

In: Administrative Strategies of our Time ISBN: 978-1-53611-904-6
Editor: Noralv Veggeland © 2017 Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

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Chapter 8

MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGY IN NORWEGIAN SCHOOLS: INTERPRETATIONS AND JUDGMENTS IN CONTRIVED LIBERATION

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“...it’s just a silly phase I’m going through.”
(I’m not in Love, 10cc, 1975)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter takes a closer look on why the educational system of Norway can be said to be both centralized and decentralized. In broad lines the chapter supports Margaret Archer's theory that no nation state will give away power to any sector, such as education and will keep a strict control, even if many decisions are left to lower administrative levels. The chapter analyses the historical background of "management by objective" and suggests that two different versions evolved, one European and one from the US. The latter is now by far the most powerful. Accordingly, "objectives" are understood as "behavior", which can be measured and tested. "Accountability" and teaching to the test are now phenomena that dominate the discourses in Norwegian educational debates. The PISA-results contributed to this process, making the debate much more exposed to globalization processes.

Keywords: curriculum studies, curriculum history, sociology of education, evaluation, assessment

A patriotic and popular song called "Norway in red, white and blue" became a national icon after World War II. This song underlined how all Norwegians loved their country and how the colors in the title could be found in various proud elements in Norwegian history, culture and nature. We recently saw a Masters' thesis in Education with the title "Schools in red, yellow and green" and we found it quite appropriate for the change of sentiment - and practices in the management of schools in our country over the last 30 years (Jacobsen 2012). The colors alluded to in this title were of course the implicit grading system developed for the accountability strategy for school leadership, and is widely used for assessing students. "Norway in red, white and blue" was a very popular song in our schools and it played an immensely strong role as a builder of the nation. Changing the colors implies that such values are substituted by a school that emphasizes testing, measurement and goals.

How did Management by objectives become a phenomenon in Norwegian education and how is it interpreted in local contexts? How does it affect school administration? When we work with schools in various

capacities and in various regions, we can easily detect differences in tone, cultures and disposition that point at what the Swedish researcher Arfwedson (1983) called a variety in “codes and contexts” of local schools. Some schools show reluctance and resistance towards new fads and fashions, while others schools are keen to demonstrate their engagement in reform projects, experiments and programs that underline their readiness for change. In our context this implies that the national project of harmony, equality and common values are in a process of being substituted by a set of values that to a great extent represent international trends.

NORWEGIAN EDUCATION - A CENTRALIZED OR DECENTRALIZED SYSTEM?

Tore Lindbekk, the Grand Old Man of Norwegian sociology of Education and professor at the Norwegian University for Science and Technology, offered a standard description of our educational system in 1975, as a rational, centralized system, with a body of loyal teachers who executed decisions effectively and in accordance with goals set by the government. The system was stable and monolithic; e.g., in contrast to most other western countries it had never developed a private system of schools as an alternative to the state financed schools (Lindbekk 1975, 214-215). He wrote:

“... the school was the national institution that showed least variation between regions, between urban and rural areas. The schools were coordinated in the same manner, the teachers training and working conditions, as well as how many hours students spent in schools on the same subjects. The textbooks and norms of knowledge in the various subjects were constant.” (authors’ translation) (Lindbekk, 1975, 215)

Reforms were driven by a cautious and not very radical government agency, “Forsøksrådet”, which at its peak of influence had 40 employees. Local school administrations were small and geared towards managing a

minimum of changes. Only 15 years later OECD described a slightly chaotic and uncoordinated system with inadequate control. Their conclusion was supported by Norwegian researchers, such as Tom Tiller (1990) and Karl Jan Solstad (1988).

The question regarding the character of the Norwegian educational system being of a centralized or decentralized kind has long puzzled historians. Historically, the church, and later the State took the initiative to schooling, passing a law in 1739, for a minimum of training and providing a textbook in religious instruction. Tone Skinningsrud (2012), who has conducted an extensive comparative study of the Norwegian educational system inspired by the theoretical system of Margaret Archer, argues that Norwegian education was strongly decentralized from 1739 and onwards. Schools were financed by local taxes, and it was first in 1845 that the national budget supported schooling financially. The 1889 schools act has been called the law of decentralization of the school in the manner that municipal authorities assumed responsibilities from the State and Church. The local school boards now hired teachers, decided on curricular issues, and decided on how the school should be managed.

However, from 1889 onwards, the State intervened in order to promote the school as a nation builder. Central government expanded its influence, step by step, in the following years. The Ministry expanded significantly, and set out regulations for a well-organized school system. The regional school directors acted as regional agents for the Ministry and supervised the municipal administrators to abide loyally to a growing number of regulations decided by the Ministry, for instance, whether schools used textbooks that were acknowledged by the Ministry (Skinningsrud, 2012, 424). By 1936 the State was also responsible for 80% of teachers' salaries and directed the budget of the local authorities down to the last detail. One of the key motivations for this engagement has been the political urge of equality in education. As Lindbekk stated in 1975, creating a system whereby children from the entire country and social class should stay in the same school system and enjoy the same content and benefit from the same amount of resources, has been paramount. Skinningsrud calls this "the intense unification." The provision of a national curriculum had already

been implemented in 1890, even if until 1939 they had a guiding function for the municipalities. The “Normalplan” of 1939 was, however, not a guiding document; rather it directed and unified the teaching without a local interpretation. Every subject taught was now described by means of minimum requirements, tables of the number of hours dedicated to each subject, and per cohort were now provided. A national grading system was imposed. Moreover, teacher education also became strongly regulated and unified in terms of curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods and practicum.

Skinningsrud concludes that the system was decentralized by the late 19th century, but the State gained more and more control until 1940. When also teachers’ unions came together and became a part of the modern corporative state, and without any competing private education sector all the requirements for being a centralized system are met. The law of 1936 also regulated grading and decided on statistical norms for assigning grades. Gustav Karlsen (1993), estimates the ongoing centralization as a process continuing up till 1970, when all differences in requirements pertaining to rural and urban schools were abolished by the law in 1969. In a seminal article from 2006, the grand old man of Norwegian school history, Alfred O. Telhaug (together with Mediås and Aasen) depicted the same period up until 1970 as the long drive towards the total social democratic hegemony in Norway (Telhaug et al. 2006). This was a period that displayed what has been called the “Nordic model” at its peak with its four principles: 1) a free and comprehensive school for all, 2) as many students as possible should spend as much time together as possible in a unified school, 3) democracy and participation in the local community and 4) the common school should reflect the social reality and value its home community (Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006).

The decentralizing process started after 1970. This was reflected in a marked shift in orientation in “Forsøksrådet” which, from 1969 hailed a new principle for development that was idealizing a “bottom up” and evolutionary ideology (Telhaug and Mediås, 2003, 240). The shift occurring from 1970 was formally instigated by Per Dalin, the new director of research in “Forsøksrådet”, who had strong links with international organizations and took up trends quickly. Involving the local schools,

politicians and their communities in the running and management of education, rooting the curriculum more solidly in the local environment was the sign of the times. Decentralization emerged as a new political trend together with the upsurge of environmental, feminist and global concerns, minorities and immigrants as new and visible political factors. This period was known as the “New Green,” a term coined by the political scientist Stein Rokkan (1987). The reawakening of political protest against war, environmental waste, nuclear energy alongside a nature conservation – and a new criticism against education as unjust and reproductive of the social order, all of a sudden rocked the political consensus about education.

Decentralizing in educational policies has been described by Hans Weiler as a) redistribution of authority, b) as making administration more efficient and c) increasing the relevance of the school to local conditions (Weiler 1990). Decentralization went along with deregulation and delegation/devolution. The rationale was tied into three principal presumptions: a) administration will become more connected to local realities and can provide better solutions to problems encountered, b) political power will be redistributed and will possibly reach and empower local groups, such as parents and c) ideological shifts toward a stronger humanist understanding of citizenship, political engagement and participation (Karlsen 1993, 54).

Deregulation and delegation were initially interpreted as the freedom to develop local curricula and make schooling more relevant to the public. Inspiration from radical pedagogues such as Paolo Freire, Basil Bernstein and Ivan Illich, and the British Humanities project with the British educator Lawrence Stenhouse, and German and French thinkers such as Oscar Negt and Pierre Bourdieu, stimulated Norwegian educational researchers to turn to radical interpretations of what a school could do for the society. Reforming society through education was the message of the strong programme. Although the national curriculum fully allowed for this interpretation when it was published in 1974, it was the deregulation of budget and the financial arrangements, which were in force since 1984, which really prompted the municipalities to develop their own ideas and dispositions for how they should develop the local school. In the reformed

national curriculum of 1987, new demands were put forward: schools should now produce their local versions of the curriculum. In 1981 a new Conservative government was installed, and Lars Roar Langslet, one of the most influential educational politicians at that time, coined one of the campaign slogans, “Ro i skolen” (End reforms in schools). In his capacity of Secretary for Science and Culture, Langslet subsequently closed down the governmental experimental institution “Forsøksrådet.” The reform pedagogy was conceived as disruptive and unacceptable to a stable social order.

The publication of the white paper (St.meld. nr. 79 (1983/84)) titled “Om det pedagogiske utviklingsarbeidet i skolen og om forsøksvirksomheten i skoleverket 1981-82 og 1982-83” (On the educational development work in schools and the Research and development approaches in the education sector 1981-82 and 1982-83) establishes the idea that the municipality should cater for evolution and development in local schools while ensuring that local innovation projects are kept within a legal framework. The financial and administrative foundation was already set out in the green paper from the Government published in 1982 (NOU 1982:15) “Nytt inntektssystem for kommunene” (New financing model for the municipalities) announcing new reforms in local government. From 1986, when the reform was installed, the ministry transferred a lump sum of money, and abandoned the policy of earmarking money for certain missions. This act of deregulation gave the municipality a much larger space for their own priorities. One of the earliest consequences was a rush of school consolidations. The previous arrangement had secured small schools in remote regions a solid financing, while the new system weakened their position significantly (Solstad 2015).

In the 1980s, the newly elected Conservative government gained strong momentum with the result that municipalities run by the Conservative party took the opportunity to develop distinct local policies with a conservative bias. And even within the social democratic party strong voices supported the idea of “back to basics” while claiming that Norwegian schools had become too lax and lenient in their demands. The son of the former Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen, Rune, who later

became Chief Councillor of Oslo coined the term “snillisme” (“kindism”) as a slogan that described the position of most Norwegian teachers: sloppy, soft and unambitious on the children’s behalf. In their educational policies most of these sentiments echoed the positions of Thatcher and Reagan. Municipalities centred round Oslo and run by conservative governments expediently developed local strategies for their educational planning on an ad hoc basis. Deregulation continued and a number of experiments with local school boards, some with a majority of external board members, were established. This wave of “New Moralism” held a prominent position in the educational debate, when the demand for greater discipline, tougher educational standards and more grading in school won support in the political arena (Løvlie, 1984).

A research report published in 1992 (Askheim, Fauske and Lesjø 1992) demonstrated that many of the tasks previously organized by the State gradually were taken over by the municipality. Almost all leaders of the municipal schools were by then members of the central board, taking part in the overall strategic debates and deliberations of the municipality administration. This was a significant change compared with the previous decade when the local director of schooling administered a state financed organization taking its commands from the government representative in the counties. At that time the municipalities had not developed any systematic set of indicators for monitoring their development. However, all municipalities claimed they were engaged in local development work, and the smaller the municipality, the more coordinated were the efforts between schools (Askheim et al. 1992, 57). Larger municipalities had school directors who were more active in designing local policies, and there was a significant trend in the report by Askheim et al. (1992) that the school directors saw a need for a more active role in this respect.

The municipality of Oslo developed a plan as early as 1990. When Asker, a neighboring municipality followed up, the motivation was similar. The municipality of Asker opted for a policy, which would place greater emphasis to what should be taught, and how the schools were managed. A document outlined how the municipality would close the ranks and tie the goals of the general curriculum tighter to national standards, produce

systems of evaluation and indicators that could inform the management about the output of the system and, finally – a program for improving teacher competence in the “basic subjects.”

The move towards more local policymaking, efforts to manoeuvre the school organization towards local needs and interests, which had initially been an existential crusade for making curricula more meaningful, soon took a different direction by comparing their standards to international and competitive contexts. What begun as process of overcoming cultural barriers in the curriculum was reinterpreted as a tool for globalization.

In spite of an ongoing decentralization, Telhaug issued this statement from a comparative perspective in 2003:” [...] the State as a governing and regulating centre has until this day held a stronger position in Norway than in most other countries. The State makes many more decisions on behalf of the schools than in all countries we can compare with” (Telhaug 2003, 438). Telhaug emphasizes that the school is governed by one law, and one national curriculum, and a corporative order settled by central negotiations between the state and the teachers’ unions. Skinningsrud (2014) supports this conclusion. She claims that the acts of deregulations and devolution did not end in the distribution of power, or democratization in a profound sense. She found that leftist or right-wing governments alike refused to relinquish power, rather developing new strategies that kept the power balance. So what accounts for the apparent reversal of the decentralization process?

MANAGEMENT - BY OBJECTIVES

Telhaug, Mediås and Aasen (2006) calls the period starting 1990 for the era of “globalization and neo-liberalism.” A very concrete expression was the impact of the OECD-report on Norway published in 1988. The report complained that educational statistics and reporting were lacking in Norway. They inferred that the educational authorities had insufficient information about the flow of resources, what effects these had, and few clues about what worked and what did not work. The OECD report was

concerned that this lack of overview and control implied that the Norwegian educational system was highly decentralized. Partly because of this critical report, the government established a project, called EMIL (Steering by goals and evaluation in Norwegian schools), which tried to delineate a national system for quality assurance. In the final report, a model for national evaluation and assessment was presented (Granheim and Lundgren, 1990).

In the next important white paper (St. meld. nr. 37 (1990/91)) “Organisering og styring i utdanningssektoren” (Organizing and steering the education sector) the need for controlling the legal boundaries and the comprehensiveness of the local initiatives is strongly commented on as “management by objectives.” Askheim et al. (1992, 22) calls this document the “breakthrough of management by objectives in Norwegian education policies.” According to the paper, national goals must be stated in sufficiently clear and unambiguous terms so they can steer effectively. The curricula for subjects should transpose the general objectives to subject specific levels, and the authorities is announced to establish monitoring and evaluative tools to ensure that goals and objectives are attained.

This message from the government was coherent and came as no surprise after the implementation of a series of initiatives commonly interpreted as “New Public Management”. Møller and Skedsmo (2013) call this initiative the “first wave” of NPM. “The New State” was a document published in 1987 (Arbeids- og administrasjons departementet 1987) setting out the principles of future management by objectives for all sectors, ministries, directorates and governmental organizations. Producing activity plans with goals for all measurable indicators became mandatory as of 1991. The accounting and revision of all objects, monitored by central governmental bodies was proposed in a sequel of papers and policy documents. The process of making the municipality “accountable” for its output, was introduced in the new law for municipalities passed in 1992, when the term “school owner” was adhered to the municipalities (for primary and lower secondary schools) and the counties (for upper secondary schools). The stated expectation was that these lower levels of

school administration should take greater responsibility in monitoring its processes and output, also in regard to student learning (Monsen 2013). Such elements of a “global perspective” on education, “accountability” gradually replaced a national-cultural perspective (Telhaug et al. 2006, 262), due to the strong influences communicated by international organizations: EU, World bank, UN, WTO, OECD and a conglomerate of their subdivisions, most notably the PISA-activities of the OECD. The traditional values of the school’s responsibility for the overall education of the students, were gradually substituted by a technical-economic or cognitive-instrumental rationale. Thus Norwegian education relied heavily on placing trust in teachers and schools, but why did this trust start to erode?

SCHOOLING WAS ALWAYS MANAGED BY GOALS

It has been said that schooling always were managed by goals (Qvortrup 2016). The French historian of education, Marrou (1956), claims that the first formal educational institutions established in ancient Greek cities were prompted by one overriding goal: training children to become warriors and skilled officers who could win wars against enemies. Ideas of managing the present and provision for sustainability, controlling the future and preparing for the uncertain are more or less self-evident *purposes* of education. The Ministry expressed a similar sentiment in the white paper on “The internationalization of Norwegian Education (St. meld. Nr. 14 2008-2009, 11): “Internationalization must be used as a tool for us to measure up to other countries, and be a response to challenges that the process of globalization pose” (authors’ translation).

The law introduced in Denmark and Norway in 1739 stated that the goal of education was: “[...] to provide sufficient teaching about the foundation of the Christian beliefs and the paths to salvation, order and means, according to the Lord’s words and the Evangelical Church truth in our children’s beliefs abbreviated scripture, and even to read, write and calculate.....” (author’s translation). In 41 brief paragraphs, King Christian

VI outlined how this was to be accomplished. Providing textbooks and giving the priests mentoring tasks were supposed to be the support system. Teacher training commenced towards the end of the 18th century, and this became another instrument of supervising schools. The goals were very broad and it was easy to check if the students fulfilled the requirements.

Controlling the output in terms of testing and grading has a long and difficult history. Collecting results scientifically from grading as well as testing for mental and cognitive development has a tradition dating back to the early 20th century. The national curriculum “Normalplanen” published in 1939 can be said to be one of the first scientifically based – or even evidence based curricula written for an entire school system (Imsen 2011, Monsen and Haug 2004). Bernhof Ribsskog carried out empirical research on retention and memory in public schools and drew up the new curriculum based on the premise that a fundamental reform that engaged students in active learning on the assumption that this would improve learning outcomes. However, the use of educational research to establish how the school system performed was not yet a topic in politics and administration, even if the dominating educational research institute in Norway at the University of Oslo aspired to hold such a position. “Forsøksrådet” established its own research division in 1970 in order to establish a sense of baseline for evaluation of how their reform efforts affected the schools involved (Monsen and Haug, 2004). In the mid- 1970s a green paper produced a much debated document on how the evaluation of student performance and school output should take place (NOU 1978:2 *Vurdering, kompetanse og inntak i skoleverket*) (Assessment, competency and enrolment in the education sector). Its proposals for systematic evaluation drowned in a heated discussion about grading as tools for evaluating students.

Lindbekk (2008) notes that controlling the learning outcomes has been particularly relevant to the discourse about small or large schools, a century-old debate in educational research (Howley and Howley 2004). One consistent finding has been that in the Norwegian context school size is of limited importance. With the increasing sophistication of statistical methods there is strong evidence that the most significant predictor of

school performance is social status and the education of parents. In fact, smaller schools in rural areas provide students with more motivation and a higher degree of school completion, even in the case of higher education (Grøgaard, Helland and Lauglo 2008). The collection of data of the earliest investigations came from small sets of data, sampled by relatively direct methods of available registry data. Later data has been successfully collected by National Statistical Surveys, but exclusively analysed by researchers, such as Lindbekk. One of the largest surveys was conducted by the Johns Hopkins scholar, and student of James Coleman, Professor Gudmund Hernes, in the early -70s. He and his colleague Knud Knudsen demonstrated by the rigorous use of statistics that working class students did not perform as well as their middle class schoolmates (NOU 1976:46) *Utdanning og ulikhet* (Education and inequality). The concern expressed by the OECD in 1988 was that there were few efforts or services to provide others than the research community with data for measuring the effects of teaching and learning.

In addition to information on school quality provided by research, the government has also provided systematic evaluations. White papers have also made increasingly use of research as input for political decisions. Typically, when the government was initiating investigations and experiments on the effects of providing schooling for six-years old, (in the early -90s) the findings and conclusions never affected the political decision. The second highest ranking officer (ekspedisjonssjef) in the Ministry confided in the researchers (Monsen and Haug 2004) that the Ministry did not have the capacity to transform such information properly.

This changed significantly during the 1990s. The Ministry ranked Norway in a number of international comparisons regarding school subjects, of which the PISA-tests won most interest. The idea, however, of testing students in order to gain comprehensive data about the progress of all students, was old. When the first agency in the USA was established in 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the exact same argument that OECD brought to Norway in 1988 was used: "...no

comprehensive and dependable data about the educational attainment of our young people”¹. Secretary Hernes would end this situation and started the efforts to place Norway in the middle of a global trend towards measurement and assessment of learning outcomes to monitor national educational systems. The number of nation states that formulate curricula in terms of learning outcomes which are then combined with assessment of learning outcomes has grown significantly in recent decades (Prøitz 2015). It has been one of the “master” ideas to influence public management in profound ways (Røvik and Pettersen 2014).

TRAVELLING IDEAS

In the critique of “management by objectives” it is often said that this approach comes from the business world and shouldn’t be applied to education. In the following we will counter this position by claiming that this has a genuine origin in education. Connecting educational goals and measurement of such goals is a heritage from French higher education and Jesuit education in late 16th century (Hamilton 2003). Durkheim, and later Michel Foucault, described how singling out individual students, closely observing and tracking their moves in minute detail, monitoring progress and punishing deviance gradually developed sophisticated technological approaches for school administration. Hoskin and Mcvae (1986) described how this improved the art of bookkeeping and accountancy, and thereby giving birth to the notion of “accountability.” From the Napoleonic military engineering schools, teachers took their curricula and ideas and influenced the West Point military Academy from 1815 on. Grading and marking students was perfected in this area and was intimately connected to the observation and assessment performed by their teachers. A graduate from West Point designed a similar system for assigning tasks to workers and measuring their performance at Springfield Armory in 1842 (Postman

¹ <http://web.stanford.edu/dept/news/pr/94/940228Arc4425.html>.

1992). His name was Daniel Tyler and he is often seen as the precursor to Frederick W. Taylor, who developed complex techniques, publishing in 1911 the book "The Principles of Scientific Management." Its impact was profound in all sectors, from running railway companies to Sundays Schools (Waldow 2012). It gave birth to the "social efficiency" movement with Franklin Bobbitt and Edward Thorndike as prominent figures.

In his writing, Franklin Bobbitt (1876-1956), made diligent use of metaphors derived from Taylor's work: the school was compared with "the factory," its activities were "productions" while the workers were "students and teachers." The standards should be set by those who bought and used the products. Standards would erase doubts about what were the desirable outcomes of teaching in school. Designing tests that would measure whether the goals of specific content had been successfully achieved or not prompted Bobbitt to develop psychometric methods for education. Bobbitt's work was supported by Edward Thorndike and numerous other academics who joined the tradition of developing "social control." Testing and measuring in order to select and eliminate students, to identify problems and misbehavior became the hallmark of a generation (Franklin 1986).

In 1949 Ralph Tyler, of the University of Chicago, published the book "Basic principles of Curriculum and Instruction" in which he posed four questions: 1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain (Objectives). 2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain those purposes (Design), 3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized (Scope and sequence), 4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Evaluation). This is the core of what in curriculum theory has been called the "Tyler rationale," which together with the views of Bobbit and Thorndike espoused a "curriculum tradition" that focusses on a set of objectives to meet the needs of society. Bobbit's analogies about the school as an industrial manufacturing unit were perpetuated by Tyler (Waldow 2012, 173). Tyler was the key figure behind the US "National Assessment of Educational Progress", which was established in 1969. The explicit aim was to generate

data about how students, classes, municipalities, and states “delivered” on specific curricular aims.

AMERICAN CURRICULUM AND CONTINENTAL DIDACTICS

Outlining a specific curriculum with many objectives, and measuring students, schools and teachers on their performance is a distinctly American way of thinking that has been widely adopted in Europe. Waldow (2012) suggests that this approach has taken a dominating position in the German educational debate, without reflecting on the policies mentioned above and their connection to the “social efficiency movement”. This is true to an even greater extent in Sweden (Waldow 2015). Ian Westbury explains that the American curriculum therefore is closely linked to the rationality of the system and/or society, and the role of the teacher is to fulfill the needs set by the system. The continental tradition of Didactics and “Pädagogik” gives much more autonomy to the teacher and the local school in order to contribute to the development of the whole person, to his or her formation, or “Bildung” as Germans put it (“Danning” in Norwegian). When a problem is detected in educational statistics and tests, it will be defined as a relation between the child and the system, and the teacher needs to mend the problem in order to improve the problem’s “social efficiency”. Therefore, it is important to detect problems at an early stage and provide early intervention (Vik 2015). In a European tradition, greater emphasis is placed on the relationship between the child and the pedagogical institution. Testing and psychometric measures are by no means unfamiliar to the European tradition, but the magnitude and impact of testing took a dramatic turn when the PISA tests entered Norwegian grounds in 2001.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

By the late 1980s, several initiatives to develop the capacity of schools to evaluate their own performances were introduced. Prominent researchers such as Peder Haug, Lars Monsen and Tom Tiller took on large-scale projects. These initiatives were well aligned with the democratic dimension of the decentralization movement (see Weiler above). In retrospect, Monsen concludes that while obvious gains were achieved, the complexity of the tasks were often considered overwhelming by teachers and municipalities. While the strategy was in keeping with continental traditions in seeing relations between the child and the pedagogical institution as the center of attention, both left and right-wing governments chose to employ testing and surveys as their primary tool for assessing the system's output. Gudmund Hernes drew up the main policy and prepared what was to come. Norway joined international comparisons in science and math, civic studies etc. like TIMMS, PIRLS, and finally PISA. The Ministry also engaged in a long list of joint European activities, such as "Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks". Røvik, Eilertsen og Lund (2014, 94) counts 42 different initiatives and activities where Norwegian school authorities participate. In a white paper from 2008/9 (St. meld. nr. 14 (2008-2009) Internasjonalisering av utdanningen) (On the internationalization of education) the rationale is clearly outlined: comparing learning output and effects of schooling with other countries is pivotal for surviving in the global competition for productivity, markets and continued economic growth.

THE SECOND WAVE OF NPM

A white paper from 1996 outlined the construction of a national quality assurance system, with the task of providing "relevant information for management and steering" of the educational sector (St.meld. nr 47 (1995-

96) (Om elevvurdering, skolebasert vurdering og nasjonalt vurderingssystem) (On student assessment, school based evaluation and national evaluation system)). A green paper from 2002 (NOU 2002:10 “Førsteklasses fra første klasse”) (Premium quality from Grade 1) assessed that Norway was the only country in the prosperous Western rich world which still operated without a satisfactory national system for quality assessment. Further, it was stated that local education authorities did not monitor its productivity sufficiently, while essential tools for evaluating and assessing results and output from education were lacking and that there were insufficient diagnostic tests and these were not widely used. The white paper (St.meld. nr.30 (2003-2004) “Kultur for læring” (Culture for learning) marked the completion of the process towards an accountability regime. The National Quality Assessment System (NQAS) was introduced, which would bring together national surveys in student satisfaction, young people’s mental health, the use of media and ICT for learning in schools, diagnostic tests for reading as well as for school subjects (Møller and Skedsmo 2013, 343).

The quality system builds on the database established in 1992 the ‘Grunnskolen informasjonssystem’ (GIS) (The elementary school information system) collecting more than 1000 different segments of information about all conceivable data for each school in the country. This was combined with economic data collected in another database called KOSTRA. Indicators for social climate, student performance were progressively incorporated, and these indicators are now also run against the central statistics about demographic and social data. Comprehensive testing of 4, 8 and 10 graders was introduced on a nationwide basis from 2004. This detailed system of statistical information was provided by the NQAS and developed through conservative and radical governments alike. In 2017 it has peaked by the Statistical Central Bureau providing information about how each school supports learning for their students measured by a scale from 1-5. This instrument aggregates results from all tests and corrects data for social background, so that schools, allegedly, can be compared on equal terms a fair ground.

The question of publishing results from schools and municipalities has caused some dissent. However, today all results are available from the website “Skoleporten” (The school gate). What accelerated the process of establishing this system was the allegedly poor results from the PISA investigation of 2001. The new right-center government used the results to its utmost in order to establish tests, so that the outcomes of schooling could be measured. When a social-democratic/socialist government returned to power in 2005, very little was changed.

PUZZLES AND INTERPRETATIONS

It comes as no surprise that students of the municipalities of Oslo and adjacent areas have performed well, and above the national average on the national tests. The results can be largely explained by conventional factors: the average income of parents is higher, the level of education is higher, levels of teacher qualifications are higher than elsewhere in the country. Local school policy-makers also claim that their administration and steering have contributed to the significant amount of positive results. A number of approaches and incentives were imposed to encourage schools and teachers focus on performance, results and scores, such as the project “Assessment for learning”. Many schools devised color codes for student progress: red, yellow and green, marking students’ performance with the traffic light. Oslo was the municipality that took the most significant steps towards building a school that was in keeping with Bobbit’s and Tyler’s rationale. The slogan “learning pressure” became crucial in the rhetoric of new and ambitious plans from municipalities (Dale and Wærness 2006). Close monitoring of students, relentless tracking of students who might possibly disconcert teachers with their poor performance increased their use of diagnostic tests and used results from national tests extensively as a monitoring tool. The policy makers in the Oslo administration also extended the notion of “accountability” to its limits. Salaries and budgets were set alongside their overall scores. Heavy use was made of results from progressing schools in the political context, as evidence for a policy

that “worked.” An important report provided by Simon Malkenes (2014), a teacher in the Oslo schools, argued strongly about the way in which the NPM hit the organization. A number of reports showed how teachers found student assessment and the logging of results and feedback procedures to be very time-consuming and bureaucratic. Moreover, a number of incidents of cheating were revealed. Poorly performing students in Oslo were more often exempted from a national test than was the case in other municipalities. The number of private schools established soared, due to parent and student dissatisfaction with the public school. They migrated largely to Montessori pedagogical institutions, institutions that are generally considered to be more humanist. The number of external consultancies selected to assess and monitor schools and administrations doubled and there was a sudden increase in costs. Their behavior upset teachers, who experienced their presence as insensitive and rude towards situations and persons. It was Malkenes contention that “taylorism ruled” in Oslo, as exemplified by the various passages in the book which actually illuminate the brisk statements from Bobbit’s writings. Principals were hired on contracts, and production results were predicted, bonuses awarded to successful principals and teachers. His well formulated critique aims at what he calls the “commando liberalism” and its mastermind: the director Astrid Sjøgnen, the former assistant to Gudmund Hernes, the Secretary of Education.

An anomaly, or at least a contrast in this picture is that in spite of significantly lower levels of parent income and education over the last decade the county “Sogn og Fjordane” on the west coast of Norway, has scored on par with Oslo in all tests. Statistically corrected for such factors, their scores rank highest in the country. A research project was designed to interrogate the ways in which this county differed from others (Langfeldt 2015). Its results deviated from Oslo in many respects: their schools are smaller and this is seen as an asset which supports the local infrastructures, children live in smaller communities that respect and support their teachers as significant and valuable members of society. They take pride in knowledge and wisdom and there is a long history of providing many teachers from its educated population to the rest of the country. Traditional

values are highly esteemed; the locals consume less alcohol, their divorce rate is lower than the Norwegian average and they lead a healthy life. They also keep up the status of the national language called “Nynorsk” (New Norwegian), a factor itself that promotes cognitive skills (Vangsnes and Söderlund 2015). Their educational policy and administrative orientation was much less based on top-down decisions. Instead the director of the county education administration worked through dialogs with school directors of the municipality. They consulted national test results, but with a certain phlegmatic distance. In the local schools discourses about students’ test results were toned down, and the position of the professional and autonomous teacher explicitly expressed.

It appears that these two counties have responded differently to the principles of NPM and MBO. Jon P. Knudsen (2015) has described the difference as a product of local or regional cultural interpretation. He has offered a cultural analysis alluding to the Capital and surrounding municipalities as heavily influenced by a view of life in economic terms, dominated by consumerism and careerism. This area easily understands local development in terms of competition and sees the provision of schooling as a preparation for future labor market. Subsequently, good results on national tests mirrors a system of motivation for children, where parents support and encourage their schooling as an actual investment in the future and participation in a global market. The mentality assumes that the era of a regulated capitalism is over, and that globalization is evident. The liberalist conception of individualism dominates, while residues of “social efficiency” prevail in the policy, not because social justice requires that they care for the less able students, but because failing students will cost the welfare system enormous sums in the future. In contrast Sogn and Fjordane remains in a cultural context which reflects rural values and an economy that they think is possible to regulate and control. Their values are more communitarian and they value knowledge for its own sake and for its potential for understanding the world. In the world of schooling they focus on overall and general goals, while estimating the contemporary principles of designing curricula accordingly. They still believe in Keynes when the capital area reveres Friedman (Knudsen 2015).

In Education Directorate queries from 2016 (Gjerustad et.al. 2016) it is clear that when school leaders are asked if their school owners have clear guidelines in various areas, Oslo/Akershus is the region that scores highest. These include guidelines on national tests, results of diagnostic tests and development for teachers. School leaders were also asked to what extent they felt school owners expressed expectations on the same thematic areas, and the same patterns showed up. 84% of school administrators in the Oslo and Akershus region said they felt expectations on the part of school owners on results in national tests while just 52% of school leaders in central and northern Norway experienced the same.

RESISTING OR EMBRACING NPM/MBO

What do municipalities do in order to comply with the new order of things? An example of a municipality that went a long way to deregulate, delegate and devolve its school is, as we have demonstrated, Oslo. Its development has been described in volumes such as Thorleif Storaas' monumental "The history of the Oslo school in the 20th century" (2011), with the telling subtitle: "National policies and municipal initiatives" (author's translation). The new financing system adopted from the State from 1986 onward and the following initiatives were embraced. The decentralization of school authorities was supposed to be completed within few years, with each school being a budgetary unit under the auspices of a school board. Full responsibility for organization of resources, for hiring staff, setting up of routines for teaching, developing work plans for teachers, and extended privileges for the principal were elements in the new management strategy. Administrative responsibility was to be delegated to the 25 regional administrations. However, all these proposals were initially rejected (Storaas 2011). The Ministry quashed all attempts by Oslo (and Asker) from producing local curricula that would be common to all schools, as early as 1990 (Engelsen 2016). The argument was that the local schools needed to develop their plans on an individual basis and the role of the municipality was merely one of supervision.

Judging from a more nationwide perspective the road towards a “New Public Management” has been far from smooth. Other regions apart from Oslo experience a “softer” implementation. Transferring tasks with wide implications for practical routines and arrangements have taken place to a large extent, but are handled differently. In the first wave of NPM, local schools had to decide on their own planning procedure. In the second wave, beginning in 2001, we see that the Ministry assigns a much stronger role to the municipality to monitor development. Particularly after the NQAS was in place we note that supervising schools has become a matter of acting in conformity with a controlling regime (Engelsen 2016). Some of the shift of rhetoric is due to the fact that the curriculum has become legally binding. Rights, duties and accountability were now an inherent part of a legalistic conception, where the task of the regional director of education for each county has taken a position of inspector, a supervisory role to check how the regulations are maintained and respected. The municipal director has a similar task in controlling whether individual single schools use their tests and results to supervise and reflect their own development. This includes supporting schools to develop and refine their local plans, guide them in the curriculum process, assist them in bringing self-assessment procedures to productive results, and ensure that students achieve the expected standards and learning outcomes. This is a significant shift from the 1987 curriculum reform, which represented an optimistic view of the professionalism of the local teachers. The ministry told municipalities to keep their “hands off” in 1987, and in the 2006 reform, a suspicious and paternalist control regime has taken its place. This regime now assesses the efforts made by each school to make the national curriculum real and operative, so that it “delivers” a training that leads students to achieve the desired learning outcomes laid out in the descriptions of competencies in the curriculum (Mølsted 2015).

However, as we have seen, the transfer of authority has been much more questionable. We see a delegation that has been much more functional than political. This sentiment was expressed by the Secretary of Education from the Socialist Left Party in 2009, Bård Vegard Solhjell, in the following terms: “*We have to tie up the local freedom, because*

schooling and knowledge is not like any other local matter” (quoted after Aasen & Sandberg, 2010, 17).

The 2006 reform, called the “Knowledge Promotion” represents a total change from a content based curriculum. All subject specific plans are written with detailed outlines of expected learning outcomes. Engelsen investigated the quality of what the municipalities derived from the general curriculum to their local plans and strategies. She found their quality to be highly questionable: “Most of all it looks as though a “cut and paste” practice has been followed” (authors’ translation) (Engelsen 2009, p.94). She points to what Stephen Ball has called “fabricated facades” and that this textual level of curriculum translation does not address the schools or teachers’ needs for guidance. These plans seem more to be written for their governors, demonstrating their ability to comply with their superiors.

Although the “learning outcome” dimension of curriculum writing has reached many countries, a comparison between Norway and Finland show that management by objectives have been taken longer in Norway than in Finland. In the analysis offered by Mølsted and Karseth (2016), the difference is significant between objectives decided and derived from the general aims about what children should learn from meeting a certain content (a content and purpose driven teaching and learning process) and objectives derived from the analysis of desired learning outcomes (as objective-driven curriculum). They found that learning outcomes in Finnish education was far more based on the handcraft and skills teachers use in presenting meaningful content to children, or what could be called their professional judgement. In short, Finnish ways of interpreting learning outcomes were based on a continental tradition as opposed to how the Norwegian curricula were described. The core concept in the Norwegian curricula is “Competencies” as a way of phrasing learning outcomes. Since their curricula say nothing about what teaching should be *about* their orientation necessarily goes in the direction of asking what the tests will require, and deriving their learning matter from expected content of tests. So the Norwegian tradition of content driven curricula is wholly abandoned, and has been shoehorned into an objective-driven sort of curriculum model derived from the Tyler-rationale. In Finnish teacher

training, which is widely respected, they focus on content didactical knowledge, teachers are trained to produce content specific local curricula and plans, an activity that is largely neglected in Norway (Engelsen 2016).

THE TAIL THAT WAGS THE DOG

In an evaluation study from 2013, produced by the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, a number of side-effects of publishing tests-results have been revealed (Seland et al. 2013). There appears to be a pattern of larger municipalities exploiting the information gathered in the national tests more than smaller municipalities, while their school authorities are more focused on producing better results from one year to the next. They take more time out of ordinary teaching to prepare students for the tests, and they use the results in conflict with what politicians and officials of the Directorate - naively - spelled out as the meaning of the national tests. The media has collaborated with local politicians to create a competitive climate between schools and municipalities. The high scores of Oslo, for instance have been used by the Oslo Conservative party and Progress Party as a showroom for what conservative policies might lead to (Seland et al. 2013). Stephen Ball (2003) has convincingly argued that teachers who are left to teach according to standards and criteria need to abandon their personal convictions and motivation, in order to adopt a calculating and strategic style. They experienced a skewed response to their professional identity from being a teacher who allows students to flourish with skills and beliefs and a mindset for a good life, to being a person who produces good results. Several researchers also point at how unhelpful these tests are for improving teaching (Haugen 2014).

A detailed study of how three schools used national test results showed that blame teachers for poor performance is a strong sentiment in the internal handling of school results. Avoiding such negative effects is a sociotechnical skill much needed for making information about results valid for the quality improvement that, at least formally, is expressed as the

purpose (Mausethagen et al. 2016). Another example, taken from the municipality of Lillehammer, shows that the school administration was quite willing to use test results from allegedly poorly performing schools, in a highly unethical manner, with no respect for directives and restrictions issued by the Directorate on the use and abuse of statistical information in order to promote a process of consolidation of schools (Nordkvelle 2016).

DEPROFESSIONALIZING TEACHERS

One remarkable effect of this change in curriculum writing is that “teacher” and “teaching” have almost vanished from the curricular texts. The fading out of the teacher from the texts started in the 1980s and by 1997 these terms were practically absent in the curricular texts (Haugsbakk and Nordkvelle 2007). The curriculum texts are now almost entirely using “learn”, “learning” and “learners” which has changed the rhetoric entirely towards a “learnification” of the language about schooling. This is wholly consistent with the ideas of a market-oriented educational policy (Biesta 2004, 2006). Biesta claims that in many countries the drive towards a neo-liberal discourse and market models will inevitably lead to a reduction of teachers’ work to technical and instrumental questions, and that the matter of accountability will push them yet further in the direction of strategic action instead of maintaining a holistic responsibility for the student. This echoes Hoskin’s explanation of “Goodhart’s Law” that every measure which becomes a target becomes a bad measure in light of this phenomenon: “But it does so, I suggest, because it is the inevitable corollary of that invention of modernity: accountability” (Hoskin 1996, p.265).

Another dimension of this discourse is the repeated mantra that teachers are insufficiently qualified for their work, and in dire need of further education, particularly in the school subjects that are tested in the national program. In 2016 the Ministry escalated the formal level of required specialization in the pedagogical content training. Without proper consultation with the concerned parties, and by means of an administrative

requirement, the formal requirements were “doubled” overnight. All of a sudden thousands of teachers formally unqualified for the job of teaching Norwegian, English or Math was made formally incompetent. The market orientation is evident in the dearth of job advertisements for teachers in religion, music or art. All positions are for teachers with above minimum training in their mother tongue, English and Math (Skiseid 2015).

Norwegian teacher unions have consistently resisted the implementation of the ideas of MBO and outcomes based curricula. Secretary Hernes was, according to Telhaug, the politician who broke down the “iron-triangle” of teachers managing the school system from all sides: as teachers in the schools, in administration and as politicians or policy-makers (Telhaug 1994). Harsh policies from the Ministry altered the working routines of teachers in the late 1980s, compelling them to spend more time in collective planning. Teacher unions became more militant and resented the early experiments of external assessment of schools, and went from a position of a gentle corporative partner to a critical and more subversive one. The spelling out of the new curriculum in 2006 was also interpreted as an attack on the professional identity of teachers. And the strongest blow, as the unions saw it, was when the employer responsibility was transferred to the municipalities from the state in 2004. Repeatedly, the unions want to reinstate the State as their counterpart as employer. The reason for that can be the experiences from the Conservatively governed municipality of Sandefjord.

In the municipality of Sandefjord the Conservative government ordered its teachers to reinstall what the teachers interpreted as a grading system from Grade 1. A group of teachers refused to follow the orders, rejecting them as illegitimate and unlawful. Now, in their guise as employees, these teachers were in effect fired. The union provided legal support and saved their jobs, but the incident attracted national attention in the press. First and foremost it has become an eloquent example of a right-wing interpretation of the correct practice of accountability at a local level. Sandefjord also has a record of using its local authority to espouse ideas of grandeur, claiming their idea was to develop the “best school in Norway”. It appears that similar statements have been posted from other

municipalities, predominantly in urban municipalities around the Oslofjord (Marsdal 2014). It goes without saying that the Oslo municipality has claimed that position, as has Drammen, another large city near Oslo. This trend is indicative of how municipal authorities now think of becoming “best” and this in turn has given local politicians a sense of “racing”. Results from the national tests are widely cited in the press, and the individual results of schools likewise. With the latest “innovation” from the central statistical agency, a more precise instrument, now accounting for social background gives an “authentic” impression of what each school contributes to a student’s learning. The tests, initially introduced as “low stake” - inasmuch as they were intended to guide teachers and schools to improve their teaching, has now, in many municipalities been turned into a “high stakes” issue. In an interview in 2011 the Secretary of Education, Kristin Halvorsen said that this focus on school results was way off the mark. Further, the designers of the national tests in Norwegian complained that journalists were covering these issues as “sport events” (Frønes et.al. 2012).

DISCUSSION

There appears to be agreement among researchers on the matter of centralization or decentralization. Skinningsrud (2014) and others have underlined the fact that Norway has undergone a number of shifts in the management of education during the past half century or so, and that the indicators of being the one or other have been confusingly mixed. Decentralization in terms of transferring tasks and decisions in many areas has unquestionably occurred, and a number of researchers demonstrate what Skinningsrud claims: the power over decisions has remained with the central authority thanks to a refined and yet very visible system of control that monitors how local levels comply with the centrally issued given objectives. This is consistent with Archer’s claims that no governing elite will voluntarily abandon a centralized system of education (Archer 1984, p.200).

While the Ministry closed down “Forsøksrådet”, counting 42 persons, because it produced too much disturbance in the education system in 1982, we now have developed a system of central administration outside the ministry in the “Educational Directorate,” with a staff of about 300, with the stated responsibility for development of kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools. In addition, the “Center for ICT in education,” another State agency numbering 80 people, a network of special education institution called “Statped,” whose responsibility it is to support municipalities in special education, numbering 748 employees, 10 centers for particular areas such as reading, writing, math, science, second language, numbering a total of 271 persons. In addition, the Directorate make lavish funds available for projects aimed to support schools, such as “The Principal School,” “Lower Secondary in development,” and “Evaluation for learning”. We can ask polemically: If decentralization has been important, why are the tasks covered by the directorate and its subdivisions not left to the counties and municipalities?

It is Skinningsrud’s contention that the Norwegian educational system, unaffected by the political inclination (or ‘color’) of the government, and despite the intentions expressed, still functions as a centralized system. Her analysis suggests that the government maintains its management by means of objectives, through the modernized management system, in order to secure the policy outlined by the Parliament and Government, a policy that is inextricably linked to values such as unity and equity. Consequently, if space for increased freedom of method is given to the local authority, control is not decentralized in terms of real autonomy and self-determination in keeping with what would happen in a decentralized system. Even if we see a marked tendency to move away from a unified understanding of hierarchies and organizations, this in fact weakens the influence of the teacher profession, while reinforcing the power of the central government.

The main question concerning the centralization or decentralization discourse is to understand the empirical data and how we can assess one thing to be one or another. Archer’s theory deals with acting structures and processes in all types of national educational systems, and Skinningsrud’s

spotlight of attention is on three dimensions: unity, differentiation and specialization. A centralized system moves towards more unity, intensively by urging the national policy to be brought to the doorstep of every school and to the mind of every student, and extensively, by trying to reach every school nationwide. A centralized system will also show a very small degree of differentiation, e.g., the teaching professions will experience only limited autonomy in designing the learning environments, seeking alliances with local partners etc., changing examinations or curricula etc. A unified and standardized system will potentially generate discontent in certain groups, and stimulate the establishment of private schools, such as can be seen in the exponential growth in Montessori schools in Norway. It will also counter tendencies to specialization. This was very strongly demonstrated in the reform of Upper Secondary Schools in the mid-1990s when more than hundred specialized subjects were shrunken to 13.

Researchers on New Public Management in Norway also point at the program's internal inconsistency (Christensen and Lægreid 2003, Veggeland 2010). The good intentions of allowing lower levels of management become involved increases the risk of the organization deviating from its initial course. This will motivate either positive or negative responses, which only can be imposed after assessment by means of controls or tests. The dilemma, or even double-bind situation in which the municipalities find themselves consist in being "liberated" to influence what schools teach and perform, and being measured by standardized tests within very strict parameters: Damned if you do, damned if you don't. On one hand, most traits associated with NPM have been introduced. The extensive use of budgets and financial control, and expounding an economic rhetoric, using terms like production, input/output, system performance, establishing competition as a driving force between schools, municipalities, and monitoring the effects of input factors, hands-on management and explicit standards for acceptable performance are all consistent with NPM (Solhaug 2011). Telhaug called this the "economic knowledge regime" (Telhaug and Mediås 2003).

In a seminal study of Norwegian curricula published in 1980, Tangerud (1980) convincingly argued that the national curriculum

espoused three different ideologies expressing socialist values, liberalist views and a middle ground, or rather a social-democrat conception. Aasen, Prøitz and Sandberg have expanded this to four knowledge regimes (Aasen et. al. 2014, 723): the market-liberalist regime, the social-democratic knowledge regime; a social-critical knowledge regime; and last, a cultural-conservative knowledge regime. Their analysis conclude that they can “identify political elements that provide evidence of a conservative restoration, but will also recognize elements or “artifacts” pointing in quite different directions, indicating continuity, and renewal in social democratic progressivism.”

One such conflicting item is that the local strategies for complying with the centrally given policies are interpreted differently, and it appears that there is room for interpreting “management by objectives” more loosely while basing these on a professional ethos. Knudsen (2015) suggested that the knowledge regime of Sogn and Fjordane County differed from that of the Oslo region. He inferred that the eagerness to comply with government policies was stronger when the value system could be called market-liberalist.

Britt Ulstrup Engelsen, the most renowned exponent of curriculum studies, discussed the latest green paper (NOU 2015: 8 *Fremtidens skole*) (The future school) regarding the future of our educational system and finds that the rhetoric of control and restrictive supervision continues apace (Engelsen 2016). She asks whether the government is serious about invoking creative partnership with the teaching profession in doing the hard work of teaching the young generation when such a spirit of suspicion and lack of trust prevails with the teachers.

We have seen that different interpretations of a management by objectives are at play here. We have noted that the US tradition are long accustomed to understanding objectives as matters of behavior and subordination and instrumentalism. This is at odds with a tradition that understands objectives as intentions and which invites students into a dialogic process of deciding what the educational outcome should be.

CONCLUSION

It seems that a New Public Management has been successfully introduced in Norwegian educational management. Management by objectives has to be a central principle in order to function well. We have argued that this approach is inherent in educational management. The journey the strategy took via the United States, and how it subsequently developed via the curious path of Tyler, Taylor and - Tyler again - is just one example of designing management by objectives. In the pedagogical tradition of European descent, there exists a very clear alternative. This tradition has now been cast aside and replaced by a technical and instrumental knowledge regime, which is much more in line with a market liberal mindset. In spite of ongoing resistance from teacher unions, the political parties appear to have accepted the principles with little consideration. Both socialist-democrat governments and conservative have implemented NPM policies without questioning the differences in how decentralization works, or whether it supports or undermines democratic participation in the development of the school. The question is whether the drive towards internationally driven curriculum process will continue, or if “red, yellow and green” might be turned back to “red, white and blue”, expressing the national sentiments and traditions.

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