



Nordic Superintendent Leadership Cross-Nordic Comparisons

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Project Rational

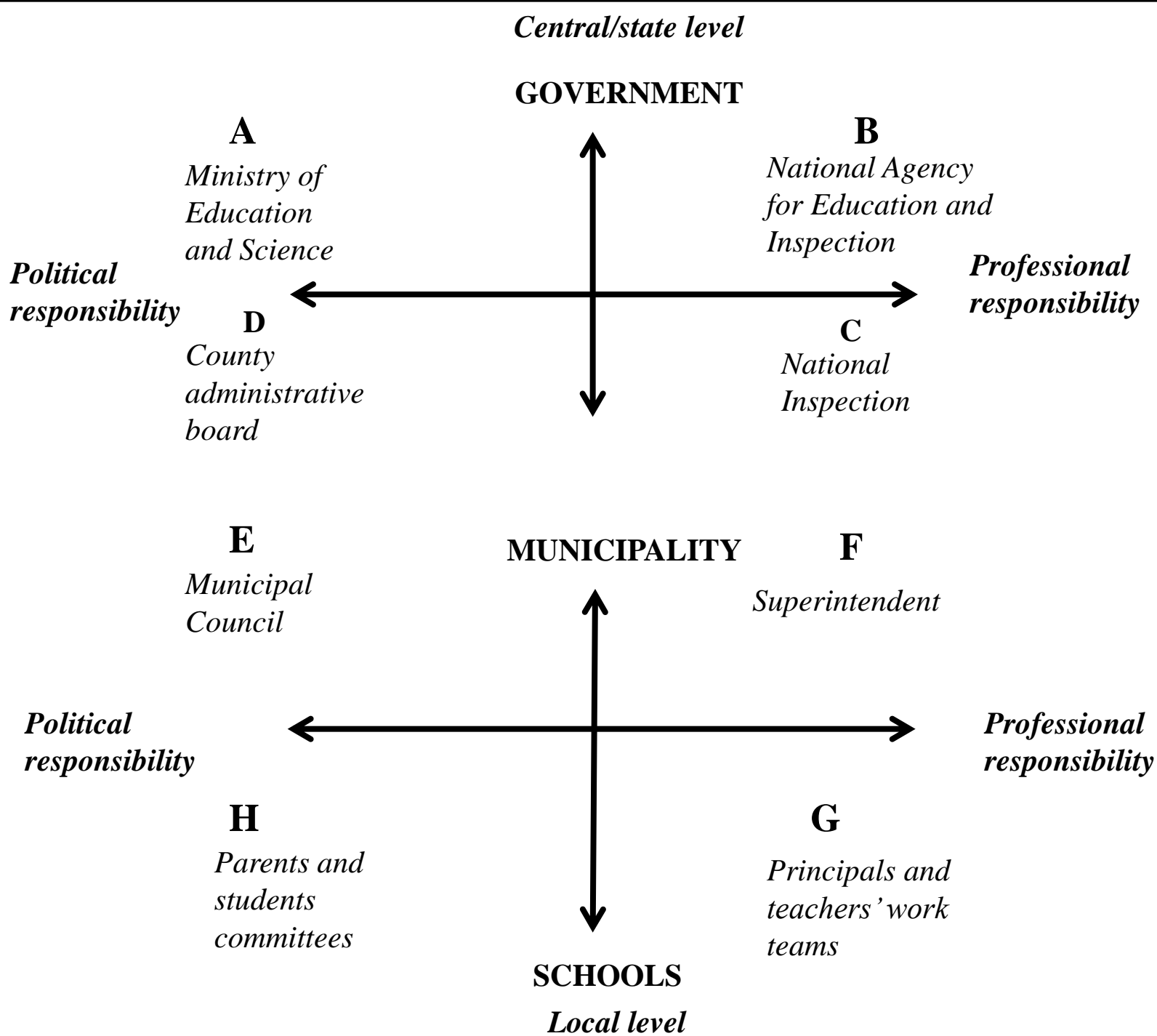
- ▶ Comparable superintendent surveys undertaken in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark in 2008 and in 2009
- ▶ Informed by US studies - adapted to the contemporary context in the Nordic countries
- ▶ We explore how superintendents' leadership may be expressed given the varying national contexts of the Nordic countries
- ▶ Is there a common “Nordic” superintendent role, and what characterizes its properties?
- ▶ The project will also include a school-governance survey in 2011
- ▶ School principal study in 2011



School Districts and Superintendents

- ▶ Municipalities – the “entrepreneurial level” of the Nordic welfare states: Daycare, schooling, elderly care and coordination of healthcare services
 - ▶ Norway: 430
 - ▶ Finland: 345
 - ▶ Sweden: 290
 - ▶ Denmark: 96
- ▶ “The school superintendent is the holder of a position in the municipality’s administrative hierarchy between the chief executive officer (CEO) of the whole municipality and the school principals” (Johansson et al, forthcoming)
- ▶ Directly subordinate to a political committee or board
- ▶ Responsible for education within the entire municipality, and head of the school principals





The governance system in the Nordic countries

- ▶ A “mix mode” of local autonomy and indirect control and steering from the state’s side
- À A general move to decentralization of powers and authorities from the state to the municipalities
- ▶ and in many cases further on to school level
- À A massive growth of more subtle and indirect state-based steering instruments (except Finland)
- ▶ Evaluation, inspection, coupling of resource allocation to assessments, public performance data
- À This shift contextualizes superintendent leadership in the “crossfire” between state accountability and quality control versus local government priorities
- ▶ Sweden, Denmark & Norway





Ranked tasks and responsibilities

- ▶ Ranked tasks (expected, prioritized and judged as interesting)
 - ▶ Budgeting and financial management
 - ▶ Planning and goal setting
 - ▶ Facilitating school development in general
 - ▶ Quality assurance (Denmark)
 - ▶ Linking policy goals to school development
 - ▶ Pedagogical leadership
 - ▶ Knowledge management
 - ▶ Change management
- ▶ External oriented tasks, such as evaluation of student achievements, external collaboration and community relationships are systematic low-scores

Ranked tasks in relation to the learners

- ▶ Enhancing issues of democracy, values and pupil influence (Sweden)
- ▶ Work active with special matters for the learners and fighting marginalization (Sweden & Finland)
- ▶ Give a lot of value to the parents' and students' opinions and see their participation in developing educational services as important (Finland)
- ▶ Helping parents with their problems with their children (Finland)
- ▶ Ensuring school safety (Finland)



The first research paper will be published as:

- Johansson, O; Moos, L; Nihlfors, E; Paulsen, J.M & Risku, M: *”The Nordic superintendents’ leadership roles: cross-national comparisons”*.
- In: John MacBeath & Tony Townsend (Eds.): International Handbook on Leadership for Learning.
- Forthcoming in 2011.

