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Action and reaction due to challenging values

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Abstract

Changes in society have produced changed expectations to public sector. Increased influence from steering principles known from private sector has changed the way we act and react upon public services. Several studies have looked at the consequences of NPM and conclude on the possibility of applying different values than those characterizing the bureaucracy (Exworthy and Halford 1999; Norman 2003; Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006). Others (Du Gay 2000, 2005; Olsen 2005, 2007) argue that our complex society needs the principles and values of bureaucracy more than ever before, and that bureaucracy never have been out of fashion for the practitioners. Røvik (2007) emphasize the ambiguous tendency of parallel processes of de-bureaucratization and re-bureaucratization.

To examine this from an actor perspective I ask practitioners about established and new or challenging values, since identity is a consequence both of established values and external expectations (Hatch and Schultz 2002). Changes in public sector depend on the choices made every day by the practitioners. Those employed experience to be in between external expectations of market oriented values and the established values of bureaucracy. How do the practitioners act and react regarding the new and the established values, and handle both the governmental and the user expectations?

De-bureaucratization or re-bureaucratization?

In his article Olsen (2005:18) sums up ...” the dinosaur scenario, emphasizing the undesirability and non-viability of bureaucracy and an inevitable and irreversible paradigmatic shift toward market or network organization, is wrong or insufficient.” The enthusiasm for NPM as idea for a global convergence of public administration has weakened. Olsen goes back to Weber (1978) and argues that public administration always has been and will appear in mixed forms, the organizational principles are fluid and overlapping. The bureaucracy in its pure form is an ideal-type, not an empirical case. He argues that the ideas of NPM (Exworthy and Halford 1999; Norman 2003; Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006) are challenged by ideas of re-bureaucratization. The arguments are that competing organizational principles coexist in public administration. Principles from bureaucratic organizations, from market organizations, and from network organizations are challenging. “An administration that simultaneously has to cope with contradictory demands and standards, balance system coordination, and legitimate diversity organizationally (Olsen 2004) and technologically (Peristeras, Tsekos and Tarabanis 2003) is likely to require more complexity than a single principle can provide” (Olsen 2005:16). Principles of bureaucracy are appropriate for the complex situations public administration increasingly has to cope with. Du Gay (2005) refers to the reviewed edition of *The Economist* (2002) “The world in 2003” to support his arguments of the rise of bureaucracy. Thompson and Alvesson (2005) argue that the fall of bureaucracy have been a matter in literature, while in the world of practice bureaucracy has appeared in new forms but never gone away.

Reading newspapers, listening to those employed in public sector, studying strategies and plan documents, it is no doubt that organizational change is on their agenda, and has been for the last decades. Thus, “news” does not always need to be complete new ideas. Some of the ”news” are comeback of old ideas and variants of hierarchist doctrines like scientific management and neo-Taylorism, i.e. quality systems (Hood 1998, p.93). News could be interpreted as “empire’s new clothes”. Another perspective is to look upon for instance NPM as fashion (Abrahamsen 1991). In that case NPM is a trend that will reduce its popularity, strength and diffusion. Røvik argues that ideas are travelling (Røvik 1998, 2007), and that several diverse and competing ideas are travelling at the same time. Regarding public sector he argues that both ideas of market orientation and of re-bureaucratization like increased use of professional standards are travelling today. Organizational principles emphasizing values related to bureaucracy, market or network are then available and coexist as expectations (Clark et al 2007) from the environment of the organization. Research on public administration reports to find a new type of hybrid identity and new form of bureaucracy (Berg 2006, Jeannot 2006). Referring to Thompson, Jessop and others, Reed (2005) argues that ‘hybridization’ is a more accurate description of change processes in public sector than ‘paradigm shift’.

From different perspectives researchers seems to agree on the coexistence of market oriented and bureaucratic values in the expectations to public sector. In this paper I will investigate these expectations from the actor point of view. The term actor is close to the use of Meyer et al. (1987) of actors as independent, choosing and controlling actions in accordance to rational means of self-interests, and having clear boundaries. Using an

actor perspective and semi-structured interview of practitioners from one part of public sector, elementary schools, I will discuss how these values surrounding public sector influence practice and decision making. Related to the Weberian perspective Olsen (2005) present the ethical question of “What kind, or kinds, of administrators are wanted (Dahl and Lindblom 1953:523) – rule followers, competitive actors, or cooperative personalities – and with what kind of skills?”, and points out the need for in-depth understanding of the specific situation. On this background my research question is:

In what way does those employed in the school system experience changes in the values guiding their work practice?

The organization of the paper is as follows. Firstly, I present the methodology and concept of this study. Based on the model presented in that section, the findings are discussed structured by the organizational forces governmental expectations, user expectations and established, professional values.

The case of value development in Elementary schools, Trondheim, Norway – an actor perspective

We have studied the change of values among managers in the Trondheim Municipality with a questionnaire. Here we found that both some bureaucracy and some NPM values had increased attention. Only some bureaucracy values had reduced attention. NPM values are rather new to the public sector, and we could therefore not expect these values to get increased attention. From this result bureaucracy values is re-discovered (Olsen 2005, 2007; Du Gay 2000, 2005) as well as NPM values are brought to life in public sector (Exworthy and Halford 1999; Norman 2003; Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006). The existence of both tendencies support the arguments of lasting bureaucracies, but in hybrid forms (Berg 2006; Jeannot 2006), and the arguments of parallel fashion tendencies (Røvik 2007).

To investigate these tendencies I have accomplished 6 semi-structured interviews from elementary schools in Trondheim. All informants have been working at school for more than 20 years. Schools could be looked upon as the modern authority as it is within schools the ideas of decentralization, management by objectives and evaluation is realized the most (Jacobsson and Sahlin-Anderson 1995). Principals and teachers were then chosen as informants in this study. The informants were free to express their ideas with their own vocabulary; what they regarded as important, what they had experienced of changes the last decades, and what tendencies they expected for the future, equal focus areas as the questionnaire. The tendencies respondents pointed out were attention to economy, efficiency and rationalization, as well as increased focus on reported results. In addition to these NPM values, they equally points out increased bureaucracy as control, reporting and auditing, public insight and judicial orientation.

Values are important aspects of organizations due to their ability to guide practice (Chalofsky 2008). Changed values imply changed practice. The actor perspective

accentuates the practitioners; their experiences and apprehension of the dynamics of values guiding their practice. Due to possible different logics between managers and servants (Rondeaux 2006) I have interviewed both kinds of actors to understand their experiences of the proceeding development in public sector in general and in school especial.

Established values are challenged by external values. Hatch and Schultz (2004) understand the development of identity as the dynamics of internal and external forces, as “... the result of conversation between organizational self-expressions and mirrored stakeholders image” (Hatch and Schultz 2004). Inspired by their model, this paper discusses the development of values as the dynamics of internal and external forces, regarded as established and challenging values. The established school values are entrenched in the institutionalized practises of the teacher profession. The school has two main groups of interests i) the governmental system represented by the Municipality and by the State, politicians and administrators, and international influenced by EU and OECD, and ii) the users; the parents and the pupils. The informants presented these two groups of interests as those having expectations to them. Local practice at school is partly decided by the teachers, but the Principals decisions gives directions for all practice at school. Thus, the Principals role is crucial to local practice and to what values that guides their practice. The combination of Principals and teachers voice is the voice of the practitioners in this study.

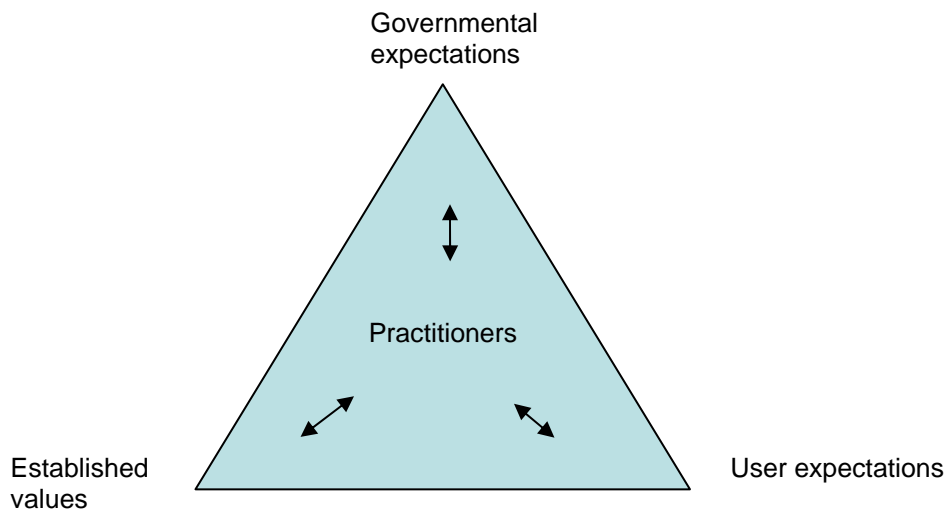


Figure 1. External expectations challenging established values.

The model expresses the external expectations challenging the values established in the school system, the governmental expectations and the user expectations. The model also expresses the forces experienced by the practitioners in their daily decisions. The practitioners state loyalty to the established school values, to the governmental expectations and the users expectations. From this model we have three different ethoses

influencing the decisions made by the practitioners. The established values represent a professional ethos. *“The professional ethos are presumably based on type I values”* (Beck Jørgensen 2007), meaning they are resistant to change (Hodgkinson 1996). From this we might expect established values to be of great importance to the practitioners. In the following discussion we will see how the practitioners act and react to the controversies between the influencing ethoses. The structure of the discussion is based on this model. All informants pointed at the governmental system and the users as those influencing their agenda, there were no discrepancies about this categorization. Governmental expectation is representing expectations and ideas presented by the Municipality, by the State, by the EU system or by OECD. The practitioners experienced these expectations as aligned. User expectation is representing the parents and the pupils’ expectations to the school.

Governmental expectations

There have been frequent governmental initiatives about changes in public sector the last decades. Many of these initiatives have their parallels in Europe and are independent of governing political shades. The reforms have not primarily been aimed at the products delivered, but at the modes of managing, controlling and accounting for the production (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000). The informants were asked about the governmental initiatives and how they acted and reacted to the governmental expectations.

All informants talked about the school reforms of the last 20 years. There have been several reforms, and from the point of view of these informants there have been many parallels between them. The reform called L97 has been the most influencing reform to primary school. This reform was emphasized by all informants. L97 is short for Curriculum plan 1997. It introduced a completely rebuilt curriculum plan and lowered the age of first grade pupils from 7 to 6 years. Pre-primary school teachers were recruited into the school system to take care of the youngest pupils. New forms of teaching and new pedagogical ideas were introduced. Problem Based Learning and project oriented approach to most subjects were dominating principles in this reform.

Two of the informants expressed:

Principal John: “L97 was introduced by Hernes (social democrat and minister of education 1990- 1995). The consequence of this plan was that the 6-years old children for the first time entered our schools, and with them play was introduced as main focus for the youngest. This trend was amplified by hiring preschool teachers. This was wrong. The youngest pupils are very eager to learn. Now we prioritize learning more than playing for these children.”

Teacher Maria: “L97 with new pedagogical ideas, project oriented and problem based, has proven to increase the social difference. These ways of teaching leads to increased support from parents and the children with educated parents take advantages compared to others. The consequence of increased difference between the pupils’ possibilities in this way is increased heterogeneity at school.”

Other reforms mentioned were reform 87, reform 94, and the quality reform of 2006. Reform 94 was mainly related to high school, but this reform started the changes that emphasized rights to education, the value of knowledge for the individuals, and the need for adapting the education to each individual (<http://www.regjeringen.no>).

The informants were critical to the reforms. They have been used to an established institution with predictable and stable activity. One of them said

Principal Frank: "The school has been very stable since the Age of Enlightenment, until changes started in the late 80-ies."

The school system was under the rule of professionals who had professional ideas about school. They were not used to governmental interventions. The reforms of the last decades are experienced as a road from self-government to governmental control. Expressed by one of the informants like this:

Principal Anne: "Some years or decades ago, the politicians did not know anything about what was going on in Norwegian schools. There were for instance a Municipality where no costs were registered on training in the native tongue, governmental politician sent out a request of why. The answer was that there was no non-native pupil in this Municipality. The only request I got in many years was about considerable divergence between the assessed attainment and the exam result. Besides this, nobody followed up. Today we are followed up closely in most of our activities."

What are these governmental expectations about? Olsen (2005:15) argues that organizations such as the OECD, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank have been important for diffusing administrative reform ideas. This thinking coincides with Nef (2003). Nef is more specific on how transplanted administrative forms from Europe and North America, with their visions of rationality, efficiency, and impersonality. He argues that these administrative forms have been the measuring rod of "modernity by imitation", and the supremacy of the bureaucratic model has been followed by reforms inspired by neoliberal ideology (Nef 2003). These arguments correspond to the informants' perception of this subject matter. Some examples of the informants' experience of increased emphasis on efficiency, measuring and control follow.

Principal Anne: "In addition to increased focus on economy and costs, it is also a trend with increased performance follow-up. The result orientation is positive and inspiring for our work... Regarding changed values there are increased knowledge requirements. The expectation regarding meeting the knowledge objectives is substantial. There is a continuous pressure from both the State and the Municipality. It is about survey tests, national tests, school-home collaboration, harassment and several other issues. All in all it is increased control and supervision. We also had curricula in the past, but nobody tracked if we followed up the plans."

Principal Peter: “Everything is about measurement, results and governance. Not management of nitty-gritty details, but management by objectives that becomes very instructive.... Focus is on what is measured, hence the PISA-statistics means a lot. The last curricula plan of 2006 has set up more clearly defined learning objectives. Number of goals are fewer, but they are more concrete.”

Teacher Maria: “The school demands a lot of resources, I understand very well that the politicians wants to reduce the costs related to school. We use a lot of money. So there are a noticeable pressure on effectivization and rationalization.... There are increased auditing, and a lot more control. We do the same things, but now we have to document everything. Fulfilment of juridical obligations is ruling our days.”

The informants are precise on the tendency of increased demand of efficiency, measurement and control. The authorities practise a tighter follow up. But the governmental ideas and expectations received are incoherent. They see the school used as a tool in an incoherent political agenda. These quotas are some examples:

Principal John: “Equal learning progress was a misguided idea. Nowadays individual adjusted learning paths are more accepted. Legally this is supported by the last reform from 2006... The school seems to be a government tool to fulfil several different causes. The school is today expected to solve many of society’s challenges.”

Principal Frank: “The closing down of special schools in Norway meant integrating underdeveloped children. We spend a lot of resources on other aspects than teaching. I was just in a meeting about children with psychosomatic difficulties. Our attention to such conditions is increasing.”

There were some differences in the informants’ attitude to the governmental pressure. But they all considered the pressure as intense. While one informant puts it like this

Teacher Maria: “We are obedient and do what the Municipality, the State and EU wants us to. But there is a great distance between the governmental signals and traditional school values. The politicians and bureaucrats have not satisfying knowledge about schools. The two-level-model has made this even worse. The school has rigid restrictions regarding use of resources where we think it is important. We are dependent on the governmental demands... The government rules and increase focus on economy, control and politics – it is rather theoretical. The practice and reality of school is not always paid attention to.

Principal Peter: “School is supposed to fulfill many tasks. It has always been like this, but in the latest period it has increased in intensity. Municipality is very active in school development. Just the other day they gave us three or four pages full of action items they expect the school to take care of.”

Another informant told:

Principal John: "As an old man I need not to worship my manager. I do not need to embrace and follow up all good initiatives they want the school to take care of. It is important to focus on some key issues and make all teachers to come along. We prioritize to keep a steady course, including all in this school. I never send 2 or 3 teachers to a course; I'd rather get some specialists come and talk to all of us."

They agreed on the governmental pressure, but the way they handled this pressure differed. The Principals had autonomy to mark their way of doing things, to distinguish their local practice. The role of management must then be considered within this new public sector situation, and is therefore emphasized in this paper in the discussion of local practice and practitioners decisions. The autonomy was a subject most of the informants talked about to explain the changes in school practice. The informants expressed it like this:

Principal Frank: "There has been increased focus on economy and efficiency, but also increased freedom of action within our economic frames. Not so much directives as earlier... "The Municipality governs the school practice through the Management performance contract. These evaluate: budget, user satisfaction, employer satisfaction, common goals for all organizational units in the Municipality, common goals for all schools, and selected goals for our school."

User expectations

Market orientation is one of the characteristics related to NPM. The informants were asked about the changes and market orientation always became a part of the conversation. Some examples are as follows:

Teacher Maria: "Users, user involvement, and user advisory are terms we have got from NPM in the early 90-ties."

Principal Frank: "We notice the trends towards market orientation regarding compulsory competitive tendering of services like house-porter and cleaning."

Principal Anne: "The concept of a customer was attempted introduced in conjunction with management training, without being committed. We talks about users, about parents and pupils."

They were familiar with the terms NPM and market orientation, and this was ingredients of the changes the last decades. The term of a customer had not been adopted, but even this was attempted. Market orientation has been on their agenda, but do these ideas mean anything for practice? Do they turn their attention increasingly towards the users and is user satisfaction ruling their daily decisions? User satisfaction is one of the targeted areas that the Municipality follows up by surveys, measuring and benchmarking the school performance. As we see from the quotas, the informants consider user satisfaction as important and prioritize a lot of resources in this area. But the prioritizing between

administrative and user oriented activity seems to differ between the schools, and the practice might be less user oriented than they like to talk about.

Principal John: "Satisfied users are important. They are satisfied if we are available and communicate with them.... Maybe as much as 80% of our time and attention is spent on the users, if I exaggerate a bit. This influences the days at school and concern the teachers. We experience many demands, huge and diverging expectations from parents and increasingly more heterogeneous users. In addition to these demands, the respect for the school and for the teachers is substantial reduced."

Is the talk about 80% attention towards the users an illusion, the way they would like it to be, or the way they like to present it, while the real practice is far less attention towards users due to lots of administrative work? The way they talked about this, in addition to the governmental stress of user orientation and heavy laden of administrative work, tells that there might be differences between talk and action (Brunsson 1989).

Teacher Maria: "There are so many things to do; we have got less time to follow up the individual child.... There has been considerably increased focus on costs, and increased bureaucracy for the teachers. We have got lot of planning processes, documentation of what we are going to do and what we have done, documentation of all contingencies, documentation of all contact meetings with the parents. There are mapping both from the State and the Municipality. All this is important, but is very resource intensive.....The consequences of bureaucracy is that too little time is allocated to pupils and teaching. We have a too high work intensity, and the pupils are suffering from this..... We have gone from curricula to regulations. The school system is more juridically oriented, and we have to visualize that we follow up the governmental demands..... The results of the first PISA survey are increased control and follow up the teachers.... We counted 9 or 10 different plan documents; Social plan, environmental plan, prioritized areas, activity plan. We ask the question if we really need this."

The governmental decisions are also lacking real engagement and are not realized in practice due to lack of resources connected to the decisions and lack of measuring the practice in the actual area. Next quote is one example of such lack of engagement to a decision:

Teacher Maria: "Due to governmental expectations the school have taken over much of the traditional parental role, i.e. regarding nutrition and physical activity..... Maybe is this more talk than action. Some schools give the children fruit or something, but the conditions for physical activity is not improved. The talk is not followed up by prioritizing either resources or real demands."

The consequence is that there are contradictory targets that practitioners can not align. Politicians follow up and support only some of these targets. It reduces some targets to texts without support:

Principal Peter: "Basic values are formally the same now as when Hernes (1997) introduced the integrated human as crucial school value. However when the management by objectives becomes so evident we are so occupied reaching the disciplinary targets that the human issues are suffering."

User orientation is prioritized at least formally, and they are measured on user satisfaction. But is this user orientation established as values guiding the way they act besides bringing results on the surveys? The way they talk about the users gives us a signal on how they look upon the users. From this quotes we could assume that the school practitioners have developed more confidence in and respect for the users.

Principal Anne: "Our attitude has changed a lot regarding collaboration between teachers and respect for pupils and parents."

Principal John: "We have gone beyond the old teacher attitude pointing finger arguing that pupils are stupid. If problems occur we have to take responsibility and try to solve it, and not blame the users. Respect for the user is important to us."

Principal Anne: "Every year the 7th grades participate in the pupil survey. In the beginning we thought that these children are on their way out from our school, so we did not take much notes on the results from this survey. Presently we see that this feedback is of importance. Some significant conditions have become apparent from these surveys, we take these results serious today."

School practitioners have increased their respect for the users, but what about vice versa. Is the relation between the school and the users balanced with increasing respect both ways? From the practitioners' view it was not, they experienced lack of respect today, while they used to be met by respect and honor from both parents and users. Lack of respect is regarded as a threat to the profession and challenge teachers in new ways:

Principal John: "The school is legally disabled through lack of respect from pupils and parents. Earlier we could speak out loudly and be heard; pupils and parents listened and changed when we said so. But now it is lack of respect."

Principal Peter: "Parents of today wants more hands on relationship to the school, requests to school information and they are also subject to media influence. Earlier they trusted us to take care of the children the best possible way. Now they are more questioning and want to know more. It is a huge challenge to make parents comfortable. We may not be enough professional for this task."

School practitioners have increased their respect for the users while the users meet the school practitioners with less respect. Does this mean that power is moved from the school practitioners to the users? Not as far as these informants tell. The users are heard, but the decisions are made at arenas without the users. These four quotes are examples of how different informants explained the user influence:

Principal John: “The user advisory board is not a real board. In reality they have no influence. We are morally committed to listen to them, but not to follow up to execution. We are not responsible to them, but to the Municipality.”

Teacher Maria: “Parents and pupils are heard, but are no power group.”

Principal Frank: “The parents were against the idea of open schools, but they were not heard.”

Principal Anne: “We have to take into consideration what is going on outside. State and Municipality, OECD and Europe set strong directives. But the users, they represent no power factor. Free choice of school in Denmark resulted in no big changes; the parents chose the local school for their children anyway.”

This corresponds to the results from Denmark where the value “listening to the opinion” became one of the last ranged values, concluded by the classical governmental ideal to be raised above others to serve others (Beck Jørgensen 2003). Even though the parents are given scarce professional influence at school they are regarded as an important resource. It is important for the school practitioners to keep up the good dialogue with parents. When it comes to social activities parents could be important both as initiators and to carry out the social activities initiated by school. Thus, users are given a role in school practice, but restricted to a role with no influence in school core competence and value. Exemplified by an informant like this:

Principal Frank: “Both parents and pupils engage themselves in arranging social activities. That is great; they have done a lot of good work. The pupils feel happy about school. But when it comes to the professional, technical and pedagogic, the parents have no influence.”

Some of the new school practice, with less homework and most books staying at school, reduce the parents’ insight in school activity, and gives parents less possibility to intervene in subject matters. In this way teachers’ professional autonomy is protected. Breaking up classes might have such consequence as well:

Principal Frank: “We have gone from classes and classrooms to levels and open areas. Earlier was it more or less impossible for us to move a child from one class to another. The parents would never accept it, even though it would be the best solution for everyone. Today it is easier for us to put together groups as we find appropriate within the levels. The parents do not discuss the organizing in groups. Earlier there could be differences regarding economic resources between the classes. This could be a problem, when some classes had parents organizing and paying for trips for which other classes not had resources. Such problems are non-existing today.”

The development can be interpreted as a negotiation between users and school (Latour 1991). The users have tried to gain more influence to school practice while teachers want to keep control, but teachers are aware the resource users represent and the increasing

demand of user involvement and user satisfaction. According to Clark et al (2007) the relation between public services and users have changed during the late twentieth century as there have been a constant effort to revise the balance between public and private, between state and market. The established idea of a citizen has been challenged by the idea of a consumer, and we might talk about an evolving hybrid; a citizen-consumer. The informants refer to the Liberal Minister Clemet as the opponent to the established equality oriented perspective on pupils as the basic value of teacher profession and confirmed by the Social-democrat Minister Hernes. The school that teachers are educated to precede was based on the idea of the citizen, where public interests exercise thoughts and action and users were viewed as a homogeneity group. Regarding ideas known from private sector where personal interests are the drive, there is mutual indifference between customer and supplier, individualism and heterogeneity. The national tests and European benchmarking are understood as supporting the idea of pupils and parents as customers. These values are looked upon as a threat to the established school values. According to the informants, the relationship between school and user tend more towards customer than few decades ago. But with a social democratic government they see the traditional values related to the idea of a citizen as still the basis for the Norwegian school. However, the new ideas have been introduced to public sector by governments all over Europe independent of the governmental shade (Du Gay 2005).

To sum up the external expectations, school practitioners are followed tightly by the authorities. The self-government they have been used to is replaced by control and diverse measurements. They experience a tough governmental pressure. In addition, the users have engaged themselves to a higher degree, they want influence, are demanding regarding their children's life at school, and meet the school less respectfully. Next paragraph present how this situation influence the established professional values among school practitioners.

Institutionalized values and practices

Talking about values to the informants, they told that values are one of those things being stressed on their agenda:

Principal Anne: "Values is a frequent issue in Trondheim Municipality. Together with other managers in the Municipality we have been working a lot with values and what they mean to us. Asking questions like what are our tasks, what are our objectives, how do we reach them, why are we here? Our values are Open, Competent and Brave. Open; mainly towards the users, competent; knowing what we do both professional and relational in encounter with the users. Braveness must be daring to be open and competent."

These values are general for all parts of public sector in Trondheim. The Principals appreciate the cooperation between the different parts of Trondheim Municipality, and they learn a lot from discussions with other managers. The Principals are closely connected to the world outside school through several arenas and governmental input. External actors from different parts of public sector, private sector, politicians and

European actors as well, are increasingly influencing school practitioners. This is an example of an answer to the question: *“What drives the development of values in the Norwegian School system?”*

Principal Anne: “The reports from OECD. Europe is more aligned and increasingly influencing what is going on locally in Norwegian schools. Traditionally Norway has stood out with the focus on democracy and well-being. The last years we have seen a lot of rightist politics in what is going on. They (the liberalist government) came with the national tests and increased emphasize on benchmarking. Clemet (former minister of education) is still active in the school debate.

The teacher profession has a long tradition with stable practice and deeply rooted values. Even though, many of the governmental initiatives have been realized in spite of the discrepancies to established values, for instance regarding national tests:

Principal Anne: “I thought there would be a tougher fight about national tests. But it did not.

Principal Peter: ”I was skeptical to the national tests when they arrived. At that time they only were a preliminary stop in the teaching process where the skill level should be tested, and where some schools should be criticized in media as bad schools. Now they are changed and better adjusted to help the kids in their learning process. There is a system around the tests with training of the teachers making the tests become an integrated part of the learning process. One school with bad score on reading skill got extra founding to improve its capacity. This is a fine way to use the tests, aligned with the idea of an equally based school. The idea is to increase the resources to those that need it instead of giving extra founding to those that already are in the front as they did with the demonstration schools. The red-green government stopped the tests. But when we are tested on the European level, national tests follow along. The tests came back, but in a different shape that to a larger extent aligns the idea of equally based school.”

The reactions to the liberalists’ changes in Norwegian school values were explained in this way:

Principal Peter: “I have been working in the school system since 1978. When Minister Clemet took over I sensed a shift of focus. The shift was so strong that I had bodily reactions. It did not longer fit with the school in which I was raised, the school in which I was educated to teach, or the school in which I had worked for 20 years. It was in conflict with what I stand for.”

The last years there have been a huge discussion in Norway about quality of schools regarding what the pupils learn. This discussion is mainly referring to the OECD tests where Norwegian pupils not have gained expected results compared to other European countries. Due to these results and this attention there has been an increased governmental focus on learning. This focus is adopted by the school practitioners and expressed as a key area:

Principal John: "Learning is a focused area, we are going to improve."

The focus on learning, highlighted by OECD, is combined with the focus on user orientation:

Principal John: "Key issues to make things work are; the organizational, dialogue with the users, domain learning. These are our focused areas."

But the increased focus on learning the last few years does not displace established values:

Principal Anne: "Norwegian schools are criticized for emphasizing wellbeing. It is important to remember that our main objective is learning, but to reach this main objective wellbeing is necessary."

Principal Peter: "The pendulum strikes back. As school leaders we talk a lot about this and we are clear on the fact that we must not take away the life in our schools. We must not create turn the school into an industrial corporation that is to deliver measurable results....I stand for something that I cannot escape. From this perspective, the pupils need not to sit at a desk in order to learn something. It is possible to learn a lot of mathematics and English through music and outdoor activities. We have to take care of the plurality. A two dimensional school is where the pupils sit, read and listen, we have to bring with us a third dimension..... Adjusted training requires plurality, so that all pupils can develop a feeling of success.....Variation is an important keyword."

And they do not like the one-size-fits-all idea. The learning results have to be evaluated on the actual schools preconditions:

Principal Anne: "What is important regarding school is high score on learning results, a good school manage to reach their objective in relation to their preconditions. National tests have to be evaluated in relation to what kind of school it is. Our school is located in an area of well educated parents that care about their children's schoolwork. Our learning objectives should therefore be higher than average for the national tests."

So far school practitioners seems to accept and adapt to the governmental ideas, and through the realization of new ideas values are changing towards what is possible to measure and benchmark. Is this a right way to describe the situation? Or are the established professional values of importance to the daily decisions by school practitioners? Joanne Martin (2002) argues for an increased fragmentation in cultures and in values. We are able to change between different values in different situations. Fluctuating values, value type III, are values setting preferences and guiding behaviour. Established professional values, value type I, is about principles and legitimating behaviour (Beck Jørgensen 2007, Hodgkinson 1996, Kluckhohn 1962). These values are institutionalized and resistant to change. Thus, values guiding our behaviour might change even though our principles and the understanding of right and wrong is more or

less constant. In the age of governmental measurement the informants expressed anxiety about the qualitative values, those difficult to measure:

Teacher Maria: “It is easier to measure math results than physical activity and how the pupils behave. Health, physical activity and nutrition is suffering.”

Public production has two aims; user oriented production as teaching, and production of general public utilities as socializing, reproduction of the work force, law and order (Antonsen et al 1999). Thus, institutional environment is of greater importance to public services (Meyer and Rowan 1977), as political actors and as political tool. The acceptance of new governmental ideas and expectations regarding their technical environment do not avoid the practitioners fighting for qualitative values and production for society. The informants expressed their school values like this:

Principal Anne: “The school can’t live like an isolated island; we have to relate to the development in general. However, we have an important role as counter culture against unhealthy powers in society. Our task is to make people conscious to oppose for example mobbing and racism... We are proud to present good results. But most important is our role as developers of good citizens.”

Teacher Maria: “The ideal school is a school for all children, an integrated school that take care of everybody and gives all children equal possibilities. Individual follow up is also important. Reports to the Storting nr 16 call attention to the need to level out social inequality, and Reports nr 17 relate this further to the social consequences of the digital revolution. This is a huge challenge to us.”

As political instruments schools are increasingly expected to take a more comprehensive role towards the users, not only become a learning institution but a caring institution bringing up good citizens as well. The qualitative values are then even more important than before:

Principal John: “There are many families with huge problems, and school is often the most important support both for the child and the family. The role as caretaker exceeds the teachers’ role as professionals.”

Traditional values of the profession of teachers as democracy, equality and well-being are still important principles according to these informants. Even though the pressure is tough both regarding authorities and users, the professional values might be continued. Persistence of traditional professional values presupposes a professional pride. In the dialogue with the informants there were no questions about pride, but as they spoke about their profession the pride and will to conserve the traditional school ideas became apparent:

Principal John: “It is important to conserve some of the old Norwegian school system. The teacher shall be concise and decisive leader that gives the pupils clear messages on how we ought to do things. Teachers are heterogeneous and we have to let them use their

skills in the best possible way... School related subject matter has been emphasized by the older teachers. Their professional pride and strength is of importance to them. Unfortunately this has not been appreciated for some time."

The pressure is present and they have experienced changes and are aware that more changes will come. Through earlier change initiatives they have seen how difficult it is to change school practice, and know that changes are no quick fix:

Principal John: "School is an organization full of traditions, and changes take time. Teachers tend to do as they please and are used to."

There are also examples of expectations school practitioners have fought away:

Teacher Cathrine: "The idea to have accountants and administrators as school managers was met with strong critique by the teacher community. And this is no longer a topic."

Due to today's governmental signals the coming changes might as well be changes back to the traditional school than increased market orientation or other new ideas.

Teacher Maria: "In Norway we look at Finland because of their good score on the PISA-surveys. Due to this, the way we think about school in Norway might be completely turned around. The idea of children being responsible for their learning process seems to have been a mistake. The pupils are not mature enough. Open architecture are discussed, but we lack research on this area. (In Norway many schools are rebuilt from classrooms to an open architecture the last years, while Finland keeps on the classroom as learning arena). There are some indications that we are going back to the traditional school. School can not take over the role as up bringers from the parents."

Principal Frank: "What we call the New Zealand model is inspiring many teachers in Trondheim and some other places in Norway as well. Several teachers have been abroad to study this school model. I do not remember exactly what it is about, but it is quite equal to the traditional Norwegian school."

Principal Peter: "New-Zealand model has presently a great influence. It started with small steps 10 years ago and has increased its importance the latest years. The model is the reintroduction of the teacher managed school, but with self organizing pupils. Based on teacher facilitation the pupils know what to do and work by themselves within the frames set by the teacher."

New ways of working are realized and there have been changes in pedagogical principles, school architecture, and they have gone from single teachers to teams. The changes are accepted, but between the lines they still prefer many of the "old" way of school practice:

Principal Frank: "We have got open schools, the doors are gone. The evaluation methods are changed from marks to portfolio assessment. Many of us would like another and more precise evaluation, but the advantage is that portfolio assessment stimulates

cooperation between the teachers...Homework is not a focus anymore...Regarding our profession as teachers we experience a great change from classroom to open school architecture. The integrated school gives us challenges traditional teachers are not educated for. That's why we soon seem to have nearly as many social workers as teachers employed. In 1997 we got the 6-years old as well, followed by pre-primary school teachers in the school and playing as a key activity. Lately we have got a focus on learning to learn, that is quite new. We have gone from an equality oriented school with homework and loud reading, to an individual orientation towards each pupil. Discipline has been important to us. Well-being and pedagogic is focused now.

Teacher Cathrine: "If PISA (the OECD tests) sets the standards, I think we will loose a lot of the strengths in the Norwegian school system. When it comes to well-being and democratic development we are probably best in Europe. Things like believe in one self, be safe, holding presentations are examples where our pupils are very good... The management in a French University said that it was easy to recognize Norwegian pupils. It was always those that asked why during the presentations of rules and regulations. This is all about a healthy skepticism, it is easy to ask why, we don't have a dangerous believe in authorities. The latter is a more important value than what PISA measure. However, we also need basic skills. We are going to learn something. Knowledge is an easy burden to carry.

Institutionalized practice is hard to change, and regarding school many of us re-institutionalize school practice as we know it through conservative expectations.

Teacher Cathrine: "In a long term perspective the school is conservative. We have all gone to school and have opinions on how school should be. Whether we are politicians, teachers or parents we all want to take further what we have experienced... The changes are like pendulum shifts, and may not reach their outer limits either. I see many patterns that also existed 20 years ago, but now we may call it something else."

In spite of discussions about how to run schools, the superior goal is pretty constant:

Principal Frank: "The pupils are going to be good citizens and they are going to learn something."

These expressions of established values support Beck Jørgensens (2003) findings of classical public values across political and administrative levels and services: "Public sector has a responsibility to society in general, there ought to be public insight, one should be aware of law and order, and one should follow independent professional standards" (Beck Jørgensen 2003:242).

Role of manager and the practitioners' choice

Olsen (2005) encourages the bureaucracy debate back to the ethical question; what kind of administrators do we want? And what kind of pressure do the practitioners meet? Institutionalized practice is a third force influencing the development in addition to the

forces from government and users. To build a legitimated and solid school practice the school managers have to handle these forces. The informants were asked what kind of forces they met, who influenced their agenda. As this quote exemplifies, governmental expectations are the dominate consideration to what influence their practice.

Principal Anne: "Management performance contract put strong conditions for what we do as Principals, it direct our priorities. In addition to the new curricula, this contract governs our daily work. I'm not sure I would have prioritised energy conservation if it was not written in this contract."

The previous discussion of practice showed that in spite of significant external pressure the institutionalized practice is resistant to change. In spite of the governmental tight follow up and continuous new initiatives the Principals report of an increased autonomy. They look upon themselves as mini-counsellors, due to new organization models where Principals as other managers in the Municipality are given more responsibility both regarding economy and results. The informants told:

Principal John: "The Principals today are more like small city mayors, we are in control of everything. It is only the city managers above us."

Teacher Maria: "The two-level-model, in which the Municipality of Trondheim is organized, has removed the school-management from the Municipality administration. Who is going to take care of the school interest now? It works in Trondheim due to competent personnel."

Principal Frank: "I have more power today than previously when there was a school management in the Municipality. Then we had more detailed plans and directives to follow, until we changed towards MbO as a management idea. Today I am in charge of the economy. If we manage to cut down on the number of employees, we could spend more on equipment if we want to. In this way we do better investments. We use the resources where it is mostly needed, and makes the most out of it."

Governmental expectations are incoherent and have to be prioritized and aligned, both the diverse governmental expectations and expectations from users and the professional practice. The autonomy gives them possibility to prioritize. The reforms have given autonomy to school managers on the way from directives to objectives. Managers role is to ensure legitimacy. Due to Brunsson and Olsen (1993) legitimacy is gained by showing correct behaviour, and in this age of reforms, showing continuous improvements. Of importance is how others experience the behaviour and improvements, not what is actually going on. It is the presented facade as well as the organizational foundation that gives legitimacy. Fluctuating values, value type III, are values setting preferences and guiding behaviour. Established professional values are classified as value type I (Beck Jørgensen 2007, Hodgkinson 1996, Kluckhohn 1962). Values presenting surface to show correctly behaviour is value III. This represents response to external expectations such as governmental and users' expectations to school. Value type I and type III might be incoherent. According to political organizations are expected to reflect values in society

and to follow accepted rules and procedures (Brunsson 1986). These are basic values of type I with slow pulse, and these are corresponding to the institutionalized professional school values. Thus, the differences in the informants' way of expressing their reaction to the governmental pressure could be interpreted as a consequence of some Principals acting in accordance with and standing up for the professional values, while some Principals to a higher degree argue in accordance to what is formally expected due to the last governmental signals.

Principal John: "It is possible to make chances with a dedicated leadership. A principal must be reflective on his or her attention and agenda. They have to keep a few things up front all the time. The Municipality jams us with numerous incompatible actions items. My role is to select from these items to keep a steady course. The advantage of being an old man is that I do not need to jump every time the head of Municipality says jump. The authorities live in their own world far away from the everyday school practice."

Principal Frank: "There are many more considerations to make today; more individual adaptation, we have got the 5-6-years old children that need special care, play is focused, pedagogical principles, underdeveloped children, children with difficulties, we have to pay attention to differences regarding resources, and well being is prioritized."

Principal Anne: "The input is governed by what is measured. Our attention is directed towards mathematics and natural science which are important criteria of what we measure. Democracy values and collaborative skills that traditional has been important are not measured. It is then up to every Principal to prioritize these. Several of us continue to prioritize these in addition to what is measured. I'm not sure everybody does, and what will happen to these values over time is uncertain."

One way to respond to and handle governmental pressure is to establish a network fighting school interests. The Principals network has become a part of the formal structure. Thus, school interests have a formal channel in the Municipality decision processes. One informant explained:

Principal Anne: "To make our voice heard by the Municipality we use the networks. We got 4 principal networks in Trondheim, one for each district. The networks are critical, and some time we are heard and sometimes not. One principal from each network meet the representative from the Municipality monthly. This system is good and works well. We have the courage to speak up."

From their study Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) found that radical changes are legitimated by an "urgent need" of greater reliance to market and greater competition. The consensus-based incrementality is out of fashion. Their findings correspond to the way one of the Principals argued about the change processes at her school.

Principal Anne: "It is quiet now, but three years ago we had a storm. We rebuilt our school from traditional classrooms to open school architecture and reorganized the school organization to teams, at the same time we got a new curriculum plan. Teachers

whining about bad work conditions, and some thought we were going in a wrong direction and that too many things were initiated concurrently. As I see it today, we could not have done this differently, a stepwise approach would not have worked as a restructuring process. The change was vast, but had to be executed. Today people are satisfied, the storm has come to an end, and one should not believe it was the same school. All agree upon the way we are doing things today.”

The informants support the claim that there have been a lot of changes some years. In this paper the focus is on how these changes influences the practices. As we have seen from the quotes referred, reaction to changed expectations could be translation of the signals due to institutionalized practice, choice and prioritizing between diverse signals, or changing institutionalized practices meaning de-institutionalization of former practice and institutionalization of new practices. This quote is an example of the last:

Principal Peter:”The enormous pressure is creating a different kind of teacher. The teachers becomes more like clerks, plurality among teachers are disappearing. Teachers are forced into narrow roles where they all the time have to keep up to measurable standardized parameters.

Zeitgeist

The discussion here is based on a model presenting established practice, governmental expectations, and user expectations as the influencing elements on school practice. Individual values and ideas except the professional values is not included, and other external actors or processes that might have influencing power on school practice is not considered. One of the informants emphasized the local change force among the teachers in Trondheim, a force both teachers, bureaucrats and politicians outside Trondheim has looked at. Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersen (1995) also highlighted the local change force as important.

Principal Frank: ”The Principals in Trondheim is progressive and keeps the school going. We are in the forefront when it comes to school development, and many others follow closely what we are doing. We are all influenced by what’s going on in the society. The signals we got from politicians and the Municipality is mostly parallel to our ideas. It is more that unite than separate us. Most teachers were against the national tests, they were introduced against teachers will.”

Principal Frank: “Some of the teachers are positive and some are in opposition to the development processes, I know who they are.”

Being progressive and positive to changes is presented as a value, at least among the Principals and many of the teachers. This value represents a strong internal force. It is connected to the established professional values, but they are willing to try new ideas. The informants differed about how they were influenced by the governmental systems or by the users. However, all respondents agreed that both governmental and user expectations exerted heavy pressure. Some of them mentioned zeitgeist as important, that

the external expectations from both governmental and users, and the local change force were products of zeitgeist and not that different.

Principal John: "We are living in a more individualistic oriented society, and our practice is a consequence of this tendency."

Zeitgeist influences all three corners in the model in Figure 1, and makes the context more or less common for school practitioners, users and Municipality. In this way the understanding between these groups of actors is possible. There is a considerably pressure towards increased documentation and measuring and an increased focus on efficiency and results, but institutionalized practice seems to need practitioners engagement to realize change practices (Hepsø 2005).

Conclusion

Re-bureaucratization or de-bureaucratization, how can we understand the contemporary tendency in public sector? An ongoing discussion on change of values in public sector is addressing this question. In this paper I have admitted an actor perspective to this theme. My respondents pointed out two groups of actors representing huge pressure on their practice through values challenging their professional values; i) governmental actors and ii) the users. The governmental actors seems to be in need of gaining control of an increasingly complexity in public sector to confront the expectations from society, to compete and gain results compared to the rest of Europe, and to reach diverse political goals. The practitioners feel overwhelmed by demands of juridical orientation through documentation and reports, economic orientation through increased focus on costs, and frequent new ideas expected to be implemented top-down. Parallel to the governmental demands practitioners experience equal increase in the strength and diversification of user demands. From being a homogeneous group respecting the school practitioners' decisions, the user group is today heterogeneous and demanding on behalf of their individual interests. Incoherent expectations from the government leave a less precise role-description of the school and open up for diversified understanding of what one could expect from the school. The practitioners at school experience expectations to deliver several other services than knowledge development, at the same time as there is a considerably pressure on delivery of learning results.

From practitioners' points of view, from the view of local decision making, the tendencies of de-or re-bureaucratization, traditional bureaucracy or market orientation, is a question of what pressure the practitioners chose to prioritize. As the contemporary theoretical discussion suggests, both tendencies are present. Changed values, de- and re-bureaucratization, are then to be understood as consequences of the characteristics of the governmental pressure, of the pressure from users, of the role and legitimacy of the practitioner, and of the role and legitimacy of management, and the interdependencies of these.

A belief in active interpretive and translating actors implies that managers at the foremost, but also other practitioners interpret and translate the signals from

governmental actors and from users. The interpreted and translated signals are the basis for the decisions and actions made, and then also the basis for the tendencies towards bureaucracy re-orientation or market orientation. The most relevant actors are then i) the local government, that speaks both for themselves, for the national government and for the EU system, ii) the users, both pupils and parents, and iii) The Principal and teachers.

My informants regard the governmental signals as increasingly defined by the EU-system and organizations like OECD. The national authorities look to Europe and compare Norwegian public sector with European level. Performance indicators and tests results from OECD set a standard for the governmental signals. In the last election campaigns in Norway, school has been a vital issue. The respondents in this study experience a wide range of different governmental signals. They feel the school is expected to solve most of the challenges in society. Increased attention and measuring results as well as increased heterogeneity of the signals is what the informants tell about regarding governmental expectations. Equally, the signals from the users are also experienced as increasingly demanding and increasingly heterogeneous. The main tendencies corresponds between governmental and user's signal. School practitioners are connected to changes in society, and the developmental tendencies are equal regarding the users, the government both local and national, and regarding teachers professional ideas. Increased complexity and increased heterogeneity combined with increased local autonomy changes the role as local manager or Principal. The strength and heterogeneity of the expectations directed towards the school makes the managers role to sort out and focus a chosen direction and ensure external and internal legitimacy.

How can we understand the changing of values out of this? Bureaucracy values such as control, professional standards, reporting and auditing, public insight and judicial orientation has increased due to more centralized and international oriented regulations and benchmarking. Market orientation and individualization is another tendency, both as spirit of the time, and as increased pressure from more demanding users. The Principals have strengthened their position and acquired more autonomy. To a certain extent each school, or each organizational unit, has the possibility to choose the values guiding their practice, to what degree they are guided by professional teaching ideas, by governmental ideas or by the user influence. Among the schools in this study, we could find significant variations. The result from this study with increased standardization combined with increased local autonomy leading to increased local differences supports the impression of hybridization of values and organizational principles in public sector.

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