

HEAD-ACHE IN NORWAY

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**Paper to the CCEAM 2008 CONFERENCE
In Durban, September 8-12, 2008,**

ABSTRACT

Tensions between different understandings of school management training in Norway have been identified through the HEAD Project. The Project is a comparative study of school leadership training in five countries; Norway, Finland, France, England and the United States, running 2004-2008. The aim was to observe how school leadership training in the five countries is responding to the respective governments' educational policy aims and strategies under globalisation. The overall frame of reference was curriculum philosophies seen as historically and presently dominant and challenged by the global knowledge economy. Moreover, the study was based in an assumption of seeing school leadership training quality as the key link in the "education value chain" – starting with national policy ambitions and ending with the specific country's ranking on international comparisons of students' achievements. Norway was taken as focus case for identifying relevance between national policies and perception of relevant school leadership competence among key training providers. The particular problem statement of this paper is: Why is there a Norwegian HEAD-ache? And, why is it likely, or not likely, to disappear? A main empirical finding is that the Government favours professional leadership, while the actual training does not succeed in implementing the new policies. On the contrary, the training perpetuates a tradition of focusing the teachers more than the leaders. The reasons for this Norwegian particularity are found in the country's culture, curriculum tradition and its present affluent national economy. The consequence is that the Government's ambitions for change can hardly be met. Among key stakeholders in a democratic society there is not sufficient real motivation for the needed changes. The Norwegian HEAD-ache continues.

1. Introduction

Policy relevant school leader competence has been a controversial issue in Norway over the last twenty years. In 1988 a nation-wide study of school development and school leadership training revealed limited relevance between national education policy goals and a national in-service training for school leaders (Johansen & Tjeldvoll, 1989). A split between the rationale of national education goals on the one hand, and the understanding of relevant school leadership among education researchers and trainers, on the other, has caught increasing attention after the poor PISA-results and pressure from globalisation for more effective production of human capital in the global knowledge market. In 2002 a new government signalled policies for more effective school management as part of a reform to lift Norway on the PISA-rankings (Wales & Welle-Strand, 2005). However, change has only occurred “tortoise-wise”, both within the education bureaucracy and the education research community, due to a deep-rooted culture of fearing that effective management will become “managerialism” and as something foreign to traditional Norwegian ways of running schools. The curricula and methods of most programmes have reflected the traditional scepticism towards effective school management (Tjeldvoll, 2008b).

At national policy level, however, a research programme initiative indicated that international trends were reaching Norwegian shores and awakening interest. In 2002 the Government and the Research Council launched a research programme on “innovation and renewal in the public sector”, particularly health and education¹. An application to this programme for a research project to study the relevance between national education policy goals and strategies – and the training programmes for headmasters in Norway was submitted. Funding was granted, and the HEAD Project was a fact².

¹ “The FIFOS programme was founded in 2002 and projects will run until 2008. 87 million NOK (USD 17 millions) have been allocated. By foregrounding basic and innovative results, the goal of the programme is to contribute towards an innovative and efficient public sector with high quality services. Emphasis has been placed on research that is change and process oriented and the priority has been given to the use of ICT and to innovations in the health and education sectors. The aim has been to focus on a few main projects. To assure relevance and actuality, the main focus has been on the ability of the research projects to develop research questions and project design according to the needs in different sectors and service producing agencies.” www.forskningsradet.no

² 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. For more information, see http://www.bi.no/Content/Article_59952.aspx

Moreover, a *comparative* component was added. The case of Norway was to be compared with Finland, France, England and the United States³. Finland was selected because of its astonishing PISA-achievements, while being culturally very similar to Norway. France was found of interest because of its strict encyclopaedic curriculum legacy, similar to what had dominated also in Norway until circa 1970 (Holmes & McLean, 1989). There were both common and specific reasons for choosing England and the US. A glance at lists of journals on school leadership research showed that close to all research-based publishing on school leadership originated from Anglo-American countries, England and the US in particular (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). One implication of this fact was that the understanding of school leadership in these two countries appears to make up the main frame of reference for researchers of school leadership in the rest of the world. For specific reasons, England was found to be interesting because of the development of centralized training programmes through its National College for School Leadership, NCSL, as well as because of the country's distinct essentialist (elitist) curriculum tradition (Holmes & McLean, 1989). Particular reasons for choosing the US were firstly, that it due to its size and structure it required highly decentralised system for training of school leaders, but more so in that it had a distinctly different curriculum philosophy, namely "democratic progressivism" rooted in philosophical pragmatism (*Ibid.*).

The four "comparison" countries represent principally different curriculum traditions and different understandings of school management. In common, however, they contribute to illuminate "aching" tensions about what different stakeholders see as relevant school leadership training in Norway⁴.

The purpose of this paper is to report an analysis of the "Norwegian HEAD-ache", which draws on empirical studies of the three main training programmes for school leaders in Norway, and in doing so responds to the following questions: *Why is there a Norwegian HEAD-ache? And, why is it likely, or not likely, to disappear?* Before briefly presenting empirical findings, we reveal the "lenses" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) applied in identifying research issues and ways of interpreting observations. The frame includes firstly, the main curriculum philosophies operating in the five countries, and secondly, the metaphor of the "Education Value Chain"⁵. The metaphor is used to

³ Later experiences from China and Hong Kong were taken into analyses.

⁴ Summaries of research into these areas can be found in the varying HEAD Country reports published in 2005 and 2006 (Bjork & Murphy, 2005; Bush, 2005; Fouquet, 2006; Värri & Alava, 2005; Wales & Welle-Strand, 2005; Walker & Kwong, 2006) and 2008 (Alava, 2008; Bjork & Murphy, 2008; Bush, 2008; Fouquet, 2008; Wales & Welle-Strand, 2008).

⁵ The Education Value Chain metaphor is used just as a – metaphor, and is not related to its application in economic and business research.

observe consistency of the logics between national policies and students' achievements, as they appear in international comparisons. The key link in the "chain" is school management⁶ competence. This competence is constituted by three dimensions of management; Learning Management, Personnel Management and Organisation Management. Thirdly, the global knowledge economy's assumed requirement for effective learning and human capital production is also part of the frame of reference. An additional reference point is that three internationally prominent countries are presented as important education policy sources influencing the Norwegian HEAD-ache. Thus, an intention is to consider how the dominant curriculum traditions and educational approach frame responses to these new impulses on the Norwegian Educational system, particularly with regard to the training and development of school leaders.

2. Conceptual frame of reference

Which factors are influencing Norwegian university trainers' understanding of school leadership competence? Education researchers/trainers have been socialised by a particular curriculum philosophy already from their own primary education and onwards. This philosophy frames their understanding of education policies and the role of the headmaster in the "education value chain", as well as their interpretation of the effects of the globalized knowledge economy on the education system. Also the education bureaucracy and the population at large have been socialised by the dominating curriculum philosophy. However, concrete education policies of certain countries with their specific curriculum legacies are now seen to be influencing the minds of key Norwegian stakeholders, e.g. politicians, researchers, media and bureaucracy.

Curriculum philosophies

According to Holmes & McLean (1989), a world map of curriculum philosophy influence can be drawn by five traditions, and exemplified by the same number of key countries. The four western philosophies are seen as having a chronological appearance of being dominant; Essentialism, based on Plato's classic curriculum "septem artes liberales", Encyclopaedism, based in Comenius' and the French encyclopaedists' ideas about liberating education for all, Polytechnicalism based in Marxist-socialist ideas about the complementarities of theory and practice, and, finally

⁶ School management and school leadership are used interchangeably in this paper, although with 'management' as an overall concept – as a decision-making position where the functions of both leadership and administration are carried out.

American Progressivism, based in pragmatist philosophy, and stressing learning by experience and democratic processes.

Essentialism is concerned about studying few subjects deeply and having character formation and wisdom as overall aims. The teacher is a respected tutor. It has elitist roots, in accordance with the rationale of Plato's Republic. The three other traditions (encyclopaedism, polytechnicalism and progressivism) have in common that they are democratic challengers to elitist essentialism. Democracy and education for all are common denominators. But, there are also significant differences between them. In encyclopaedism, the effective learning of many subjects is a key purpose. The teacher has distinct authority. In polytechnicalism theory and practice, academic and vocational subjects are seen as equally valid. In progressivism however, the learning process is seen as more important than specific subject knowledge (cfr. Dewey's "learning by doing"), and, the teacher has relatively low authority. Democracy is important in all processes. The fifth tradition, Confucianism, was introduced at about the same time as Plato's ideas were expressed⁷. The Confucianist curriculum tradition has similarities with both essentialism and encyclopaedism – a very deep respect for education as such, and, by passing tough exams it was, in principle, a social mobility tool for everybody (Tjeldvoll, 2008a).

The country most clearly reflecting an essentialist curriculum legacy is England (Holmes & McLean, 1989). The encyclopaedist best example is France. The former Soviet Union and its East bloc-neighbours were inspired by polytechnicalism. Finally, the core example of a progressivist curriculum tradition is the US (*ibid.*). China is the most clear Confucian country case, although most parts of East Asia can be labelled "Confucian Lands".

Norway

The country can boast of having compulsory basic schooling already from 1739. In the beginning it comprised mostly Christian religion (Lutheranism) and basic reading and arithmetic.⁸ Gradually, encyclopaedist ideas crept in, peaking between the two world wars. Even in the early years after WW II, "school knowledge" and good exam results were a main social mobility instrument in a rather poor country, mainly having lived from fishery and agriculture. Strong efforts at school, paid socially off well. Around 1970 the country switched from encyclopaedist to progressivist tradition. Most of the present adult population has been socialised to see relevant education as characterised by stressing the learning processes, participation, project work and the teacher

⁷ The Chinese philosopher Confucius lived at the same time as Socrates, 551-479 BC.

⁸ You were not allowed to marry before you could read aloud from the Bible.

more as a facilitator than an authority of knowledge (Welle-Strand & Tjeldvoll, 2002b). In this tradition there is scarcely room for a leader as *manager*. The “relevant” leader is seen as a facilitator for the teachers. The leadership, in this tradition, ought to be carried out by democratic decisions in the teacher staff meetings. This particular Norwegian legacy seems now to be challenged by neo-essentialism (from England) and the needs of the global knowledge economy (competitive human capital and knowledge management). The clash between the old cultural and ideological traditions and the quality and economy-driven requirements is causing “the Norwegian HEAD-ache”.

The Education Value Chain

The HEAD study was based on an assumption of seeing school leadership training quality as the key link in the “education value chain” - a logic starting with national policy ambitions and ending with the country’s ranking on international comparisons of students’ achievements. When the Government became concerned about low achievements on international comparisons (e.g. PISA) and wished to improve achievement, it started looking for more efficient management at every level of the education system. The value chain-logic then appears to be: to have optimal consistency between a) national policy goals/strategies, b) school managers’ implementation of policies (towards teachers, students, parents and context), c) teachers making all students achieve optimally, while also seeing (unequally spread) excellence as particularly important, d) stakeholders’ satisfaction and e) Norway’s improved position on international rankings. The latter is by the Government seen as an indication of being internationally “knowledge economy competitive”, also when the off shore oil industry has come to a close. Thus current impulses suggest an acceptance that improved management of schools will result in improved pupil attainment. At the same time, heavier focus is placed upon demonstrating the outcomes of schooling rather than just output.

The Global Knowledge Economy

After the fall of Communism and the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the success of information and communication technologies, a new form of capitalism dominates the globe. Cornerstones of the new global economy are individual knowledge (human capital) and innovation competitiveness (Castells, 2000). Finland, with its success on the PISA test serves as an example of a nation meeting this challenge. The pressure from the increasingly global economy has made high consistency between links of the Education Value Chain increasingly more important, from a national policy point of view.

In order to understand the function of education management in the global education market place, it is necessary to move beyond “inside-education research” approach and look to knowledge produced by those who have “to learn in order not to burn” – companies’ dependent on being competitive in the market (Friedman & Olaisen, 1999). Peter Lorange (2002) in his *New Vision for management education: Leadership challenges* – has illuminated a leadership reality that may in the future also be relevant for public institutions, e.g. schools. The leadership is decisive for keeping the organisation competitive in a real market situation. This corporate reality may also be important to learn from for public institutions in the future. Any chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Also countries with a progressivist-democratic education tradition seem now pushed to accept a new Management Reality or New Public Management. However, democratic countries with an affluent economy may face difficulties in finding acceptable policies, appreciated by the voters, and not least, by strong teacher trade unions and other stakeholders.

3. Three influential countries

Internationally, it is considered that three countries’ policies are likely to draw attention in Norway, and to influence debate and future policies; Finland, England and Hong Kong⁹. The first is steered by a distinct encyclopaedic curriculum, the second by an essentialist tradition, but with an ambition of offering elite quality education to the whole population¹⁰. Hong Kong represents a synthesis of British essentialist/elitist and Confucianist education ideas. Finland and Hong Kong have high rankings on PISA. Finland has for several years been the Education Pilgrim Country for a great number of other countries dissatisfied with their PISA-results. For neighbouring Norway, Finland has been seen as particularly interesting because of the similarities the two countries share, in terms of history, ideology, economy and culture. A Finnish paradox is that the country is doing so academically well, without having paid much attention to school leadership. When a country has exceptionally professional teachers there does not seem to be a particular need for them to “managed”.

Hong Kong’s economy is based almost entirely on human capital. Culturally it has merged Chinese and British values. Today it is a world metropolis and gateway to Mainland China. The way Hong Kong is continuing to merge Confucian, British, and, increasingly western progressivist/democratic ideas makes it of particular interest from a comparative education

⁹ Hong Kong is not a ‘country’, but a special administrative region of China (SAR).

¹⁰ Visible, for example, in the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit (SU) (2005) Strategy Memo 2005, from the Education Team in the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit (SU) in the Cabinet Office, UK.

perspective (Tjeldvoll, 2008a). Its significance is even more underlined by today's general strong attention to Chinese culture and language. England offers education as a key export product, of considerable importance for the country's economy. The three countries taken together are assumed to influence Norwegian policies in general. Particularly, Finland's subject-centeredness, England's leadership programmes and Hong Kong's multi-culture orientation in both curriculum and leadership are assumed to influence Norwegian policies.

The two other countries involved in the HEAD Project (France and the US) are not assumed to be given any specific attention among Norwegian stakeholders. The US has a lot of excellent higher education institutions, while basic education quality is regarded as rather mixed. France seems to be struggling to find a balance between its encyclopaedic tradition, with certain elitist features – and the background of students with parents having scarce education.

4. Norway – Tortoise change

For obvious policy and funding reasons Norway was made focus country of the HEAD Project. It was a changed rationale at the top of the Norwegian political and funding system that made HEAD possible. The research funding decision makers must have acknowledged the value of focusing this particular link in the Education Value Chain, and the comparison with key countries in the international context. The tension between the understanding of education goals and practice by top politicians/economists and the Education Lobby, researchers, bureaucrats, media and the dominant teacher trade union included might be acknowledged. As a background for interpreting empirical findings about Norwegian university trainers' understanding of relevant school leadership competence it seems helpful to take a glance at Norwegian cultural and economic particularities.

Lauglo (1998) described Norway as having an education legacy influenced by populism. This culture is historically characterized by rural dominance, very small schools and a strong equality value. The population has been spread over a large area, with small communities. The school often was the cultural centre of the community. The equality values were based in puritan Lutheranism and, increasingly in Socialist ideology. The school often only had one teacher. He/she was also quite often the assistant to the local priest. When schools had more than one teacher, one of them was appointed "over-teacher", to take care of administrative businesses. However, this head teacher was (only) the first among equals. After WW II social development changed, by merging of schools, increased length of schooling and a need for more effective management appearing.

The role of the head teacher came gradually under pressure. From above he was supposed to take charge and be effective in implementing policies. From his staff, colleagues, he was expected to behave as “one of them” (Nytell, 1994). The heads were in a squeeze between the role of an administrative “servant” for the teacher colleagues, and a manager leading the staff’s implementing of national policies.

Simultaneously there was a change in curriculum philosophy in Norway – from European style encyclopaedism to American progressivism. Actually this change fitted well with the old role of the head teacher. The curriculum change reinforced the old legacy of anti-management in favour of “teacher collective management”. At the same time the teacher trade union gained more power. The leader of the teacher union club in the staff room might well challenge the power of the formal head teacher. Effectiveness in implementation of new policies would strongly depend on the level of consensus in the staff. In practice a head teacher opposing the staff, which in reality is led by the club leader, would be rather powerless (Tjeldvoll, 2002).

In this state of the art, the 1980’s and 1990’s were years when Norway grew rich, very rich because of it’s off shore oil industry. For the society at large and the education sector in particular the combination of a strong democratic, equality culture, powerful trade unions and an affluent national economy made any significant reforms/change very difficult. The good economy and a highly developed welfare state also seem to indicate less motivation for education as a tool of social mobility (Welle-Strand & Tjeldvoll, 2002a). The political scientists Olsen and Peters (1996) in their analysis of social change in Norway, labelled the country a tortoise. The country changed slowly, because it did not have to change. It lacked real motivation for change.

On this background certain assumptions can be made about how the staffs on Norwegian university-based programmes see school leadership competence.

Assumptions

The Norwegian HEAD-ache is due to a collision between a Norwegian legacy of anti-management thinking and a belief in democratic leadership by the teachers on the one hand – and the Government’s fear of Norway lagging behind as a “knowledge nation” internationally, on the other. Convalescence is likely to be slow, because of a general “tortoise speed of change” in Norway. Empirical data is expected to find “an internationally oriented knowledge economy

orientation” in the national policies, while the understanding among training staffs of school management will reflect a Norwegian legacy of “resisting managerialism”. It is thought that the general slow rate of change will be even more influenced by ideas thought to conflict with accepted paradigms.

5. Findings from empirical research¹¹

The following research questions were to be answered: a) What are the goals and strategies of educational reforms in Norway? b) What is the understanding of a relevant school management function among trainers of school leaders at Norway’s three main providers? c) How relevant is the curriculum content for meeting the qualifications needed by the present policy reforms?¹² and d) How do a sample of master theses reflect understanding of new policies?¹³

Summarised the following was found:¹⁴

1. The national policies stress subject-centeredness and a school leadership expected to be effectively accountable to national policies (Utdannings og forskningsdepartementet, 2002, 2004a, 2004b). There is a distinct influence from the international comparisons, e.g. PISA.
2. Rather than adopting national standards or centralising training, the Government has supported the development of Master programmes for School Leadership development.
3. At the same time funding has been made available for the training and development of school leaders. Local authorities, as commissioners, “buy-in” the programmes they consider suit their purposes, which should fit overall policy goals.
4. Despite assumptions, a majority of trainers at the two public universities and all trainers at the private business school had an understanding of school leadership quite consistent with national policies. However, at the two public institutions significant minority groups of professors had an understanding reflecting resistance to the underlying basis of recent policies as they would likely lead to “managerialism”.

¹¹ Methodology: The research “objects” were a) national education policy documents, b) understanding of the school management function among the training staffs at three main providers, two (public) universities and one (private) business school, c) programme curriculum at one of the universities, and d) master theses submitted at the business school and one of the universities. Basic methodological understanding is rooted in Burrell and Morgan’s functionalist and interpretative paradigms (1979). The interviewing of 22 trainers (professors, associate professors and assistant professors) was carried out on line with interpretative thinking. The interviewing was based on a structured guide. For each of the issues (learning, personnel and organisation management) operationalising the school management function, the interviewee was invited to express his/her views about knowledge and/or skills needed for a school manager.

¹² Only the curriculum at one of the public providers was analysed.

¹³ Only samples from two of the providers (the private business school and one university) were analysed

¹⁴ For a more elaborated presentation of the findings, see Tjeldvoll (2008b)

“School Management: Norwegian Legacies Bowing to New Public Management”, in *Managing Global Transitions. International Research Journal*, Vol 6, No 2 (177-205).

5. The programme syllabus of one of the public providers reflected distinctively the Norwegian legacy of focusing on the teachers' role, and, not on the manager's tasks.
6. Master theses submitted from both the private business school and one of the public universities reflected the Norwegian Legacy, focus in the theses being upon the pedagogical tasks of schooling rather than management tasks, with the former appearing focused from the teachers' perspective¹⁵.
7. Two adaptations strategies were identified:
 - a) The *private business school* had adapted its programme (goals and curriculum) strictly to the most recent national policies (bowing to the Government). The programme was also sold to some commissioners who demanded a radical departure from traditional thinking, while the participants reflected the school system. A tension appeared to arise when master students doing theses as part of the programme demands focused upon themes in concert with the Norwegian legacy, and, hence, there seemed an adaptation back to "customers in the market" – customers with an understanding contrary to the national policies. This is indicating a contradiction between programme rhetoric and implementation.
 - b) In the two public universities, majority groups of trainers had accepted the national goals and strategies (bowing to the Government), while curriculum content and the topics of master theses in the other university indicate contradictions between rhetoric and reality.
8. In essence – the Norwegian HEAD-ache continues, in the public institutions with staffs being split in their understanding of the rationale of school leadership. However, this study has revealed a more peculiar split and, perhaps more serious HEAD-ache in a future perspective.

¹⁵ A first-order content analysis of a large sample of master theses, drawn from all the major training providers, reveals that the strong teacher-oriented legacy is in four areas of the candidates' work: (1) Problem statement and research questions, (2) basic understanding of the school organization, (3) basic assumption of educational reforms, and (4) theoretical frame of reference of the theses. To the first issue, the major bulk of master theses reflect current debates within the teacher professions. For example: ICT competence among staff, teacher team collaboration, coach-based teaching and pedagogical leadership. Not to say that these issues are not important, but they reflect a rather non-controversial agenda seen from the teachers and their trade unions' point of view. Secondly, the basic understanding of the school organization reflects a bottom-up and ultra-democratic position. According to this paradigmatic view, legitimacy and trust from the teacher corps, and not the policy aims of the mandatory, is the primary foundation of school management and leadership. This understanding is also reflected in the approach to school change and educational reform. Fourthly, theoretical frames of reference, as presented in theory chapters, reflect a longstanding "school-development" tradition in Norway, which converges with the points briefly listed above. The core of this legacy is a democratic and humanist-oriented bottom-up understanding of the school organization, paired with "anti- management". The theory chapters reviewed are, however, strongly overlaid with "learning organization" and "distributed leadership" rhetoric. But in contrast to mainstream knowledge management research, Senge's (1990) theory is used in a loose manner, where it is possible to put very much into it. In that respect, the image of the "learning school" is much of the same as the one strongly held within the dominant teacher oriented legacy.

In terms of the private business school, there is a contradiction between, on the one hand accepting new national education policy goals and the necessity of New Public Management and, on the other, adapting its knowledge production (master theses) to a market reflecting a traditional anti-management culture.

9. The findings may imply that there, for the time being, is not a real motivation in Norway for a change towards a school management thinking that is emerging internationally. In the international context, Norway sticks out as a “peculiar” country. Powerful stakeholders seem satisfied with the present state of the art. School leadership trainees are met with a double message: Rhetorical adaptation to New Public Management, and, simultaneously, continued acceptance of a traditional understanding in practice.

6. Discussion

How can one explain a *continued* Norwegian HEAD-ache? Why is it sufficient for providers to pay rhetoric lip service to the new policies? Why are the ongoing “resistance strategies” accepted by the Government? What might change the situation? Answers to the Norwegian particularity may be found in its culture, curriculum and economy – together resulting in resistance to change, or change at “tortoise-speed”.

Culture

One reason may be the country’s particular culture of educational populism. Primary features of Norwegian culture are a profound national consensus on the values of equality and democracy. Historically this culture is rooted in a rural, agrarian society of small communities, people were mutually dependent on each other for survival. They were generally equal in terms of material standards, they were Lutheran Christians, often with a distinct lay-orientation and, many turned Socialists when this ideology appeared at the beginning of the 20th Century. Thus Socialism-strong trade unions developed. They had common values in religion and ideology, stressed solidarity and equality, resulting in a strong support for democratic procedures.

As society developed throughout the 20th Century, the class struggle rhetoric of the trade unions and the Labour Party gave way for consensus-thinking and peaceful, small step-negotiation about social change measures. While the country was still relatively poor (until ca 1970) these values contributed to an ethos of hard work and efforts for social mobility. Schooling was seen as a particularly important instrument. Schools were small, even often with only one or a few teachers. The equality culture implied scepticism to any sort of management reflecting old times’ social hierarchies. *The teachers* were the local “knowledge masters”. People had a profound

respect for knowledge, and by implication, for teachers. The teachers were the leaders (in education). This Norway, of social equality and, simultaneously, strong motivation for social mobility leading to pupils' efforts at school, changed profoundly from around 1970 – when a new curriculum tradition became dominant, and the oil economy made the nation rich. However, the equality culture did not disappear. It remained strong, becoming one of the causes for the HEAD-ache that appeared. And, as equality still is a core element in Norwegian culture at large, it is likely to contribute to a continued HEAD-ache.

Curriculum

Another reason for the Norwegian HEAD-ache may be that the student-centred and democratic process-oriented curriculum tradition although still dominant, is now under increasing pressure from international essentialist and encyclopaedic forces. Already before WW II, a curriculum change process in student-centred direction had started. The historical legacy of the encyclopaedic tradition was challenged by ideas from both polytechnicalism,¹⁶ and much more profoundly, from American progressivism (Dewey). The Labour Party changed overall political strategy in the beginning of the 1930s – from being a class struggle party, to a social democratic party (Langli, 1979). This implied a changed view upon the societal function and role of the basic public school. The Labour Party's new vision was that it should be a school meeting the needs and background of all children, equally relevant, and it should be a cultural and social melting pot. This view fitted well with a child-centred "learning by doing-tradition". In order to accommodate a comprehensive or "unified" school without streaming (Welle-Strand & Tjeldvoll, 2002b), preferably to the end of upper secondary level, centralisation and merging of schools became necessary. These restructurings implied a need for more effective administration and management.

At considerable reform speed, a school with a child-centred pedagogy, a problem-centred curriculum and with the teacher more and more in a facilitator-role appeared. Subjects and academic standards got less attention. Teacher authority increasingly deteriorated. An increasing number of young students showed lack of motivation for schooling. Pedagogical-psychological services had to be developed (Tjeldvoll, 1976). The teacher's status was reduced, implying loss of respect, and reduced social status. "Just to keep students in school as a social arena – "a place to be, more than a place to learn" (Christie, 1977) became more important than their learning achievements". The academic subjects increasingly suffered. The school leadership got a tougher

¹⁶ With stress on vocational subjects, practical work.

job. A widespread belief in democratic leadership, where both teachers and students had a strong say in decision-making made it a challenge to keep up the school leader's authority. In the clash between the requirements from above and a curriculum tradition of teacher and student-power, the school leaders frequently developed a chronic HEAD-ache (Nytell, 1994). Since this progressivist curriculum tradition has been applied in the socialisation of Norwegians for more than forty years, it continues to be an essential element of Norwegian culture, continuing to shape the minds of politicians, bureaucrats and researchers, in terms of how schools should actually be led.

Economy

A third main reason for a continued Norwegian HEAD-ache was the affluent national economy. The 1970s were also an economic watershed in Norway. It was the beginning of the off shore oil industry. In a few years Norway turned an extremely rich Welfare State. Social services were improved, and most of them were free, e.g. education at all levels. A significant portion of the population was out of regular work, living on social security, with close to the same standard of living as those in work. The labour market was generous. Salaries were good. Related to education, this new economical situation had a clear-cut negative motivation effect on Norwegian students and parents. "Free education for all", a generous labour market and high social security made education of quality less necessary. When all students were accepted into upper secondary education, and, also into higher education without charges, independent of their academic achievements work efforts are likely to go down. Neither to get into higher education, nor to get a job, is it necessary to demonstrate work efforts in school – like before. Parallel to this development the teachers' social status is strongly reduced, reflected among other things in a lack of motivation for seeking teacher education. School leaders facing both students and teachers with limited motivation, while attempting to meet the policy requirements from above – easily will get a HEAD-ache.

The HEAD-ache: Clash between policies and lack of motivation

The synthesis of the old equality culture, a progressivist curriculum and an affluent economy makes a significant twist of Norwegian work motivation in general, and, for education in particular. Motivation for education is sliding. In an OECD-study in 2005 Europeans were asked about how they assessed "education as a value". The surprising finding was that while 81% of Europeans put high value on education, only 48 % of Norwegians did so (Sørensen, 2006). These dramatic figures did hardly cause any debate in Norway. Indirectly this lack of concern about "education as a value" confirmed the OECD-findings – education is not an important value in

Norway, except in policy rhetoric terms. The dominant teacher union is playing a reactionary role. It is strongly rooted in the old teacher-power legacy, it is simultaneously supporting a progressivist curriculum, and apparently it is sceptical to academicism that offers alternative interpretations. Hence, it is strongly supporting status quo. In relation to the Government's national "knowledge policy" the dominant teacher union acts as a powerful conservative resistance agent. A Norwegian "union particularity" is the fact the main teacher union has until now succeeded in organising the majority of school leaders within the teachers' union. The implication being that the teacher union is a powerful stakeholder in defining the role of school leaders, and what should be relevant training for them. However, a professional association of school leaders are now successfully competing with the teacher union in member recruitment. This fact may be seen as an indication of international influence.

Continued rhetoric pressure from the Government about improved academic quality in schools, and parents' (and students) lack of motivation for education put the school leaders in a squeeze. How can they make a school's pupil population achieve higher on PISA-rankings, when the majority of pupils and parents really do not see school work as important? With increased policy pressure from above and international influence, the Norwegian HEAD-ache is likely to be worsening.

The great majority of Norwegian education researchers seem also to be playing a consolidating role. They hardly question two of the root causes of the HEAD-ache – the assumed universal truth of progressivist curriculum, and the unified school principle, both denying a principle of organisational differentiation in schools. Hence, the researchers' advice to politicians and bureaucrats have not done more than pointing to surface problems, and advising of "strategies for creating more well-being in schools". In several cases the researchers seem to be in a role conflict between "researcher", "trainer" and "ideological activist". Moreover, researchers on school leadership seem to be depending heavily on frames of reference from the Anglo-American world for their studies. This may be indicating a belief in some sort of general organisational truth about school development and school leadership, independent of contextual culture and curriculum tradition. Researchers may be unconsciously trapped between their own cultural socialisation (to a traditional teacher role and progressivist curriculum) and research orientations from class-based societies with elitist traditions, making them intellectually confused in their analysis of the Norwegian case. Whether the researchers have experience as school leader or not seems also to make a difference on their choice of conceptual frames of reference for their studies. Researchers with only practical experience as a teacher, primarily see – teachers and

students at school, from a teachers' *individualist* point of view. Researchers with leadership experience tend more to see the school as an *organisational* tool for teachers' and students' work. The difference in practical experience has an impact of which "school problems" are identified.

Another Norwegian key stakeholder contributing to the Norwegian HEAD-ache – is the media, in general. The great majority of media-initiatives seem steered by the equality culture legacy and solid scepticism to both academic excellence and management – probably due to effective socialisation during their basic schooling. They see themselves as successful products of the unified school model, and wish everybody else to gain the same. However, the changed economic and international conditions are not sufficiently taken into account. Hence, the effect of their engagement may be the opposite of their intention. They may be contributing to a weaker knowledge-based competence among present-day Norwegian students.

A most peculiar empirical finding was of the private business school, the training programme bowing to the new national accountability policies and New Public Management thinking, still with close to all master candidates submitting theses reflecting the old anti-management legacy and choosing topics similar to those on the other Masters programmes. Part of a private business school's rationale is to accept "customer's choice". That is necessary in order to have business, but it might be complex to balance the demands of varied commissioners and the individual participants, who might have a different perception of the purpose of leadership in school. Hence, with the best intentions of contributing to more policy-relevant school management in Norway, the school is also affecting the opposite. Since the "customer-master students" have the right to (democratically and equally) choose their topic of study, they focus on what they have been culturally socialised to "see as important" or what found of most interest – the teacher-student relation. This finding indicates that even when the training provider is loyal to the national mandator and bases its programme on NPM-principles, it fails to be consistent. "The market" has its preferences rooted in the old culture. In Norway, also the private business school contributes to status quo and a continued Norwegian HEAD-ache, illuminating the (ironic) paradox of the "artificial market" in a rich, democratic country that does not really have to change its educational practice in international direction – yet.

7. Conclusion

There seem to be few reasons to expect Norway to recover from its HEAD-ache soon. The country is trapped between the forces of its equality culture legacy, of its de-motivation for

education affected by extreme national wealth – and, on the other side - key politicians' (from both Left and Right) concern for training HEADs that can be accountable for accomplishing the competence production that are seen as a national concern to make the Norwegian welfare state survive, when the off shore industry is gone. Since the majority of parents/voters do not see education as important, reforms, if any, will most probably be by tortoise-speed. Democratic procedures are conserving the traditional equality culture. Quality of equality is preferred to quality of education - until the oil has gone. The HEAD-ache will only disappear when or if there again is a real motivation for education.

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