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ABSTRACT

International comparisons present the paradox that while such efforts encourage reflection on their own norms, values, and insights, researchers may lack the requisite knowledge to similarly engage a new culture. This work reviews school-leadership research that points to commonalities and differences in social and cultural trends in Denmark, England, Scotland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Australia. Reports from Scandinavia point to the pressures confronting school leaders, including "New Public Management" models based on market principles, high national expectations without adequate assessment or evaluation, and school cultures resistant to change. Global economic realities drive the devolution of authority in education to the local level, where it is assumed leaders are better attuned to the "bottom-line." In Scandinavia, leaders now face the new challenge of closer supervision of teachers and instruction. Despite appearances of cohesion and many commonalities, significant differences exist within Scandinavia regarding languages, history, politics, democratic norms, and national educational frameworks. Data from parents, teachers, and students reveal significant differences regarding perceptions of teacher quality among all the countries. Data from parents and administrators point to significant differences and some commonalities between Denmark and England regarding desired teacher attributes, school management, discipline, and communication styles. Views on effective school leadership are highly dependent on context and culture. (Contains 14 references.)(TEJ)

Paper for the AERA 2000 Conference, April 24-28, New Orleans

Symposium: Implication of Cultural Context for Understanding the Changing role of School Leaders: Opportunities and Limitations of Comparative Perspectives

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Context and Culture

Coming from a very small country – Denmark – with a language only spoken and read by a little more than 5 million inhabitants and being occupied in educating and doing research in educational leadership you will find that Danish theories on educational leadership and Danish literature on the same subject is extremely scarce. Therefore we have to read leadership literature in foreign languages, most often English, hoping that the research, the insight and the discussions made in England, USA or Australia can be transferred or of inspiration to a Danish context. We are among other issues reading extensively about learning organisations, transformational or transactional leadership. But certainly we often are carried away by cultural isomorphs: Paul Begley uses this phrase to catch the problem of discussing educational leadership/administration across cultures. He defines the concept in this way:

> *By isomorphs is meant social conditions or values postures which appear to share the same shape or meaning from country to country but actually are structured of quite different elements. (1999)*

This problem is of course not only a problem in Denmark. Kenneth Leithwood and Philip Hallinger are discussing the same problem in a special issue edited by them of Peabody Jour-

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nal of Education (1998). This discussion focuses more on the differences between USA and Asian countries, but applies to the rest of the World too. They find that most western scholars and researchers are blind to other cultures:

> *'Europeans and Americans in particular remain surprisingly provincial in their exposure to practices in other cultures.' (Page 5)*

They would like us to consider the cultural perspective, when discussing theories and concepts:

> *By cultural perspective, we refer to how the values and norms of a society shape the expectations, beliefs, and behaviour of individuals and organization. (Page 6)*

When doing international comparisons one find oneself facing a paradox: On one hand you become more attentive to your own culture: you get a clearer view of what is going on because you can reflect your norms, values and insights on a new background. On the other hand you will find it difficult to get an adequate and precise knowledge of the new culture. I might add that this problem is not only a problem looking from one country towards another country. Even the smallest countries embrace a lot of different cultures.

As an illustration of the cultural and contextual differences I shall mention a cross cultural study in London and Singapore, undertaken by Peter Mortimor and colleagues (Mortimor, 2000):

- *National attitudes to education* differed in that education was held in high esteem in Singapore which was not the case in London
- *Views of intelligence.* In Singapore the attitude is that you can succeed by putting in hard work while people in London think that intelligence is inborn and success is mainly a result of natural endowments
- The motivating effect of *good career prospect* is much higher in Singapore because of full employment
- The odds of *examination success.* In Singapore 66 per cent of pupils reached nationally set targets in examinations, compared to only 46 per cent in England.

It is difficult to get an overview of cultural differences between countries and within countries. Gert Hofstede (1991) asked people in many countries on their views on a number of cultural issues and came up with a theory on cultural differences in 4 dimensions (social inequality, individual and group, masculinity and femininity, approach to uncertainty and aggression). On that basis he draws maps of where countries are placed when looking at the dimensions. One gets a very rough picture of differences between countries, and one doesn't get pictures of differences within the countries.

In this paper I shall start by outlining some common trends in society and culture within Western European countries (Denmark, England, Scotland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) and Australia. These countries are chosen because I have together with good colleagues been doing research on school leadership in these countries in two projects.[2] Then I shall give examples of cultural differences that are significant for school leadership practice.

Leadership in a Cross Pressure

In the project: *Scandinavian School Leaders* (Moos et al. (Eds.) 2000) we asked five groups of educational researchers to write a country report for each of the five Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden).

The country reports indicate some common trends and tendencies in the educational landscapes of the Scandinavian countries. They all point to school leaders being in the midst of a cross pressure with a lot of tensions between

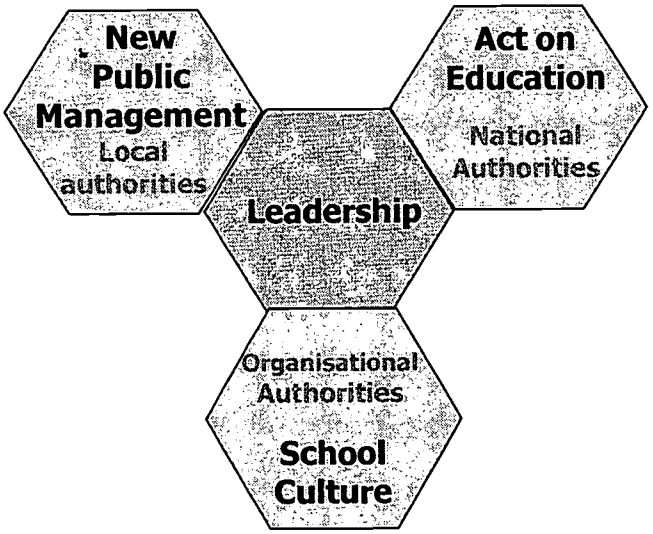
1. New Public Management that is based on efficiency, low trust, consumer oriented and product focused management strategies. These strategies are often applied by local authorities because great parts of management has been devolved from state level to local level with the powers of financial and legal management
2. The goals and objectives of the educational system or the schools that in all Scandinavian countries are to support children developing into action competent and educated citizens

[2] One is: *Effective School Leadership in a Time of Change* – Denmark, England, Scotland and Australia. With: John MacBeath, Jenny Reeves, Joan Forrest, Kathryn Riley, Pat Mahony, Neil Dempster, Lloyd Logan and Chresten Kruchov.
The other is: *Scandinavian School Leaders' Work* – a mapping of the working conditions, conditions and tasks of the Scandinavian School Leaders – in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. With: Stephen Carney, Jorunn Møller, Olof Johannson

of democratic societies. These goals are set by the national authorities with the weak power of assessment and evaluation

3. The culture of the school where both staff and school leaders by tradition often are resistant to being led and to lead as but one aspect of these very powerful frames set by culture, tradition, structures and actors.

Cross Pressure of School Leadership



New Public Management

The global trend towards one overriding market place that is governed only by a capitalistic logic of competition, that has been noticeable for a decade or two in many parts of the world (MacBeath, Moos, Riley, 1996, 1998) seem to have come to the Scandinavian countries too. Because no communist super power or system is competing with the Western version of capitalism, because a growing number of trans national companies (now exceeding 40.000) are in charge of and control a growing percentage of world trade, with a number of very large scale trade associations and unions, because of the emerging of 'the global village' within the internet and communication media. And because there is virtually no limit for the free movement of goods, labour and finances on the global scale the national states have changed their function and co-operation. It has become increasingly difficult for the national governments to make their own national legislation and regulation. All nations have become interdependent of each other and of the international and trans national interplay. This has brought with it in most countries a permanent public deficit. And at the same time the states have to compete with one another. So many states have developed a concept of having to

compete on the international arena with other states and therefore must try to produce goods and services as good and cheap as possible.

In short one can describe this development like this:

1. the ease with which ideas, finance, manpower and goods can be moved around the world makes the concept of the 'global village' a reality forming the conditions in which governments have to act.
2. the power of trans national companies as noted by Martin and Schumann (1997) cannot be ignored
3. the influence of international organisations such as OECD
4. the autonomy of national governments is limited by trans national trade agreements
5. the changing pattern of world employment consequent on both the emergence of the major trading zones and the development of technology
6. fact that we all live in a global society of risk (Beck. 97) [3]

All of it has been made possible in parts in and through revolutions in communication and technology. Accessibility to electronic information, at least for those who can afford it, has promoted the flow of both information and knowledge that is anti-educational as well as educational, anti-social as well as to the benefit of society. It offers new opportunities for criminal activity, operating on a trans national basis from the multi-million dollar electronic movement of money, to street level drug exchange or sex trafficking in women and children. (MacBeath, Moos, Riley. 1996)

> *As the world is characterised by increasing interpenetration and the crystallisation of trans national markets and structures, the state itself is having to act more and more like a market player, that shapes its policies to promote, control, and maximise returns from market forces in an international setting (Cerny 1990 p.230).*

These developments have made the restructuring of the western welfare states necessary. One advice given by international councils like The World Bank and the OECD to countries having trouble in financing the public sectors is to decentralize finances and administration

[3] is becoming part of the common knowledge. Since the Tjernobyl A-plant disaster it is apparent to everybody that the threat of an atomic catastrophe is actually a fact of life not only for those who live close to an A-plant, but to everybody on this planet. Other environmental problems point to the same conclusion: The pollution, the acid rain only to mention a few.

from state level to local level or even institutional level. This giving an democratic spin off in that the decisions come closer to the citizens – in this period of time growing into consumers. It seems that on this basis a new model of public management is being developed, starting in Ronald Reagans' USA, moving on to Margret Thathers' England and from there further on to the Scandinavian countries, among many other: New Public Management (NPM). There are more factors to explaining the background for this development off course. One being the cultural development towards more pluralistic and more regional cultures making the notion of national cultures and national values more difficult to stick to and therefore making it even impossible for a national agency to control the maintenance and development of local politics and even of institutional politics. So the task of the national governments has change fundamentally over the past some 20 years. Governments can no longer rely on institutions and servants to be loyal to national goals and intentions. At the same time most states have decentralized the hard means of regulation (finances and legal sanctions) to the local level. Leaving the soft regulations like information to the national agencies.

In the Scandinavian project (Moos & Carney, 2000) it became apparent that the national level was left with noting but legislation on the overriding level – without much legal sanction and no financial power to support it. And the hard management was given over to the local authorities that often are stressing that the institutions first and foremost must be very attentive to 'the bottom line' of finances - the authorities themselves being squeezed between a range of needs and less income[4]. At the same time the institutions feel that the competition for local attention and financial support requires that they show their qualities in the public arena. The need for accountability has grown considerably.

The concepts of leadership changes according to the perspective one choose: Local authorities, feeling more responsible for economics than for education would ask for efficiency, low trust relations, long term planning and control and the school culture often would ask for a collegial, non-interfering and collaborating style.

[4] a very contemporary illustration: Professor Peter Pagh, University of Copenhagen, found that within a number of areas the municipalities seem to neglect the rights of citizens when the local finances are overstretched. A spokesman for the National Association of Municipalities, chief economist Jan Olsen comments: "Parliament is making legal guaranties in a number of areas and the municipalities of course must manage according to those. In a number of areas however Parliament has stressed the

The Objectives and the Organisational Culture

On the other hand the national government writes the Acts, stating that the main objective of the schools is to support children to develop into action competent and educated citizens in a democratic society. We call it: 'Dannelse'/'Bildung'/-Education. This concept embraces more that only the acquisition of skills and knowledge it means getting prepared to acquire knowledge and to act in society. In article 1 of the Folkeskole[5] Act (1993) states:

> *The school shall prepare the students for participation, sharing of responsibilities, rights and duties in a society with freedom and democracy. The education in the school as well as the daily life of the school therefore must build on intellectual liberty, equality and democracy.*

In the Scandinavian countries it means that the teachers and the school leaders must be attentive to the whole environment and learning conditions: e.g. Students should not only be taught how a democratic society is functioning on a structural level (parliament, government, system of justice, police... and so on). They should themselves experience and live a democratic life even in school. This means that not all methods of instruction are considered appropriate and not all teacher behaviour is appropriate.

In the Scandinavian countries (Johansson et. al. 2000) the need for school leaders to lead teachers classroom practice has become more explicit over the past few years. Ten years ago it was considered the state of the school that there was a silent contract between teachers and leaders. The teachers, being used to and brought up to a great degree of autonomy, accepted administration and management as long as leaders kept out of classroom practice. They would not accept leaders to intervene in planning and carrying through teaching/instructing practice. These days the Acts state that school leaders must intervene and supervise teachers. This is a relative new task for school leaders. It requires new competencies and new legitimacy: Leaders must know subject matters and planning frameworks sufficiently well to asses and assist teachers. At the same time they must act in a way acceptable to teachers who must feel safe and trustful in the new relations.

need for municipalities to manage according to financial guidelines. This certainly affects the decisions." Politiken, March 26, 2000

[5] The 'Folkeskole' is the Danish basic school, primary and lower secondary for students age 6 to 16

Differences in Scandinavia

The findings mentioned above suggest that things are looking similar in the five Scandinavian countries. If one looks at it from the outside – say from the UK or USA – you probably would say so: All countries are illustrations of the Scandinavian social democratic welfare state based on many years of enlightenment, hard work, luck and close collaboration between neighbour countries that speak almost the same language. From the inside however we tend to find a lot of differences in culture and traditions:

- we often find it impossible to understand the other languages. Finnish being in no any was close to the other languages and Icelandic far away too
- the demographic and business histories are – partly because of geography – different
- the political and cultural orientations have been different for many years – Finland towards The Soviet Union, Denmark towards Germany and Sweden staying neutral
- the concept of democracy being different too. e.g. there is a tendency in Sweden that the social democratic democracy is a structural issue subject to legislation and regulation whereas the Danish – more pluralistic society – democracy is conceived more like a way of living, a culture difficult to regulate and change
- an illustration would be the leadership education programmes in the three countries: In Sweden there is still a national program even if the powers over the school has been decentralized, in Norway there is a national frameworks and guide for educating school leaders but the actual education is carried out by universities on behalf of local authorities. In Denmark there are no national frameworks at all.

Some Differences in Tradition and Culture: UK and Denmark

In the Effective School Leadership we found differences in traditions and culture. (Moos, 1999). The particular forms which NPM takes are influenced by the cultures and traditions of the particular country. In the UK there is a traditional class culture represented in strongly hierarchical systems. For example in larger schools it would not be uncommon to find between seven and eight levels of status and hierarchy: head, deputy heads, assistant heads, senior teachers, heads of department, deputy heads of department, main scale teachers with particular responsibilities and those without assistant.

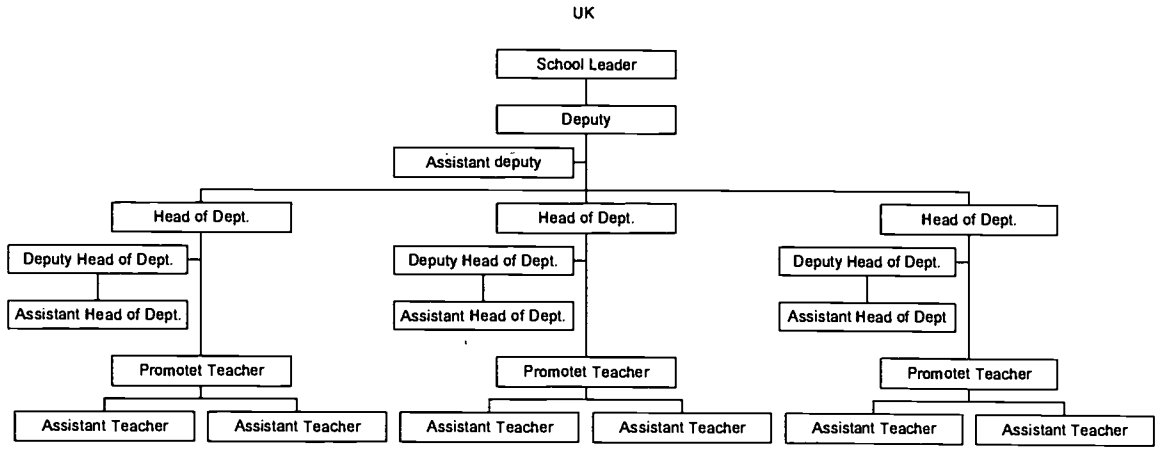
the grain. As we shall see in the next section, differences in tradition and culture also appear to make a difference in how parents and teachers conceptualise good leadership.

Parents', Teachers' and Students' Views of Headship

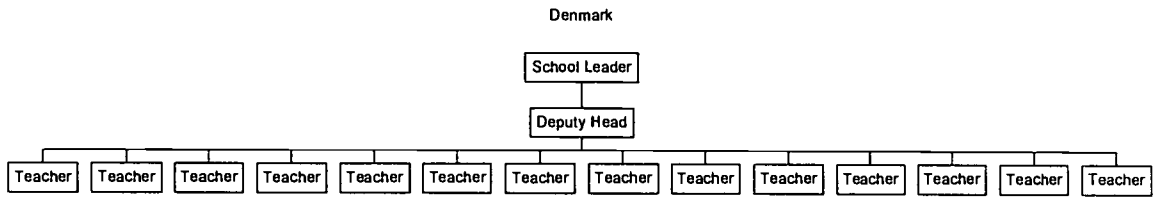
One element of the 'Effective School Leadership in a Time of Change' project involved asking the sample of teachers, students and their parents, what counts as a good head teacher. (Moos et. al. in MacBeath. 98). We asked a variety of different open ended and closed questions through questionnaires (which enabled us to check for internal validity) and we conducted card-sort exercises with two groups of about six from each category in order to provoke discussion and to follow up any issues emerging from the questionnaire. Taking all the data from the questionnaire responses together with all the responses from the card sort activity and the notes taken of the discussion, certain trends emerged very clearly which are summarised below.

One of the questions to parents and teachers was to tick the definition of leadership closest to your own view in the column marked 'Best' (and in with the definition furthest from your own view in the column headed 'Worst'). The definitions were:

	Leadership Definition	PARENTS %				TEACHERS %			
		Danish		English		Danish		English	
		Best	Worst	Best	Worst	Best	Worst	Best	Worst
PERSONAL VISION	A headteacher should have a clear view of what makes for a good school and be able to inspire people to make it happen	23	8	38	1	12	24	29	24
ROLE MODEL	A good headteacher leads by example. S/he should work in the classroom alongside the teachers and encourage them to take responsibility for improving things	6	16	4	12	26	6	26	6
TEACHERS	Good school leaders let teachers get on with the job and protect them form too many outside pressures	5	**53**	0	**46**	12	10	6	17
LOOKS AHEAD	A good headteacher should know what's going on and be able to look ahead and make sure staff are ready for what's coming so that they are able to deal with change confidently and in a planned way	48	3	25	3	47	2	15	10
PRAGMATIC	Good leaders know how to use the system to get the best for their own school. They know how to negotiate and when to compromise.	6	9	3	9	0	**50**	7	**29**
NO ANSWER		13	10	30	29	4	8	15	**15**



In Denmark on the other hand, there is a long tradition of very flat structures consisting of head, deputy and teachers.



- In the UK, decision-making tended to be the head's prerogative whereas in Denmark there is a tradition of negotiating with full participation of teachers in democratic decision-making (the teachers council used to be powerful in most aspects of school life but this is changing because of an Act from 1991). In this context what it means for heads to have freedom to manage would have to take account of the values of the society as expressed in the structure of schools.

- In Denmark the head, once appointed head of a school, stays in that post for the rest of his/her professional career, which could easily last for 25 to 30 years. In England most heads follow a career pattern that leads through several headships, staying only for a few years in each post.

- In the UK, the tradition of teacher autonomy has given way to control by central government at least over the content of the curriculum. In Denmark traditionally strong beliefs in teacher autonomy have largely been maintained with broad descriptions of the aims and objectives of school and no inspections. One would expect that to the extent that explicit standards and measures of performance are introduced, it would be more in

keeping with the values of the society if these were developed by the stakeholders themselves.

- In the UK, formal cooperation between school and parent tended to be a matter for the school with the head issuing the invitations. In Denmark, the relationship was organised at a class level with the class teacher initiating contact. Here again it will be interesting to monitor whether the tendency under NPM to give more control to named persons at the top of the organisation removes this activity from class teachers.

- The relationship between parents and school, in the education of children, is given a different emphasis.

  - In the UK:

    It shall be the duty of the parents of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. (Education Act (England and Wales) section 76, 1988)

- In Denmark:

  The Folkeskole shall - in co-operation with parents - further the pupils acquisition of knowledge, skills, working methods and ways of expressing themselves and thus contribute to the all-round personal development of the individual pupil. (Folkeskole Act of 1993, article 1.1)

Since cooperation with parents is written into the Act it would seem inappropriate that active, visible, ... control from named persons at the top should be interpreted as meaning the same for Danish heads as it does for their English colleagues.

These differences in tradition and culture do appear to have made other differences in how NPM has been applied within the two contexts. For example, less centralisation of control would seem to fit within the Danish tradition of democratic participation (which, within the duration of the project, was explicitly mentioned by Danish heads as something to be valued and retained). One implication of this is that it is nonsensical to transport the top down leadership model being developed in the English context to Denmark. It would go totally against

I show the table of the parent's and teacher's answers because they give a good overview of the tendencies of expectations. The Danish parents want the leader that looks ahead and the English parents want the head that has a clear view. Both groups dislike the leader, that lets the teachers go on with their job and protects them.

The Danish teachers agree with the Danish parents in wanting a leader that looks ahead and prepares his/her staff. The English teachers want the role model (this is the primary school teachers) and the clear view (the secondary teachers).

Parents' and Governors' Views about The 'Good Head'

The responses to the open ended question: What is a good Head? of parents and governors were virtually identical so for the purposes of this paper, I shall include governors (the 'school board' in Denmark) in the data on parents. The English parents consistently identified qualities of 'good communication skills', 'assertive or strong leadership', 'effective management skills', 'accessibility and approachability', 'the maintenance of discipline' and 'understanding of and empathy with pupils, parents and staff'. The good head in England 'encourages and motivates people', acts with 'consistency and fairness', has the 'ability to compromise' and is 'flexible, dedicated and committed'. The Danish parents thought that the good head is someone who has a 'good overview', is 'co-operative', 'inspiring', 'visionary' and a 'a good and well qualified teacher. S/he has 'effective management skills, 'encourages and motivates people', s/he 'understands and empathises with pupils, parents and staff and s/he 'delegates effectively'.

In some respects there does not appear to be a great deal of difference between English and Danish parents. One might conclude that the earlier introduction of site-based management in the UK does not seem to have differentiated parents' expectations of the good head, despite heads themselves feeling that this restructuring has altered the balance of their remit. However, 'effective management skills' meant something very different in two different countries. For the English parents, it tended to be strongly associated with 'assertive or strong leadership' whereas this was an expression Danish parent simply did not use.

There was also a clear difference in terms of the domain in which these skills were assumed to be exercised. In the England the good head came across as a more public figure who was expected to take an active and direct role in interaction with parents and the direction of young people. Running through the responses from Danish parents was the belief that good heads were 'co-operative' and collaborative'. Such language did not figure at all from English parents.

In both countries there was surprisingly little support for statements such as 'promoting the image of the school' even in England where a school's survival in the competitive market might depend on it. Neither group wanted the entrepreneurial or business-orientated head. There was also very little emphasis placed on change and change management. Being innovatory and keeping up with new developments was only mentioned by a handful of respondents, which suggests that this discourse is limited to the profession itself.

In the area of interpersonal skills there were several categories consistently identified by parents. In England the most essential quality was that of being a good communicator. Over and over again responses mentioned the importance of the head being able to listen to others and to operate with consistency and fairness - all notable for their absence from the national 'standards'. Sometimes being a good communicator and being able to listen to others was amplified in the discussions to include the way in which heads are often seen as the final arbiters and adjudicators between different stakeholders, with each group wanting their particular needs to be understood, represented and responded to.

Accessibility and approachability were also rated very highly by English parents but were not mentioned by the Danes (the relationship between parent and school is organised at a class level with the class teacher initiating contact). Danish parents did not emphasise direct 'hands on' monitoring and control of teachers (thus reflecting the tradition of professional autonomy). On the other hand, the importance of being a 'good and well qualified teacher' indicated that Danish parents see the main role of the school leader as not being to ensure staff compliance (for that would not be 'the Danish way') but to promote dialogue about good professional practice.

'Discipline', regarded as important by English parents was not mentioned by the Danes. Here Hofstede's work on cultural difference maybe relevant. He argues that the UK places much

more emphasis on 'masculine' values of discipline and correction while Denmark favours the more 'feminine' values of permissiveness and compromise. (Hofstede 1991)

Teachers

Data from both countries again revealed some interesting similarities and differences. English teachers identified the good head as having 'communication skills', as being able to 'motivate and inspire staff and pupils', as possessing a 'clear direction or vision', and as being 'accessible and approachable'. The good head was skilful in relation to finance and administration (here reference was frequently made to the impact on staff jobs, of heads not managing the budget well). S/he demonstrates 'empathy and caring', 'strong and assertive leadership' and 'consistency and fairness. S/he is someone who 'commands respect' and 'maintains discipline'.

In Denmark the teachers identified 'vision', an ability to 'preserve the overview', to 'inspire others', to 'listen' and to be 'loyal to staff and pupils'. The good head is 'able to delegate', is 'visible to pupils and staff', 'humane', 'engaged' and has 'pedagogical insight'.

'Vision' was mentioned by English and Danish teachers but its meaning was different. The English teachers were more inclined to use the term to indicate the head's ability to point out a clear direction (part of the role as defined in England). The Danish teachers on the other hand meant that the head teacher should maintain a dialogue with the staff and other involved groups about the direction in which the school should progress, again in line with the importance the Danes attach to their democratic traditions. In the card sort activity issues of social justice emerged as particularly important for English teachers and as something which they took for granted as integral to the definition of a good leader.

The fact that good communication skills were not explicitly mentioned by the Danes seemed to be because leadership operates within flatter structures. In the UK where much more power and responsibility for direction or vision is invested in the head, teachers felt that they could only follow the Head's lead, if it had been communicated successfully in the first place.

Taking parents and teachers in both countries, a much greater emphasis on the need for 'strong leadership' or 'assertive leadership' emerged from the English data whereas in Den-

mark there the good school leader was conceptualised as being co-operative and able to 'preserve a good overview' (rather than creating or building it which would be the way of expressing it in the English national standards) and of being co-operative.

Younger Children

From a simplified questionnaire (which included the opportunity to draw) and the focus group discussions it became apparent that many of the younger children found difficulty in distinguishing between what a head teacher (presumably theirs) actually is or does and what a good head teacher is like. For English children, the head (or good head) 'tells children off if they're naughty', s/he is a 'good organiser' and 'helps teachers and children'. S/he 'buys things for the school', 'sorts out arguments and problems', is 'friendly to parents', 'teaches classes', 'praises children' and 'makes sure children are safe.

For Danish children the head was (or ought to be) 'kind' and 'sympathetic'. The phrase 'tell children off if they're naughty' did recur as did its opposite 'doesn't tell you off', but 'telling off' in general did not feature so prominently as in the English responses. S/he 'keeps school orderly' (including keeping it clean), 'solves problems', 'arranges good outings', is 'happy', and generally 'good to kids'. Here I might pause to question why the 5-11 English children identified the role of the Head so heavily with 'telling children off if they are naughty'. In England it is not uncommon for the class teacher, as a last resort, to send 'naughty' children to the head whereas in Denmark responsibility is allocated to the class teacher who often follows the class for several years (up to 9 years) and is the main link with parents. Perhaps the pressure to achieve high academic standards along with the 'charterised' expectations of parents also lend the issue of 'discipline' a higher profile in England. Embedded in this data were real glimpses of headship from the child's point of view: in Denmark the head, 'pays attention to unhappy kids', and 'makes an aerial ropeway'. In England s/he 'talks about the good news', 'cheers you up' and 'protects education'.

Older Students

Beneath some superficial differences in expression, there was a large measure of agreement between the older students from both countries. The data was laden with statements such as 'listens', 'talks with pupils', 'kind to pupils', 'takes care of pupils', 'understands pupils', 'establishes good relationships', 'accessible' and 'approachable'. If, as was suggested during the dis-

cussions, these are taken as falling under a broader category of 'establishing positive relationships', then the data is overwhelming that this, along with a concern that heads should be just in their dealings with pupils, is the most important criterion of what makes for a good head teacher.

In responding to a question which asked them to rank a list of statements, the English students rated highly 'makes sure there is good behaviour in the school' whereas it appeared way down the list for the Danes - it being a matter for the class teacher. Similarly, the word 'strict' peppered the English data but did not figure at all for the Danes in any of the data sets.

Older students from both countries express the need for a good head to be involved in the school and to visit classes. Danish students seem not to share the concern, expressed by their heads, that visiting classes might well be construed as 'spying on colleagues'. On the contrary, a significant number of Danish students, believe that a good head ensures that 'teachers are teaching well'.

English students did not mention the financial management of schools in their depictions of a good head. For them the emphasis was almost entirely on the quality of relationships s/he ought to establish and what personal qualities a good head would have. S/he should be 'human (not like a robot)' and 'friendly', and be able to 'support pupil/teacher relationships'. Danish students also thought these were important but did include being 'financially knowledgeable'. For the Danes 'lively', 'resolute', 'devoted to work', 'creative' and 'not old-fashioned' all commanded a fair measure of support. In response to one open question, English students valued leadership which 'takes account of pupils' opinions', but in another part of the questionnaire which asked them to choose five from a range of statements 'involves us in decision-making' was ranked more highly than 'takes account of pupils' opinions'. Given the choice they preferred a much more inclusive mode of school leadership but it seemed not to spontaneously occur to them that this could be an option.

Summing up The Expectations

— school leaders should have a vision for their school. While all groups agreed on that, they saw the vision-building in different ways. The English and the Scots wanted a strong

hands-on leader who would point others in a clear direction. The Danes wanted their leader to be more collaborators, discussing and building a vision in concert with teachers

— no group in any country was in favours of the managerial school leader although the Danes were most forceful in their rejection of managerialism

— school leaders should have good communication skills and a readiness to listen and be approachable to all parties

— students in all countries agreed on the importance head teachers treating them fairly and equally and instilling a sense of order and discipline. The Danes were much less concerned with issues of discipline than their British counterparts

— teachers, governors and parents in all three countries said the head should encourage and motivate staff to keep up-to-date professionally. While there was an emphasis on leadership as looking ahead and preparing staff for change, there was little emphasis on change management and innovation

— there was widespread agreement that head teachers' primary commitment was to be in school, monitoring everyday life. Their role in the community or on the larger national stage was given low priority. (Moos et. al. 98)

Concluding Remarks

I hope to have to some extend demonstrated my point, that school leadership is context and culture bound and that only by looking at it at great distance one can find an overall resemblance from country to country, from locality to locality. I hope to have demonstrated my point that researchers must go close to practice if they want to produce knowledge of use to practice.

It seems to me to be is a matter of perspective: If one wants to impose a master plan, a great scale solution, theory or concept onto different fields of practice, it is because one wants the fields of practice to become identical.

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