



Superintendent leadership under shifting governance regimes

Jan Merok Paulsen

Business Administration, Hedmark University College, Rena, Norway

Olof Johansson

Centre for Principal Development, University of Umeå, Umeå, Sweden

Lejf Moos

Department of Education, Aarhus University, Copenhagen, Denmark

Elisabet Nihlfors

University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden, and

Mika Risku

Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

812

Received 1 July 2013

Revised 16 September 2013

Accepted 3 January 2014

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyse the superintendent position, its relation to the local political system and the function as superior of principals in the school district in order to illuminate important district-level conditions for student learning. Influences from historical legacies and policy cultures are investigated by means of cross-country case analyses.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is based on data from national surveys of superintendent leadership in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway.

Findings – A key point is the observation of a mix-mode system of hard and soft governance. Municipalities, schools, teachers and pupils are – in different degrees across the Nordic countries – subjected to external evaluation and assessment by central control agencies, where the streams of reports, assessments and performance data are assembled. However, shifts in the governance systems are only modestly reflected in the self-reports on the superintendents' role. Overall, superintendents in the cases express a self-preferred leadership style as professional learning facilitators who focus on pupil orientation, which positions the superintendent in “crossfires” between conflicting stakeholder demands.

Research limitations/implications – The paper reinforces the importance of superintendent leadership in local school governance. It underscores the importance that superintendents facilitate learning conditions for school leaders, teachers and students, which we see as a promising path for further research.

Originality/value – The paper provides empirical evidence regarding superintendent leadership situated in local social and political contexts within the Nordic countries. The cross-country analysis illuminates how path-pendent historical legacies mediate current reform trends.

Keywords Quality assurance, School governance, School principals, Educational governance, Superintendent leadership, School district

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

This paper focuses on what happens when national education policies meet structures of implementation at the local school district level. Focus is on the position that is subordinated to a municipal committee or board responsible for education. This position is here called superintendent, even if precise titles vary. By focusing on this position, its relation to the local political system and the function as superior of principals in the school district, it will be possible to investigate some of the preconditions for learning in the school districts (Nihlfors, 2003). As will be showed, we consider the superintendent a



key agent in the chain of governance, where policy aims and objectives are transmitted from transnational, national and local levels to schools. This position has, like other school leadership positions, also been subject to restructuring and changes over the past decade, because of changes in governance focus, forms and meaning (Nihlfors *et al.*, 2013). A shift from traditional government structures towards a more complex and fuzzy governance model is visible in the Nordic countries. Specifically, the introduction of national quality assurance systems in public education expands the number of relationships the superintendent must deal with significantly (Johansson *et al.*, 2013). Quality assurance or accountability, as we use the term, refers to when an actor, in virtue of contractual obligations, has the right to hold another actor responsible to a set of standards, to judge whether the standards have been met, and to impose sanctions if the standards are deemed unfulfilled. The present situation gives rise to the following question: Is the superintendent typically a quality control agent on behalf of the state, or a local leadership facilitator who advocates professional school interests? This present research question addresses the power distribution between the state and the municipalities in national school governance, where the underlying argument suggests that these system characteristics are crucial in determining the context for school development and student learning in practice. The topic is discussed in the light of empirical data from all Nordic educational systems.

A mixed mode of soft and hard school governance

Education is part of a bigger community: municipality, region, nation-state and transnational as well as international communities. Schools are important players in transnational as well as national politics; thus, they are included in chains of governance and culture. Schools are expected to implement national and transnational (e.g. European) citizenship education, using state resources, but also contributions from the local political level. The aim has shifted over time from contributing to developing democratic societies to contributing to strengthening the national economy in the global competition. The transnational agencies operate on a soft governance model, inspiring national agencies from governments and downwards by comparisons, benchmarks and European programmes. National parliaments legislate and governments carry out and implement the legislation when issuing regulation and setting the educational agenda. The transnational agencies have only existed for a few decades, with the overarching aim to further the creation of a European community and European citizens (Moos, 2009).

At the national level we see that within the financial frames and aims of the legislation more tasks and responsibilities have been decentralised from state to municipal and school levels. Today, municipalities have more responsibility for providing educational services, but they also have more freedom when it comes to organising these services, and legislators and ministries have therefore perceived a need for to strengthen the couplings between the levels in non-regulatory ways. Thus, new forms of governance have been developed and implemented, and the introduction of national quality assurance systems in the Nordic countries can be described as a shift in Norwegian educational policy from input regulations (legislation, organisation and funding) towards a more output-oriented policy. The increased use of assessment data and monitoring of results and accounting reports represent new ways of coordinating the education system, which establishes new patterns of interaction between the national and local authorities. These developments may result in less local autonomy and increased bureaucratisation of the school system, at the same time as local autonomy among municipalities is emphasised in the national policy discourse.

A principal model of the school governance system in the Nordic countries is illustrated in Figure 1.

In concrete terms, the national level sets out the frames and aims of education and an overarching template for the quality reports. The municipal level develops the frames and aims and also the template for the report in line with local policies. Schools write reports every year, and the documents about quality are part of a school's self-evaluation of the results for the year and constitute a basis for formulating the aims for the next year. The combination of fixed issues and broader issues of school choice with self-evaluation procedures aims at producing a strong sense of responsibility and accountability. In the case of the quality report, school leaders are at the lower end in relation to the school district management, while the superintendent is in the lower end of the contact with the ministry and very often also with superiors within the municipal hierarchy. By this move, educational policy is increasingly moved towards a governance space developed by experts and agents and depoliticised by use of standards and data.

Another reason why the municipalities are developing new forms of governance is that this "meso" level is being restructured, a development most visible in Denmark however currently also in Finland. Small municipalities are merged into larger municipalities with the obvious effect that the distance from the top level, the municipal council and administration, to the schools is increasing. This calls for governance relations that are more standardised, more prescriptive and based on less person-to-person relations. This shift in governance contextualises superintendent leadership in the

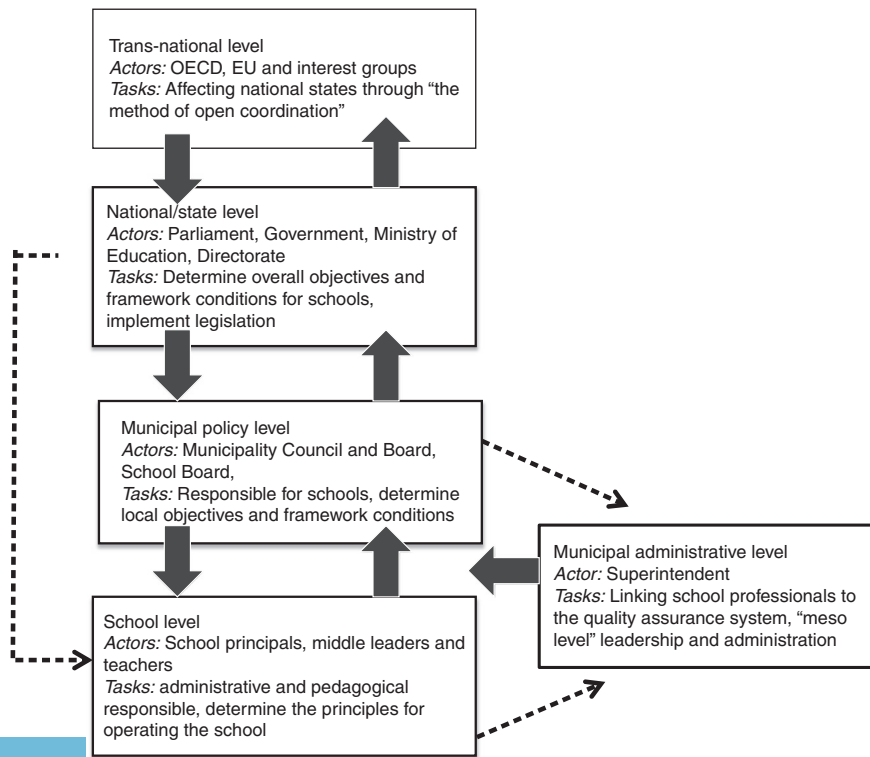


Figure 1.
The chains of governance from national to local levels

crossfire between demands for accountability, quality control and indirect steering imposed from the state versus local government priorities decided by municipal authorities.

When compared, it is clear that Sweden has gone the furthest in reintroducing central command through the use of statutory regulations, oversight and sanctions. The two latest quality control agencies was in 1997 a law handled by to National Agency for Schools on Quality work and a new agency in 2006 called the State School inspection. During the same time period Finland has largely abstained from developing a comprehensive system of national quality control. But in Finland international evaluations and assessments are used to position the country in the global context and to identify national strengths and weaknesses. Finland also tries to take an active role in the development of international evaluations, so that they meet the needs of the Finnish education system. Denmark and Norway have positioned themselves in between the two extremes, both having developed national oversight systems with monitoring and reporting requirements, but so far without the addition of hard sanctions. In all four countries the future is likely to see further tensions in central-local relations.

Loose couplings in the school governance system

From another point of view, the described school governance system found in all Nordic countries can be understood as loosely coupled systems, especially when analysing policy implementation across various levels. Karl E. Weick (2001) defines loose coupling as evident in a multi-level organisational system “when the components of a system affect each others: first, suddenly rather than continuously; second, occasionally rather than constantly; third, negligibly rather than significantly; fourth, indirectly rather than directly and fifth, eventually rather than immediately” (Weick, 2001, p. 383). The crucial point in Weick’s (1976) theoretical propositions is that it can be expected some lack of correspondence between the formal organisational system architecture, in terms of plans, goals, strategies and routines developed by state agencies, on one hand, – and the negotiations, decisions, power distribution and operational activities carried out by the players in the municipalities on the other. Despite the “messages” from the national school legislation, the quality assurance systems and the municipalities’ official strategies about monitoring, auditing and inspection of student learning and test data – it is not sure that these demands are imposed on schooling in practical life, simply because superintendents are uniquely positioned to mediate these demands in their roles as gatekeepers. Support for this seemingly radical and “pessimistic” proposition is found across several national educational systems. For example, in their study of the US public school system in the 1980s, John W. Meyer and his colleagues found inconsistency and variation in instructional methods, work processes and learning outcomes across classes within the same school department. Furthermore, the same pattern was detected across departments within the same school and across similar schools within the same district. Eventually, unintended variation was found across districts within the same state. Weick (1976) has an important, however overlooked, point that loose coupling is a dialectical phenomenon; organisational systems are typically both loosely and tightly coupled. This mixed pattern is visible, for example, in the Norwegian quality assurance system. The couplings between the state level and the county level are fairly tight, whereas the couplings to the next layer, i.e. the municipalities, are loosened. In general we see in the Nordic countries, that the last 20-30 years restructuring of public sectors has brought

a massive decentralisation of economical management, day-to-day operations and personal management from state to municipalities, i.e. municipal council as school owners and often further on to school boards and central school offices and finally on to the schools which are govern by the school law, curriculum and local political policies. In order for the state not to loose the necessary insight, transparency and control with public institutions, couplings of other relations in education need to be tightened. Therefore, we see more detailed aims, standards and more national tests, accountability. So these are illustrations of the mixture: tightening and loosening are done simultaneously but into different areas.

Methodology

The current research project was conducted in 2009 in order to provide comparable data on the school district superintendent's leadership roles and work conditions across the Nordic countries. The main data collection instrument was a joint survey developed for research on Swedish, Norwegian and Danish municipalities. The instrument, which was aligned with the Finnish superintendent survey of 2008, was developed as a theory-based evaluative design, which we see as suitable for studying real-life attitudes and experiences. In this manner, the study sought to link theoretical themes from international research with emergent themes and issues of the local contexts in the Nordic countries. The Finnish research group undertook their national superintendent survey in late-2008, and a similar data collection was completed in Sweden, Denmark and Norway during late-2009 and early-2010. In all the Nordic cases, data collection achieved high and acceptable response rates. Specifically, in Sweden there are 290 municipalities, but since some municipalities have more than one school board, the instrument was submitted to 370 persons that met the conceptual criteria of a superintendent, and 240 superintendents responded. In Denmark there are 98 school districts, and thus 98 superintendents, in Denmark. In total, 59 superintendents, that is 59.1 per cent, answered the 2009 survey. In Norway, 68 out of a total of 431 municipalities reported that they did not have a position similar to a school superintendent in their administrative design. Further, 291 of the remaining 363 municipalities responded to the survey, which gives an effective response-rate of 80 per cent. The Finnish national superintendent survey was transmitted to the total of 390 municipalities in the autumn of 2008. In total, 210 superintendents responded, and after the merger process in 2008, these 210 superintendents in the sample represents 232 municipalities. All questionnaires were transmitted electronically through self-managing web-survey systems, and dropout analyses were undertaken by all four research-teams, comparing the samples with the total population. The results indicate that the national samples of superintendents are fairly representative to all superintendents in each of the countries.

The superintendent position in the Nordic countries

In search for the superintendent

Superintendents work in multiple fields and with many different stakeholders in a highly political system (Bjork and Kowalski, 2005; Nihlfors, 2003). One main function is to mediate between political and administrative managers, on one side, and educational practitioners, especially school leaders, on the other. In the four national surveys only a few respondents fit our initial description of a superintendent, "Being directly subordinate to a political committee and being in charge of all municipal education". Most of them have as their field of responsibility a broad field of

education: childcare, adult education, culture and social affairs; and they are subordinate to other managers. They are all, however, in charge of the municipal education. In Denmark only 11 per cent fit all criteria of our initial description, while in Norway the superintendent role is closer to the conceptual definition. About 60 per cent are subordinate to a school policy board. At the same time, more than 80 per cent in Norway and 56 per cent in Sweden are directly subordinate to the CEO of the municipality. In Finland 21 per cent of the superintendents were also principals, working mostly in schools. Practically, in every Finnish municipality superintendents serve on a separate board for education. Significantly, boards in rural municipalities had more often a broader remit than boards in urban and suburban municipalities (Kanervio and Risku, 2009). Another difference is that there are clear indications in the Danish material that the people in the higher-level management posts are not educators by profession, but economists or lawyers, like the managers in ministries. The initiatives can be seen as a case of homogenising public leadership, adding more management powers and taking out educational subject expertise. This is not the fact in the rest of the Nordic countries.

Reform consciousness

Initially, we can conclude that the superintendents in all the countries express a high level of reform consciousness. When asked what reforms they would welcome, the superintendents in Denmark answer that the top priority is the demand for more local autonomy. This can be interpreted as opposing the current educational politics of recentralisation seen in governance in Denmark. The whole-day school is opposed to the then liberal-conservative government's (2001-2011) politics to have school and day care and after-school centres operate independently of each other. The respondents in Norway answered in an open response category that the educational reform that had the greatest impact on their work as school superintendents was the curriculum reforms in 1997 and 2006. The Swedish superintendents answer in 2009 that they look forward to the implementation of a new education act and a new regulation for upper secondary school. Both reforms had been discussed for several years. Next in priority is implementing curricula for all school forms (from preschool to adult education). When we asked which reform they saw as the most important reform for their work they emphasised individual development plans for each pupil. This is a change from group thinking to individual thinking. The answers of the superintendents in Norway and Sweden can be interpreted as a function in the chain between the national and local levels, where many seem to be in line with the national level, while the superintendents in Denmark seem to be more in opposition to the national level. The superintendents in all three countries vary greatly.

Task preference structure: importance, meaningfulness and time-consumption

The superintendent position does not always allow the superintendent to prioritise work according to wishes. We asked the respondents in the sample to rank the five most important tasks in their job, the five most time-consuming tasks and, finally, the five tasks they found most interesting. Rankings were collected by multiple-response questions based on predefined response categories. The overall pictures are much alike, but the convergence and differences between the replies to the three questions (meaning, time and interest) can be rather astonishing. Budget is given high priority in all countries and is the most time-consuming task. School development is the most interesting task, but takes too much time. Planning and working with the goal

formulations is also an interesting, meaningful and time-consuming task. Pedagogical leadership is high-ranked as meaningful and interesting in Norway and Sweden. The Danish superintendents are the only ones who see political matters as meaningful, highly time-consuming and interesting, and this seems to be the overall favourite of the superintendents in Denmark. Their preferences for change are respectively more autonomy to municipality and schools, whole-day schools, local quality development, revision of subjects and better coherence in education years 1-18.

The Swedish superintendents say that political matters are time-consuming, but they do not rank it high, when it comes to meaningful or interesting. Finnish superintendents seem to correspond well to the task profiles of the other Nordic countries. Different kinds of managerial tasks dominate the superintendents' job descriptions (42 per cent of the data involve e.g. financial management, management of teaching and administration). Although Finnish municipalities are facing intensive and radical changes, strategic leadership and planning are not mentioned as common tasks in the superintendents' job descriptions. Pedagogical leadership is left to the principals, and the management of teaching and pedagogic leadership again seem to have a minor role in the superintendents' work (Kanervio and Risku, 2009).

Relations to the school principals

School leaders are the primary subordinates or collaborators to superintendents, who explain that they manage educational leadership, sparring, school development strategies and student learning. They communicate person to person in mentoring and sparring processes. And they support school leaders in thinking strategically. Danish superintendents prioritise face-to-face interaction with school leaders: communication and sparring, but also through work concerning the school and municipal organisation and quality reports. The communication is based on both parties' educational professional backgrounds. Respondents were asked to write the three most important tasks in their work with school leaders. The highest priority is given to the focus on communicating with school leaders and on advancing their development. Superintendents here indicate their interest in leading the leaders of schools and giving them support. The second highest priority is given to developing the school organisation and school district, attitudes and resources, and lower priority is given to working on quality reports. Relations between superintendents and school leaders are direct, as only seven per cent said there was another level of leadership – like district leaders – between themselves and school leaders. In other research projects (Moos *et al.*, 2007), we hear school principals in the new, larger municipalities complain that the on-going and direct communication between school management and local administration/superintendent has been transformed into written communication. They complain that they seldom have a chance to meet with the superintendent, because they have many institutions to look after and, therefore, write many policies and principles.

Superintendents regularly hold conferences with school leaders, once a month or less often. The themes for these conferences cover a broad field. Four items are mentioned more often than others by the Danish superintendents: discussing how to improve student outcome; discussing school leaders; discussing teacher empowerment and discussing strategies for implementing national decisions. When the Swedish superintendents were asked about the most time-consuming tasks in their job, as shown above, the four top-ranked tasks were, not surprisingly, financial management, change processes in the schools, goal formulation and planning, and policy issues.

However, when the same superintendents were asked in their own words to define the most important issues in their day-to-day dialogue with school principals, the answers mirrored a more pedagogical discourse: local strategy about national educational policy and school improvement towards raising student performance. Superintendents are very much aware of national reforms and how to implement them, both by influencing school leaders through discussions at conferences and by empowering leaders and teachers to take on new expectations.

Three main trends emerge from the data on Norwegian superintendents' task profiles. First, there is a strong emphasis on organisational management tasks, such as financial management, human resource management, and planning and goal formulation. Second, when the superintendents were asked to rank the themes on the agenda with their principals, school development, supervision and guidance of principals, and leadership development counted for 27 per cent of the observations. Third, and interestingly, quality control issues are typically low scorers in the same data set, counting for only 12 per cent of the observations.

Nordic similarities and differences

As noted, the Nordic school systems have been affected by comprehensive civil service reforms during the last two decades (Moos, 2006). Decentralisation of powers, authorities and responsibilities from the state to the municipalities has been a major trend in all Nordic countries (Tanggaard, 2011), which in theory should lead to more freedom and scope for problem solving and policy-making at the local level. On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the state to some extent only has changed the mode of regulation to more subtle and indirect steering instruments (Moos *et al.*, 2013; Pedersen, 2010). Municipalities, schools, teachers and pupils are subjected to external evaluation and assessment. Moreover, accountability is strengthened through results from national tests and evaluations available on special web sites, paired with the formation of central control agencies, where the streams of reports, assessments and performance data are assembled. A mix-mode system of hard and soft governance in the relation between central agencies and local agents is, thus, evident in the Nordic countries (Pedersen, 2010). In theoretical terms, this means coexistence of loose and tight couplings between the state and the municipalities. The Danish contract seems to function as a soft governance tool, placing the responsibility and thus the blame on leaders at several levels. The form of the contract underscores this trend; institutional leaders formulate the contracts themselves – presumably in collaboration with their staff – and they also evaluate the results themselves. Thus, they are the only agents responsible and accountable. A second trend exposed in our cross-system comparisons is the level of political empowerment in agenda setting in municipalities. In the Norwegian case the municipality organisation enjoys certain degrees of freedom in selecting the content of their status reports. The reports, in the next round, form an agenda for supervision and monitoring from the regional level. A third and nested tendency is the level of bypassing the municipalities; here several examples can be taken from the Swedish context, where principals have the power under the Education Act to exert some influences on municipality from below. A fourth difference where Sweden is the deviant case concerns the introduction and development of an independent school sector. This development, in connection with the ideas of free school choice, has created a large independent school sector in Sweden. This independent sector has to follow the same regulations as the public school and they are inspected in the same way. The big

debate around them is related to their right to take out profit, which is created from the surplus of the school activities.

When viewed as a group, Nordic national quality criteria tend to be less ideologically coherent than they once were, as social democracy has come to be increasingly challenged by liberalism and conservatism. Contemporary legislation and curricula draw on a mix of values and ideas, often emphasising universalism, social equality, standardisation and central planning side by side with competition, individual autonomy, differentiation and multi-level governance. The conduct and characteristics of local actors are evaluated through a variety of procedures, including screening, contract design, reporting requirements and monitoring, and the Nordic states employ both soft and hard social technologies to act on the judgement. There is generally a preference for steering schools indirectly – e.g. through benchmarking, consultancy, guidelines and skill development – and the legal capacity of national agencies and politicians to intervene directly in the day-to-day work of teachers and school leaders remains for the most part limited.

The shifts observed in the school governance systems find resonance in the self-reported data on the superintendents' individual role, interpretation and priorities concerning leadership tasks. On the one hand, the current study portrays as a prototype superintendent a profession-oriented learning facilitator. This image is manifest in the contents and priorities of the superintendents' regular meetings with their school principals, and this pattern is visible through all the Nordic cases. For example, the data describes frequent discussions on pedagogical investments to reach better results for the pupils, paired with discussions of development of school leaders' competencies. Overall, among superintendent respondents the dominant image of a self-preferred leadership style is the one of a professional learning facilitator who focuses on pupil orientation. On the other hand, more managerial issues, such as economic challenges, financial planning and implementation of strategic decisions, are also frequently reported themes taken up with school principals (Johansson *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, it is also evident that the municipal superintendent is expected by the national authorities to be a key agent in the external control of school performance through the national quality assurance systems. The data sets indicate that this pattern is more visible in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway, where the national quality assurance system so far has mainly focused on legislative matters. Further, external control towards schools is absent in the Finnish material, and thus, superintendent engagement in external control exposes cross-country differences in the Nordic sample.

Implication for theory development and further research

The superintendent's position in the national quality assurance system is contextualised in the "crossfire" between state demands for external control vs local politicians demand for autonomy and democracy. Further, the superintendent is also placed at the interface between political and professional demands towards school principals and teachers. In line with loosely coupled system theory, we expect school superintendents to actively mediate reform signals and expectations from different parts of the governance chain in order to create a best possible match with the local school cultures. Specifically, we assume that a main function for school superintendents is to filter and mediate between political and administrative managers, on one side, and school leaders and teachers, on the other. Support for this notion is for example explicated in the Norwegian data, showing that superintendents buffer school

professionals demands for parental involvement. Moreover, the Swedish and Danish data indicate that superintendents perform a balancing act between implementation and policy making in practice. We see mediation by municipal superintendents as an important research area in order to improve the understanding of school governance at the “meso-level”. What kind of mechanisms do superintendents employ in order to balance the complex blend of demands for professional trust among teachers and school leaders, local autonomy expected by local politicians and legitimised state control imposed on she or he through the quality assurance system? Furthermore, to illuminate the richness and variety of practices involved in policy mediation, assessments on the similar issues should be collected among the other key role stakeholders of the superintendents: School board members and school principals in the same governance line.

References

- Björk, L. and Kowalski, T.J. (2005), *The Contemporary Superintendent: Preparation, Practice and Development*, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Johansson, O., Moos, L., Nihlfors, E., Paulsen, J.M. and Risku, M. (2011), “The Nordic superintendents’ leadership roles: cross national comparisons”, in McBeath, J. and Townsend, T. (Eds), *International Handbook on Leadership for Learning*, Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 695-725.
- Johansson, O., Holmgren, M., Nihlfors, E., Moos, L., Skedsmo, G., Paulsen, J.M. and Risku, M. (2013), “Local decisions under central watch – a new Nordic quality assurance system”, in Moos, L. (Ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership – Is there a Nordic Model?* Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 173-192.
- Kanervio, P. and Risku, P. (2009), “Tutkimus kuntien yleissivistävän koulutuksen opetustoimen johtamisen tilasta ja muutoksista Suomessa (A study on the status and changes of educational leadership in the provision of general education in Finnish municipalities)”, Opetusministeriön julkaisuja, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki, p. 16.
- Moos, L. (2006), “What kinds of democracy in education are facilitated by supra- and transnational agencies?”, *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 5 Nos 3/4, pp. 160-168.
- Moos, L. (2009), “Hard and soft governance: the journey from transnational agencies to school leadership”, *European Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 397-406.
- Moos, L., Kofod, K. and Krejlsler, J. (2007), *Meninger i ledelse – succesfuld skoleledelse mellem vision og selvledelse [Sense-Making in Leadership – Success-Ful School Leadership Between Vision and Self-leadership]*, Dafolo, Fredrikshavn.
- Moos, L., Kofod, K.K., Hjort, K. and Raae, P.H. (2013), “Denmark: new links between education and economics”, in Moos, L. (Ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership – Is there a Nordic Model?* Springer, Dordrecht.
- Nihlfors, E. (2003), *Scholchefen i skolans styrning og ledning (The Superintendent in Governance and Leadership of the School)*, Uppsala University, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala Studies in Education, Uppsala, p. 102.
- Nihlfors, E., Johansson, O., Moos, L., Paulsen, J.M. and Risku, M. (2013), “The Nordic superintendents’ leadership roles: cross national comparison”, in Moos, L. (Ed.), *Transnational Influences on Values and Practices in Nordic Educational Leadership – Is there a Nordic Model?* Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 193-212.
- Pedersen, O.K. (2010), *Konkurrencestaten [The Competitive State]*, Hans Reitzels Forlag, Copenhagen.

Tanggaard, L. (2011), "Innovativ evaluering i uddannelse [Innovative evaluation in education]", in Andreasen, K., Andreasen, N.F. and Rasmussen, A. (Eds), *Målt & vejlet (Measured & Weighed)*, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg, pp. 237-253.

Weick, K.E. (1976), "Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 21, pp. 1-19.

Weick, K.E. (2001), "Management of organizational change among loosely coupled elements", in Weick, K.E. (Ed.), *Making Sense of the Organization*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, pp. 380-403.

Corresponding author

Dr Jan Merok Paulsen can be contacted at: janmp@hihm.no

To purchase reprints of this article please e-mail: reprints@emeraldinsight.com
Or visit our web site for further details: www.emeraldinsight.com/reprints

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.