel. Teachers' development plans should be aligned to the goals of the school. Teachers are often moderately interested. The big challenge is teacher motivation, and the connection between teacher motivation and the needs of the school. There is agreement about being active in increasing funding for the school, about behaving proactive to the school's context, and about getting parents as active partners to achieve learning goals for individual students. Restructuring of the school is important in order to make the school a more effective instrument for national policies and for parents/students interests. Academic achievements or 'classical school tasks' are seen as the core of the school's work. There is agreement about procedures for appointing new teachers and for sacking them. Accountability to the school's owner is accepted as a fact. Simultaneously, it is seen as a problem that the school owner, in many cases, does not really understand 'the school business'. There is agreement about academic life – long learning for school leaders. The Internet and ICT has considerable potentials for increasing learning and

for being a useful administrative tool. However, it is warned against over-belief in the new technology.

Certain Emphases

Within the group's broad agreement about what constitutes relevant knowledge and skills (competence) for school leaders, there are also some interesting different emphases among the respondents. There are some who take the school as an organisation, as a frame of reference for their understanding, and, simultaneously stress the importance of general leadership thinking. Some express scepticism about the relevance of pedagogy as a knowledge base for understanding school leadership. One points to classroom discipline as an important area for improvement. Some see the new policies as primarily rhetoric. PISA taught Norwegian politicians about the need for a knowledge orientation. This need had been presented by researchers in 1990, but due to 'democratic dysfunctions' it took more than a decade to be acknowledged.

Some state that development must be based in the staff as a collective, aiming at team teaching. The leader's responsibility and ability to motivate teachers are underlined more strongly by some respondents. Twined to the motivation strategy, the leader has to assess and monitor 'the chain of effects in the classroom'. It is held that many Norwegian teachers are not necessarily interested in such attention from the leader. Many want to have freedom without control. The leader monitors by goal-dependent incentives. Norway has been poor at using incentives. To motivate teachers is difficult in Norway, because education does not have such a high value. This is partly a dysfunction of the successful Welfare State. Testing should be effective, but not 'clumsy'. From the test results there should be back tracking to the learning processes in the school. The leader should check staff's plans and basic structure of work, but avoid 'micromanagement', although visits in classroom should be normal.

For improving *the leader's own competence,* one group stresses higher academic learning and continued participation in discussions among professionals in the field. The other group is rather critical towards the present competence level of Norwegian school leaders, claiming that Norway has the wrong focus on knowledge production. More training will not have so great an impact if the candidates have academically weak backgrounds. The better training for school leaders would be involvement in empirical research themselves, as well as in continuous evaluation and experimentation with their own school.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
AMONG THE THREE INSTITUTIONS

What are the similarities and differences in understanding school management at the three institutions?

For the three staffs as a whole, respondents' opinions illuminate a rough split between two different frames of reference, when considering what relevant school management competence is. One group is, morover, applying a *humanist approach*, where teachers and their well-being is centre stage for all other considerations. If teachers are motivated, students will be motivated, and experience a positive learning process. Hence, national policies for more goal-effectiveness, competitiveness, effective management and accountability towards external stakeholders become dubious, and even threatening for the situation of the teachers, and, by implication, for the students. Such policies and their implementation ought to be viewed critically, and even be resisted. The other group is mainly applying a structuralist-economic frame of reference. National policies are seen as a mission presented by the Ministry as Mandator – on behalf of a democratic society. These policies ought to be implemented as effectively as possible, for the good of the students, for other stakeholders and for country. The management position is seen as crucial. Poor teachers are an obstacle. A possible effect of these two different frames of reference is that the 'humanists' in their teaching in the programme will be steered by primary attention to the teacher-student relation, and the effects on it from the new policies. The 'structuralists', on the other hand, are likely to focus more on the manager, as an instrument to make teachers apply goal-effective learning strategies for the students.

Discussion

The purpose of the empirical investigation of three Norwegian providers was to find information to answer the question: How relevant is Norwegian school management trainers' *understanding* of school management in relation to the goals and strategies of present national education policies? The findings have indicated that the Norwegian Legacy has had to bow to New Public Management. Why?

THREE INSTITUTIONS – THREE PROFILES OF UNDERSTANDING

In terms of understanding school management the three institutions show three somewhat different profiles. The minority group of the NTNU-dichotomy is the most distinct critique of the present policies,

curriculum and emphasis on school management. Teachers, not management, are the key to school development. At the other end of an envisaged scale, there is B1, who is completely in line with the new national policies, and has the whole programme tailored to meet the implementation needs of these policies. In between, there is U1O. In common with B1, there is a majority group with a clear-cut management orientation and distinctively positive attention to the surroundings. There is willingness to restructure the school, in order to meet both national policies and local stakeholder needs. In common with NTNU there is at U1O a minority group apprehensive towards the new knowledge and accountability-policies and towards NPM-like management thinking. Moreover, similar to NTNU, a minority group strongly expresses that socio-cultural theory for learning is the preferred knowledge foundation. The teachers should be the driving force in development, the leader principally in the role of a facilitator of staff relations.

While all B1 staff have a keen policy-relevant understanding of school management, NTNU and U1O are inclined towards ambiguity. The minority groups at the two institutions are resistant to or reluctant to accept national policies and strategies, reflecting an alternative understanding of the purpose of schooling and of how schools should be led. This understanding is in line with traditional Norwegian ways of viewing school development, characterised by being critical to 'management of teachers'. These trainers do not really enjoy the idea of a manager. A school leader ought primarily to be a coordinator of relationship building among the teaching staff. This view is contrasted with those clearly seeing the necessity of a manager, accountable to stakeholders at local and central levels of the education system. Theoretically, the minority group's understanding of schooling is founded in 'scientific pedagogy' based, mostly on an 'education sector inside' understanding of the purpose of education. In terms of understanding how learning takes place, socio-cultural learning theory is dominant. For NTNU and U1O, as programme providers, this cognitive split (between majority and minority groups) presents the target group (the trainees) with a blurred message of what school management is. It may have problematic effects for the trainees to handle being taught and tutored from two different understandings. Without taking a stand as to what is ultimately the 'true' understanding of school management, or to what are 'correct' education policies, it is fair to assume that the identified split-situation may have dysfunctional effects for the trainees.

INCREASED RELEVANCE – AND RESISTANCE

Compared to assumptions made before the study started, the relevance of trainers' understanding of school management (competence) in relation to national strategies is higher than expected. The group expressing either resistance or reluctance towards present policies is small. The great majority accepts the policies, has a rather clear understanding of learning being the focus, of present policy goals as they are expressed in the curriculum, and of the need for relevant planning and assessment skills. Also on personnel policies most respondents favour a manager who simultaneously takes care of personnel, of the school and of him/herself. In terms of organisation management, the great majority envisages a manager that aims at leading the school effectively in order to simultaneously reach national policy goals and meet local stakeholders' needs. Evaluation is seen as crucial both for making the school organisation effective, and for being able to report (accountably) to stakeholders about student achievements.

However, the resistance is still there, in the understanding of minority groups at NTNU and UIO. There is reluctance to place too much focus on knowledge, at the cost of the school's wider socialisation responsibility. In essence, there is disagreement about what is really the quality of schooling. Moreover, there is resistance to 'managerialism'. Distinct leadership is seen as counterproductive to professional teacher and staff independence. Too strong a stress on management may be threatening to democracy in schools. The resistance group is more concerned about school improvement in the way teachers would address it, than about school effectiveness processes led by a distinct manager. Implied is much reluctance to strict assessment procedures. Negative effects of the evaluation's control function are feared. The resistance of the minority groups is seen as rooted in what can be termed a particular Norwegian legacy of 'teacher power' in terms of understanding school development and school administration.

THE NORWEGIAN LEGACY CHALLENGED
BY PISA AND GLOBALISATION

Why did the 'Norwegian Legacy' come into existence? A glance at the history of school development and school management in Norway may help understanding. Until recently, Norway was primarily a rural country, with small schools run by a few teachers. Administrative tasks at school level were taken care of by one of the teachers, formally titled (literally)

an 'Over-Teacher', an administrative 'care taker'. Historically, the curriculum tradition was encyclopaedic – subject-centred, with many subjects. Good education was an important means for social mobility. Motivation for education was high. Until ca 1970 students finished compulsory schooling at the age of 14.

Around 1970 a curriculum philosophical paradigm shift occurred. Compulsory schooling age was raised to 16. A principle of non-streaming was gradually introduced. Curriculum tradition changed from encyclopaedism/subject centred to student-centred progressivism. Due to an increased number of students in general, and the merging of schools' catchments areas, school size increased significantly. Broader study programmes, a more diverse student body, non-streaming, increased school size required more administrative capacity at schools. Regular school management positions appeared. However, the old teacher-dominant culture stayed on, heavily guarded by a strong union. Parallel to this, a recruitment policy for teacher training accepted students with quite low academic standards from secondary school. A reduced academic standard for recruitment as well as an adaptation of Progressivist pedagogy also in the teacher training colleges, affected gradually a lower academic standard among Norwegian teachers at large. An embedded effect of this development was reduced teacher authority, and a contribution to a lowered social status for teachers in Norwegian society.

Into the 1980s problems of students' motivation increased. Simultaneously, there was a growing awareness of the nation's need to stay competitive in the increasingly more global knowledge society. A traditionally strong concern about the value of equality in all aspects of life, also in education, was confronted with the need for quality of education, in order to be internationally competitive. During the 1990s, the Labour Party Minister of Education, Sociology Professor Gudmund Hernes, radically restructured the whole education system of Norway – in order to create more 'quality of equality – and competitiveness' (Tjeldvoll 1998). Hernes' legacy is especially connected to two issues. He re-established as Labour-policy, 'a knowledge school' as something valuable, implying a slight return to more encyclopaedic curriculum thinking. Secondly, he simultaneously reduced the power of the teacher trade unions, and changed the function of the school leader from just being an 'administrative care-taker' – the first among equals – to a manager as part of the municipality or county governance structure, accountable to the school owner.

Right after the turn of the last century, an OECD-comparative study

of skills in reading, maths and science, as well as of classroom behaviour (PISA) – sent shockwaves throughout Norwegian society – because of Norway's relative poor ranking – in relation to the country's high financial investments in education (Welle-Strand and Tjeldvoll 2002). A conscious national policy to improve the quality of Norwegian education followed from 2002, symbolised later in the telling label – *The Knowledge Promotion.* Essential ambitions of this reform were subject knowledge, individualised teaching, assessment and accountability. These ambitions were to be achieved with reform strategies delivering improved quality of teachers and school managers.

The empirical findings from NTNU and UIO of how school management is understood indicate a clash between the former teacher-ruled, student-centred pedagogy, without particular attention to efficiency/ learning achievements – and a managed, subject-centred, efficiency-oriented school. An effect of the traditional understanding of school management has been that the programme has focused more on teachers and relations between teachers and leader, than on management professionalism. This is reflected in the syllabus of the NTNU-led programme.

The present 'split' in understanding of school management found at NTNU *and* UIO *may be seen as affected by the global trends of the knowledge economy* (Dimmock and Walker 2005). *These trends may now be colliding with Norwegian legacies of teacher-led schools. The global trends of education policies are today most clearly seen implemented by the British labour government* (Tjeldvoll 2005). Especially, the NTNU-study simultaneously illustrates the strength of the Norwegian legacy, and the fact that international efficiency trends have reached Norwegian shores forcefully. The prevailing strength of the Norwegian legacy is likely to reduce the training programmes' relevance to policies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate policy relevance of school management training programmes in Norway. More specifically, the question asked was: How relevant is the teaching professors' understanding of the school management function to national policies and strategies? The staff of three major providers was interviewed. The main assumption had been that because of particular Norwegian traditions in school development and school administration there would be considerable resistance to a policy and strategy that implied a more clear-cut

management thinking in schools. This assumption was soon afterwards refused by the pilot study at NTNU, since only a minority of staff expressed resistance to new policies. At NTNU the programme syllabus was also analysed, and the syllabus had an overload of texts expressing a critical and reluctant view of the new policies. Hence, the NTNU syllabus confirmed the resistance assumption to a considerable degree. For UIO and BI the syllabi were not analysed. Only the staff's understanding of the school management function was investigated.

When opinions from all respondents at the three institutions are seen as a whole the resistance assumption is in the mayor part refused. The majority of staff at NTNU and UIO and all the staff at BI express agreement with the new policies. There is a high level of relevance between the goals of national policies and strategies and the understanding as to which competence school management should have. Key issues are subject knowledge, individualised learning, effective assessment and accountability to school stakeholders. There is keen awareness of being ready to restructure the school organisation at the balancing point between national policies and local stakeholders' needs. A professional school leadership is seen as paramount for successful policy implementation. A common concern of the majority is, however, the lack of 'school competence' at the school mandator level.

Minority groups at NTNU and UIO express resistance or reluctance to the policies. They are concerned about the mission of the school under these new policies. Will the mission change from being an agent for socialisation of all Norwegians into a democratic society to becoming a 'competence machine' for economical needs of the national and global economy? Parallel concern for the minority groups are the position and role of teachers as individuals and as a professional collective. Will their traditionally strong and independent position in Norway now become overruled by business style managers? Moreover, there is a reluctance to other stakeholders becoming too deeply involved in the school sphere. If external agents are to be involved, this ought to be via teachers. In terms of identifying the real strength of the minority group at UIO it would be interesting to carry out the analysis of the programme syllabus. Would the analysis reflect a similar resistance, as it was the case with NTNU? Or, would its ethos match the policy and management understanding of the majority at UIO?

Over and above the 'Resistance Assumption' has been refused. The major Norwegian providers of school management training are on line

with international trends. But, the 'Minority Resistance Group' identified may slow down reform implementations.

Notes

1 The HEAD project on international school leadership training (2003–2008) is conducted at Norwegian School of Management BI, under the leadership of Professor Anne Welle-Strand, in cooperation with Professor Arild Tjeldvoll, University of Oslo. The project is financed by the Norwegian research Council.
2 See http://www.kunnskapsloeftet.no/filer/ strategiforkompetanseutvikling.pdf.
3 Etterutdanning is equated with INSET provision in the English translation of this Act (see www.lovdata.no) and later described as updated competence rather than formal education (videreutdanning).
4 Although there also appears that the State has or will, on occasions, prioritise areas and ring fence funding for these.
5 Or the County in the case of upper secondary schools.
6 At the University of Oslo, June 20, 2005.
7 See http://www.sru.edu/depts/educatio/National%20Standards %20Principalship.doc.

Abbreviations

BI Norwegian School of Management
HIST Sør-Trøndelag University College
ICT Information, Communication and Technology
ILS Department of Teacher Education and School Development, University of Oslo
ISLLLC Interstate School Leaders' Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders
KS Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
NFR Norwegian Research Council
NPM New Public Management
NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA Programme for International Student Assessment
UFD Ministry of Education and Research
UIO Ministry of Education

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