

Danish Primary Education Accountability – a conceptual and organizational journey of accountability practices in Danish history of education

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Abstract: In this paper we focus on primary education accountability as a concept and as an organisational practice in Danish history of education. Contemporary policy studies of education often address questions of accountability, but the manifestations of school accountability differ significantly between different national settings. Furthermore, accountability measures and practices actually change the ways and means by which societies approach their cultural edifices in general and their educational systems in particular. In other words accountability measures and practices tend to have a disciplining effect on its surroundings. Hence there is a need to clarify the characteristics and traits connected with the concept – both at an analytical level and at a practice level. One way of approaching this endeavour is to turn to the history of education, because the discourse of accountability actually incorporates numerous historical antecedents, technologies, and arguments.

The paper presents the case of Denmark using the key analytical questions of school accountability put forth by Joseph C. Burke as a starting point; namely “who is accountable to whom, for what purposes, for whose benefit, by which means and with which consequences” (Burke, 2005, p. 2). Our focus areas are the diachronic legal framings of school accountability since early modernity, the differing practices of school accountability at different administrative levels in the same period and the interplay between these entities where the complexities of transfer and translation are pivotal.

Empirically the paper is based on the relevant body of laws, the archival sources of the Ministry of education found in the Danish National Archive and the archival sources of the Regional Archive of Northern Jutland as well as existing research in the field.

Introduction – accountability as a concept

In this article we focus on primary education accountability as a concept and as an organisational practice in Danish history of education, with a specific focus on public compulsory schooling. Contemporary policy studies of education often address questions of accountability, but the manifestations of school accountability differ significantly between different national settings (Ryan & Feller 2009: 172). Furthermore, most international accountability analysts agree that accountability measures and practices actually change the ways and means by which societies approach their cultural edifices in general and their educational systems in particular (Hopmann 2008: 422). One example is the emergence of a strong preoccupation with numbers and quantifiable variables – a

tendency that has engulfed public sectors across the industrialised world, not least as a consequence of the New Public Management wave and a general inspiration taken from the business world. With Foucault one might say that accountability measures and practices has a disciplining effect – depending on the agents, organisation and techniques used (Foucault 1977). Hence there is a need to clarify the characteristics and traits connected with the concept – both at an analytical level and at a practice level. One way of approaching this endeavour is to turn to the history of education, because the discourse of accountability actually incorporates numerous historical antecedents, technologies, and arguments.

Accountability means to be taken into account for activities, whether such activities are of ethical, moral, economical or other character. In a broad sense accountability means to hold someone responsible for something. In public governance it points to the state holding its institutions responsible; thus accountability pertains to the relationship between state and institution. Such relationships are complex and they often involve the possibility of conflicting interests between the state, authorities and politicians on the one side and institutions, employees and citizens on the other side.

Having its etymological origin in an Anglo-Norman context (Bovens, 2007), the concept of accountability has no precise equivalent in Danish language as indicated by the Danish evaluation researcher H. K. Krogstrup.¹ She describes its meaning in terms of “linking performance and evaluation” and related to the activity of holding authorities responsible according to performance criteria (Krogstrup 2007: 39; Rist xxxx).

Ryan and Feller define accountability as:

(...) a political and legal concept. It denotes the responsibility of an organization or individual (i.e., an agent) to perform within the specified boundaries set by some higher political authority (i.e., a principal) and to report to and justify one's actions to this authority (Ryan & Feller 2009, pp. 173).

Both Krogstrup's and Ryan & Feller's definitions are very much depending on the specific context it is referring to; within the context of education, which is in focus here, it might refer to judgements based on different kinds of documentation on the progress of pupils' or students' knowledge, skills and competencies and to the question whether schools and teachers in general meet the requirements put up for them. In a wider sense contextual perspectives referring to specific characteristics are relevant in discussions of the concept. Of such could be mentioned the historical and cultural context and the form of government.

Tracing the roots of the concept of accountability, it seems both historically and semantically to be related to governance and to the use of bookkeeping and thus to counting (Bovens 2007: 448). Such thinking in governance of authorities holding their employees accountable on different kinds of agreements and performances can be

¹ It is not included in dictionaries of the Danish language.

identified in historical documents at least from the beginning of the first millennium (Bovens 2007: 448). Diachronically the meaning of the concept has differentiated and broadened significantly, but the element of counting seems a recurring characteristic. The rise of democracy has added the meaning of citizens holding authorities and public service officials accountable for their activities, practices and results and the neoliberal era – with its promotion of public sector marketization and introduction of New Public Management – has added performance indicators as an accountability measure for governing institutions and even individuals (Bovens, 2007, pp. 449; Ryan & Feller 2009, pp. 173). All of these contexts contain unmistakable elements of quantification and counting, which certainly is also the case in contemporary educational accountability practices such as national tests and the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA). But at the same time the role of democracy cannot be overrated. All forms of democracy configure a specific relation between stakeholders at different levels of the societal pyramid. Following the high-profiled founders of the folk high school movement Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) and Christen Kold (1816-1870) in the 19th century and the influential democracy theorist Hal Koch (1904-1963) in the 20th century, Denmark has a strong tradition for consensus through dialogue. This is generally known as deliberative democracy and it highlights the need for a free public discussion and formation of public opinion (Togeby et al 2004). This is important in relation to the configurations and unfolding of accountability because it frames the setting of accountability measures and practices which will become evident in the historical analysis to follow.

We have now identified a couple of central characteristics in the concept of accountability, namely the element of counting and the immense importance ascribed to the historical and cultural context in general and the form of government in particular. However, in order to work meaningfully with the concept it is necessary to develop an operationalized definition able to cut across historical and cultural idiosyncrasies; a definition that ensures that we are even analysing the same phenomenon in diversified settings and cases. To that end Joseph C. Burke is pointing to some all-encompassing and universal elements when he defines accountability as: *“who is accountable to whom, for what purposes, for whose benefit, by which means, and with which consequences”* (Burke 2005: 2)

To make the methodological implications clear the definition stipulates an empirical focus on:

A relationship in which accountability activities makes sense

A purpose

Someone's benefit

A means

A consequence

We find this definition and analytical conceptualisation useful for our analytical endeavour in this article because it captures and operationalizes the concept of accountability with a specific focus on the relational aspects of accountability making it compatible with analysing historical practices where the actual term 'accountability' is absent. For instance the dimension referring to 'relationship' makes it possible to discuss specific contextual factors, such as forms of government, and its impact on the practice of accountability. More specifically it is about the distribution of authority between stakeholders (i.e. state, municipality, church, school leaders, teachers, parents, and perhaps children). This question seems to be of importance to fully understand the practice of accountability in a historical perspective in Denmark, which again serves the purpose of gaining a better understanding of contemporary school accountability and its disciplining effects.

School accountability under the reign of absolute monarchy 1660-1849

Ever since primary schooling evolved institutionally in Denmark in the middle ages, legislation has reflected the authoritative relationship between the state, the church and the school, and the institutionalisation of various control systems. Following the reformation in 1536 a new church law [kirkeordinans] was instituted in 1537/1539. This new piece of legislation also covered schooling of children as conducted by the religious teaching managed by the church. It worked for centuries as the backbone of education legislation making it a valid starting point for this historical analysis.

The church law instituted a system of control, in which representatives of the church played a key role. Thus, for at least four centuries, Danish educational authorities kept control with schools and their administrations through inspections performed by or involving church officials in different ways (Skovgaard-Petersen 1986) (Karlshøj 1997: 123).

The 1537/1539 church laws framed the management, content and system of control of Danish primary schools and described clearly how such control systems should be practiced, by whom and for which purposes. The relationship between authorities, employees (teachers) and citizens was related to a control system with a specific hierarchical structure emanating from the king and involving the whole range of stakeholders from the bishops and the nobility to superintendents and rural deans to school masters, and to children and their parents.

The system can best be characterized as a one-way, top-down system where the higher echelons exerted authority over the lower echelons without negotiation. In the lowest position of this hierarchy was the school master [skolemester] who was responsible for the teaching of the children. His role is explicitly described in the church law: "Capable and qualified school masters to skilfully educate youth in every way are assigned in market towns and villages"². Above the school master was the superintendent, who had "the

² [Den danske Kirkeordinans af 1539, Kundgjort af Kongen] [*Der beskikkes gode, egnede Skolemestre i Købstæderne og de smaa Byer, som med stor Dygtighed kan oplære Ungdommen i alle Maader*]

inspection with all schools and should know how religion and other subjects are being taught, for this purpose he should assign school masters who he and the rural dean have examined³”.

Thus, the superintendents were tasked with the inspection of schools regarding both religion and other subjects together with the rural deans. The religious role of schooling was described very explicitly in formulations about the superintendents and the rural deans, whose obligations were to “Make sure that everything is done properly and rightfully⁴”.

Parents and children were generally subjects to a punitive regime where offences, such as absence from school or impertinence, were punished by the authorities. Sources reveal how inspectors criticised teaching in the beginning of 18th century saying about the children that they found “the majority very rude and ignorant”⁵. The hierarchical nature of the system is clearly visible in the 1707 act of inspection regarding Copenhagen, which states that: “the school masters should be examined by the rural dean before they could be entrusted to teach in schools”.⁶

Schoolmasters were clearly subject to the authority of the rural dean and the vicar and they were obliged to “conduct public examinations of youth in the churches as often as they are instructed by the rural dean or the vicar”⁷. If they did not it was with the consequence of “*forfeiting their public office*”⁸. The law and thus also the hierarchy of authority was enforced simply by dismissing employees who did not conform to the law. The church and the state shared a strong interest in the youth learning the right Christian faith and learnt to know their places in society. Religion was both the power base of the church but it was also the justification for lawfulness and sticking to your knitting, which was in the interest of the absolute monarchy.

3 *Tilsyn med alle Skoler og vide hvorledes der læres baade i Religion og i de andre boglige Kunster; og han skal hertil ansætte Skolemestre, som han selv tillige med Provsten og de bedste i Raadet har overhørt. (Ibid.)*

4 “*holde Kirkens Tjenere ved deres Embede og se til, at alle Ting alle Vegne gaar ordentlig og ret til.*” (Ibid.)

5 “*den største deel meget grove og vankundige*”. Forordning om tilsyn med skoleholderne i København, July 4, 1707. Magistraten i Kiøbenhafn 1707.

6 [skrive- og regneskoler af magistraten skal forordnes og skolemesterne af sognepræsten overhøres, før dem nogen saadan skole betroes]. (Om Tilsyn med Skoleholderne. Magistraten i Kiøbenhafn, July 4, 1707).

7 [saa ofte til offentlige examina i kirkerne med deris ungdom at møde, som de af provsten eller sognepræsterne dertil bliver advaret og kaldet.]

8 [deris embeders fortabelse] (Om Tilsyn med Skoleholderne. Magistraten i Kiøbenhafn. July 4, 1707).

Thus, authorities stated the role and importance of religion regularly and it was clearly emphasized in the body of educational laws. This served the function of the state and church knowing that a new teacher was able to impart the “true” version of Christianity without any heretical detours.

Any offences against the law meant punishment which could be either a fine or even imprisonment,

Anyone acting against this [...] should the first time be fined twenty Rdl.⁹, second time forty Rdlr [...] and if he makes further offences on the same, he will be sentenced to prison [på vand og brød (water and bread)] for some time by authorities.¹⁰

School teachers were obliged to teach a specific curriculum of specified subjects (such as religion, reading, writing, math etc.), but they had also obligations concerning control of pupils attending school, and this matter was regarded as just as important. For instance, the 1739 act on rural education (Forordning om skolerne på landet i Danmark, og hvad degnene og skoleholderne derfor må nyde) points out that:

“If any child is absent from school, [...] he should immediately and as soon as he recognize their absence, inform the parents and call for legitimate explanation [lovlig forfald]. (Instruks for degne og skolemestre på landet i Danmark, 1739)

Regarding the enforcement and punishment of children the act stated that teachers in general were expected not to use violence but instead punishments such as detention. However, it was up to the subjective whim of the teacher whether corporal punishment was justified. The law said that:

He must not with strokes and knocks severely harm the children; but he should in a permissive way seek to correct their errors. If someone is found lazy in learning, he must keep such a one sitting longer in school than the rest (...). If his admonitions and permissive punishment of children, keeping them longer in school than the others, does not help, he must inform their parents who should then, in his presence, with a rod punish their child according to his offence. But for blatant ungodliness, swearing, lying, backtalk and deliberate insubordination, committed by children in school, they should immediately be punished with the rod in the presence of the others (...).¹¹

⁹ Monetary standard

¹⁰ Forordning om danske Skoler og Skoleholdere i Kbhvn, 1716

¹¹ Instruks for degne og skolemestre på landet i Danmark, 1739 [Guidelines for deans and school masters in rural areas in Denmark, 1739] [Han maa ingenlunde med Hug og Slag ilde medhandle Børnene; men

The use of corporal punishment by teachers and other authorities in school was adopted in educational legislation throughout the 19th century, but after World War I with the rise of the progressive education movement an intense public debate took place and the use of corporal punishment was gradually reduced; especially in progressive schools (Nørgaard 2005: 109ff.). Corporal punishment in Danish schools was finally abolished in 1967, although Copenhagen schools had seen the abolishment already in 1952 (Nørgaard 2005: 112ff.).

But it was not just parents and children who were subject to punishment as a consequence of not living up to what was expected of them. Teachers were closely monitored as well. An interesting example stems from 1754 where a teacher, Andreas Holgersen Møller, – who was also the parish clerk – faced 31 serious accusations ranging from drunkenness, trying to pick a fight, swearing to fouling himself. As accusation number 23 is listed that the teacher has not fulfilled his task of teaching the youth, and as accusation number 24 that he has inappropriately closed the school. Witnesses declared the accusations to be true and added that the teacher had even been drunk in the classroom.¹² **The teacher was sentenced...**

Following the work of the great school commission working since 1789, the Danish public school system [Folkeskolen] saw the light of day in 1814, which meant the institutionalisation of compulsory education. In the field of education system inspection King Frederik VI (1768-1839) had mobilised bishops, deans and vicars as inspectors of the public school system, thus continuing the strong ties between religion and education in Denmark. At the municipal level schools were governed by the school directorate consisting of the dean [provsten], the county governor [amtmanden] and an elected member. The directorate had inspectorate authority of the local schools, it had the right to appoint teachers and it served as a mediator between local school authorities (school commissions) and the ministry. Every year the inspectorate sent an account about the local schools' conditions to the ministry (Skovgaard-Petersen 2000: 622). As such, the most potent element in the 1814 school inspection system was the unannounced rural dean inspections (Skovgaard-Petersen 1986: 53). According to the 1814 education act (§42)

§. 42.(about the inspection by the deans)

deres Feil skal han paa lemfældigste Maade søge at rette. Findes nogen u-flittig i at lære, da lader han saadan en sidde længer i Skolen end de andre [...]. Vil hans Formaninger og den maadelige Straf, han lader Børnene udstaae, med at sidde længer i Skolen end de andre, intet hielpe, siger han det til deres Forældre, af hvilke, eller at ham i deres Nærværelse, de da med Riis, efter deres Forseelses Beskaffenhed, straffes. Men for aabenbare U-gudelighed med Banden, Lyven, Skielden og forsetlig Traadsighed og U-lydighed, som Børnene i Skolen begaaer, derfor straffer han dem strax med Riis i de andre Børns Paasyn (...).]

¹² Regional Archive for Northern Jutland, Nørre og Harre herreders provstearkiv [Nørre and Harre shire's vicar archive], justitsprotokollen [the administration of justice protocol] 1701-1786, pages 118b-147b.

Biskopperne skulle fremdeles have nøie Tilsyn med samtlige Skoler i de dem anbetroede Stifter og være pligtige til at undersøge disses Tilstand, saavel ved deres Visitatser som ved enhver anden Leilighed. De skulle ogsaa være berettigede til fra Amtsskoledirectionerne og tillige igiennem disse fra Sognenes Skolecommissioner at indhente alle de Efterretninger, som i Anledning heraf maatte ansees fornødne.

Iøvrigt bør de vaage over, at Skolevæsenet i Overeensstemmelse med disse Vore allernaadigste Forskrifter fremmes, og at mødende Hindringer efter Muelighed ryddes af Veien. Saa skulle de og paa deres Visitatser overhøre Ungdommen, og til Vort Danske Cancellie indsende deres Beretninger om, hvorledes de have befundet enhver Skoles Ungdom underviist.

In conclusion, school accountability through this period was exerted in a system where parents were accountable to the teacher (who could be the vicar or the parish clerk), and had the obligation of their children attending school and have the right behaviour especially regarding religion and behaviour in general. The authority of keeping the supervision of the vicars and teachers was ascribed to the rural deans and the bishop who had the authority of engagements and dismissals of teachers and an obligation of keeping inspections. As above mentioned such decisions had the character of being top-down and one-way, decisions of the authorities superior in the hierarchy was not considered a subject of discussion or negotiation. In the form of government of the time with monarchy based on a close relationship between state and church, the king was the formal head of the church. Such system had the purpose of maintaining the control and power of the king and sustaining the absolute monarchy.

School accountability in the nation state 1849-1990

The second revolutionary wave in Europe in 1848 made significant impact in Denmark in the following decades: the democratic state emerged and the control over the educational system became framed by legislation in new ways gradually putting an effective end to the role of the church. At the same time, the conflicting interests of stakeholders as well as the complexity of the structure and organisation of school manifested itself in discussions about administrative systems and governance for instance related to the introduction of democracy.

In June 1849 Denmark had a new constitution introducing democracy and abolishing the absolute monarchy. The opportunity of having influence on political decisions caused expanded political debate of matters of public interest such as the school and its content and governance. From 1849 Danish teacher and politician D. E. Rugaard published a journal, "Den Nordiske Folkeskole" ("The Nordic Basic School"), in which he often addressed such questions. For instance he raised a critical question in the first issue:

The immediate superior of the school teacher, of whom he is completely dependent and obliged to obey, is the parish vicar and those of the parish peasants who are parish council members. (...) Starting with the vicar – is he competent to handle this control?

I could mention several damaging consequences of this control, for example that it deteriorates the required respect for the teacher among the peasants (...). But it would lead too far to name all the damaging consequences inflicted by the unfortunate local control; nor is it my opinion that the vicar and the parish peasants should be robbed of all rights to control the teacher as such, I just believe that this control system should organized in a different way¹³

13 "Skolelærerens nærmeste foresatte, af hvem han er aldeles afhængig og hvem han er nødt til at lystre, er sognets præst og de af sognets bønder, der ere sogneforstandere. [...] For nu først at tale om præsten – er han så kompetent til at føre den kontrol?" (Rugaard 1849, pp. 6). "Jeg kunne nævne flere skadelige følger af denne lokale kontrol, f.eks. at den [...] nedbryder den for læreren højst fornødne anseelse hos bønderne [...]. Men det ville blive for vidtløftigt at opregne alle de skadelige følger, som den uheldige lokale kontrol drager med sig. Det er naturligvis ikke min mening, at skolelæreren skulle unddrages al kontrol; det er heller ikke min mening, at præsten og sognets bønder skulle berøves al ret til at kontrollere læreren som sådan, jeg mener blot at dette kontrolvæsen bør indrettes på en anden måde"(Rugaard 1849, pp. 10)

With the 1867 municipal reform act the inspection of the teacher and the daily teaching was given to the school commission (consisting of the parish vicar (chairman) and two members elected by the parish council), most markedly expressed with the (**overhøring**) of examinations (Nørr 1994: 349).

Local school inspection was shared between the municipal council (the parish council in the rural areas and the city council in urban areas) and the school commission. Regional inspection authority was placed with the school directorate. A central task for the inspection authorities was the filling of teacher positions. The municipal council recommended three candidates for a position and the school directorate or the bishop decided on which candidate to choose. The bishop decided on the positions where a dean had formerly been employed and the school directorate on all other positions (Nørr 2003: 34f.). Normally the ministry would not interfere unless the process resulted in a stalemate.

Although strong forces had pushed for an abolition of the clergy's role in the inspection of schools prior to the passing of the 1867 act, economic arguments for retaining the clerical inspection system had prevailed. Employing ministerial inspectors would cost a considerable amount whereas the vicars were there for free (Nørr 2003: 36f.). This observation testifies to wide degree of pragmatism in the organisation of school inspections although the clergy and conservative forces had clearly fought against the proposed separation of school and church. Their main argument was that a separation would lead to the separation between church and state; a highly controversial issue at the time. From an analytical perspective the union between church and state still produced mutual benefits vis-à-vis governing the country in general and remote areas in particular. But it also meant that the school inspection system reproduced a significant focus on the proficiency in Christianity to some extent neglecting other subjects. Religion still played a significant role as the foundation of values and sense of normality shared by both the state and church and furthermore the state was not yet able to present a rich administrative net of control of its own matching that of the church.

Since the 1814 education act it was the vicar's duty to inspect all schools in his parish every fortnight. However, the inspection frequency varied considerably between parishes and the historical sources contain numerous complaints to the ministry from parish councils [sogneråd] that the vicar did not live up to his inspectional duties and from teachers that the vicar inspected the schools too often causing disruption in the teaching progress (Nørr 1994: 350). These variations and the fact that the ministry did not intervene significantly shows that vicars in practice had a wide degree of latitude for deciding which schools to inspect and how often. This system significantly confirmed clerical influence in schools. The second leg in the clerical school inspection regime was the inspections made by the dean. Even before the 1814 education act deans had been obliged to visit every school in their deaneries every year. But as with the vicars the inspection frequency varied. In the shire of Hornum-Fleskum, just south of Aalborg in Northern Jutland, dean N.V.B. Albrechtsen inspected his deanery schools every second year. In 1870 he inspected 16 schools and in 1871 14 schools (Nørr 1994: 360). Prior to the inspections deans required information from the schools be sent in advance, such as pupil name lists, parents' names, age, school days, absence, and teacher's remarks. As chairman of the school directorate deans exerted significant influence over schools, both in administrative matters and in curriculum matters. The third and most powerful leg was the bishop inspections. Bishops were required to inspect schools every three years, but only very few bishops were able to meet that demand.

A very telling example about the relations between the bishop and the school directorate represented by the county dean stems from the island of Bornholm in the late 19th century. In July 1885 Bishop Bruun Juul Fog (1819-1896) made an inspection visit to Østermarie Nordre school. The dean had been rather critical towards the local teacher who was an adherent of Grundtvig. He had noted his proficiency as “poor” and the children’s educational progress as “middling”; which was almost a damning disparagement (Skovmand 1973: 60). When the Bishop arrived the dean completely changed his stance. The teacher’s proficiency was described as “impeccable” and the children’s educational progress as “satisfactory”. According to education historian Roar Skovmand the background for this change is not available in the archives but in an interview made in 1964 with the teacher’s son. During a visit to Østermarie he had met one of his father’s old pupils, Emil Hansen, who had informed him of an inspection made by the dean in November 1882. The dean had expressed clear discontent that the teacher did not have the children learn the catechism by heart. It came to a sharp quarrel and at the end of the inspection the dean had threatened the teacher with dismissal if he did not obey the dean’s orders. Emil Hansen further recollects that the bishop after his inspection noted that the children from Østermarie Nordre school had proven to be the best taught children in all of the parish schools. However, high rates of pupil absence indicate that the dean had some local backing in his critical views about the teacher. The example shows that the bishop exerted significant authority in the school inspection system and he sent out guidelines to the deans prior to his inspections, which Roar Skovmand describes as “extremely thorough” (Skovmand 1973: 60). But the example is also very telling about significant lines of demarcation in the Danish school system, lines intimately intertwined with religious differences between progressive Christianity represented by Grundtvig and conservative Christianity represented by the majority of bishops. In 1856 Grundtvig himself stated in parliament:

*The vicars in relation to the educational system are usually a kind of their own, because they, with very few exceptions, are to used to the traditional lane that they are unable to move to neither right nor left, or as far as their influence goes, will allow that anyone moves.*¹⁴

But it was not only the clergy who inspected schools. Two ministerial inspectors in gymnastics [Gymnastikinspektøren] and singing [sanginspektøren] respectively had as their duty to inspect teacher training colleges [seminarier], urban and rural public schools.

14 “(...) Provsterne netop i henseende til Skolevæsenet ere i Reglen et ganske eget Folkefærd, thi de ere, med meget faa Undtagelser, så tilkjørte på den gamle Bane, at de hverken røre sig til højre eller venstre eller, saavidt deres Indflydelse går, ville tillade, at Nogen rører sig.” Rigsdagstidende [Danish Parliamentary Proceedings], Forhandlinger paa Folketinget [Parliamentary negotiations], 7. Session [7th session] (1855-56) sp.2156. 45. Meeting held February 2, 1856.

Apart from inspections teaching and learning were also scrutinized on the basis of two annual examinations. Examinations were held in the presence of the school commission. The children were given grades according to their oral performance¹⁵. The examination provided the commission with an opportunity for scrutinizing the teacher. The school commission protocols contain an abundance of evidence that the commissions held subsequent meetings about examination results and teacher performance. Special attention was called when it was a temporary teacher hoping for a tenure track position. Copies of the examination grades were forwarded to the schools directorate (Nørr 1994: 370). The examination grades would carry importance for the individual pupil's promotion to the next grade. As to the children's seating in the class room the teacher had crucial influence, since not only examination grades but also the everyday proficiency level of children and behaviour were taken into account. Even social ranking would also carry an impact on children's class room seating (Nørr 1994: 373).

In 1899 a new education act was passed which meant that local curriculums had to be approved by the Ministry of Education every 10 years (Skovgaard-Petersen 2000: 619f.) In urban schools the head teacher (from 1946 called the school inspector) was responsible for the teachers adhering to the curriculum. In a circular dated October 5 1900 the Ministry made it clear, that the head teacher was to call a meeting with the teachers to negotiate pupils promotion the next class, the distribution of teaching hours, the curriculum and other school issues (Skovgaard-Petersen 2000: 629). In rural schools teachers were themselves responsible (Ibid. 632).

According to the 1899 act local school authorities could recommend a teacher for discharge, if they found the teacher incompetent. In such cases the case went through the school directorate to the Minister who would make the final decision. However, the teachers called for the establishment of teacher councils – they were established in the 1904 act which increased teacher influence. In 1908 a new law was passed meaning that the school commission and the municipal council – with a qualified majority in each assembly – could discharge a teacher without ministerial interference (§8)(Ibid. 631). Between 1908 and 1934 approximately 50 teachers were discharged using §8, between 1934 and 1949 the number was 24.

The disagreement about teacher job security reflected a central issue in the vision of the school: should it be a local institution where the teacher was dependent on parental wishes and local employers? Or was the school a societal organisation with the state guaranteeing against capriciousness and teacher job insecurity? (Ibid. 631).

In 1941 a circular was released in which the ministry stated that: "no attempt to direct teaching in specific directions should not be made as long as the prescribed objectives are

15 Reglement for Almue- og Borgerskolevæsenet i Kjøbenhavn den 29de Julii 1814

attained¹⁶” (Bekendtgørelse om Maalet for Folkeskolens Undervisning, 24. maj 1941¹⁷). Thus the ministry claimed that that it would not ”give any guiding principles on how to teach within the frames of the act of the public school of May 18th 1937¹⁸” (Ibid.). The ministry would not give details about the content of each subject – only an overall frame – school and teacher freedom of method was adopted (Skovgaard-Petersen 2000: 636).

More analytical perspectives and concluding remarks to be inserted...

The 1933 and 1949 acts of inspectorate: county school inspectors and parents

In 1933 a new structure of keeping control with schools and introducing new governing bodies definitively ended the clerical inspection system. Instead responsibilities were taken over by the new office of county school inspector, of which the first were appointed in 1935 (Nørr 2003: 334ff.). The county school inspector ‘(...) is the School Directorate’s educational advisor. It is his task to supervise and be consultative for the schools belonging under the jurisdiction of the directorate (...)’ (§18 – the 1933 Act of Inspectorate). Two thirds of the newly appointed county school inspectors in 1935 were active in the teachers’ union (Karlshøj 1997: 127). Information about 12 of the 18 county schools inspectors’ political affiliations: 6 social liberal, 3 liberal, 1 citizen’s list, 1 common list, and 1 social democrat. The social liberals were obvious candidates of compromise.

However, the schools in Southern Jutland/Nordschleswig were governed according to a different legislative framework than the rest of Denmark. This was due to the special history of this area having been under German rule between 1864 and 1920. As a consequence of Germany’s defeat in World War I the area transferred back to Denmark and this meant that a new legislative framework had to be put into effect. One of the significant differences in this piece of legislation was within the area of school inspection. The most significant invention was the office of county school inspector (Nørr 2003: 43). The new office was tasked with frequent – and unannounced - inspections of schools on behalf of the school directorate as well as providing council as to the school system’s administration; especially in the transfer from German to Danish schooling (Nørr 2003: 43). It was this office that served as inspiration when county school inspectors were extended to the rest of Denmark with the 1933 act of inspection. But only in Southern Jutland/Nordschleswig was the inspector authorised to perform unannounced inspections and generally had more authority than the inspectors in the rest of the realm (Nørr 2003: 447). The reason for this difference was that many teachers feared the county school

16 ”der ikke bør gøres noget forsøg på at lede undervisningen ad bestemte baner, når blot det foreskrevne mål nås”

17 DPB http://www.dpb.dpu.dk/index.php?id=7190&tx_lfskolelov_pi1%5Blawid%5D=54&cHash=41b5871a879e60c46caef923ff4385

18 ”fremkomme med nogen rettesnor for, hvorledes de rammer skal udfyldes, som folkeskoleloven af 18. maj 1937 giver for folkeskolens undervisning”

inspector “(...) as an inspector, as a critic of teachers and a whip of new methods.”¹⁹ There was a local and regional fear of education system standardisation, which called for a certain level of pragmatism on the part of the county school inspector.²⁰ This observation is tied to the Danish local community foundation of public education... **deliberative democracy...**

The position as county school inspector called for “(...) tactfulness and human understanding. He must balance between encouragement and caution (...). He should not be one-track minded and not give direction, but kind supervision.”²¹

There was a general view among the county governors that “On the outside the position of county school inspector must be modest, but on the inside the school directorate can empower the inspector with any authority it sees fit and attach significance to his recommendations.”²²

The county school inspectors also had to deal with problems with local teachers. These were often rooted in problems of cooperation between the teacher and community or the teacher and the school commission or among teachers. Both the school authorities and the teachers often wanted the county school inspector to mediate. On March 24 1924 county school inspector N.J. Nielsen had a serious talk with the teacher in Nr. Hostrup because the school commission had complained that he had problems with showing up at the appropriate time in the morning and that he had sent children to buy him cigarettes during teaching hours (Nørr 2003: 203). When the talk did not help, the teacher and the school commission were summoned to a meeting in Aabenraa with the School directorate. The result was that the school commission would withdraw their complaint if the teacher would promise – with his signature – to apply for a position elsewhere. But when the teacher had not fulfilled his part of the bargain he was taken to task again in January 1930

19¹ Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, Meetings: minutes from meetings with the county school inspector, 1935-1942: Minutes from a meeting held in Parliament on behalf of the Ministry of Education October 2 1935 with participation of the Minister of Education, the County School Inspectors and the County Governors. The quote stems from the Permanent Secretary of Education, p. 2.

20¹ Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, Meetings: minutes from meetings with the county school inspector, 1935-1942: Minutes from a meeting held in Parliament on behalf of the Ministry of Education October 2 1935 with participation of the Minister of Education, the County School Inspectors and the County Governors, p. 6.

21¹ Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, Meetings: minutes from meetings with the county school inspector, 1935-1942: Minutes from a meeting held in Parliament on behalf of the Ministry of Education October 2 1935 with participation of the Minister of Education, the County School Inspectors and the County Governors, p. 11

22¹ Danish National Archive, Ministry of Education, Meetings: minutes from meetings with the county school inspector, 1935-1942: Minutes from a meeting held in Parliament on behalf of the Ministry of Education October 2 1935 with participation of the Minister of Education, the County School Inspectors and the County Governors, p. 14.

with the commission and the directorate. The commission pointed out that the teacher on November 18 1929 had come directly from the pub to the school appearing to be drunk. Another indication of his drunkenness had been that his jacket had lain on the ground outside the school the whole day. Another accusation made by the commission was that the teacher had been in a fight in the pub. However, the directorate did not take the accusation at face value. Since the county school inspector in his reports had found the teacher's teaching satisfactory the teacher was allowed to stay in his position (Nørr 2003: 204).

The county school inspector played the role of councillor with the authority following from years of teacher experience and general esteem. As is evident in the sources found in The Provincial Archive for Northern Jutland the inspector was tasked with taking a stance in most cases concerning schooling in the county including curriculum and teaching hours. The inspector would then give his recommendation to the school directorate of the ministry (if appropriate) for approval. It is important to note that the county school inspector was not the teacher's superior – he was an esteemed councillor.

The office of county school inspector was established to provide a more professional inspection authority able to cover the whole range of subjects as well as pedagogical and didactical issues as opposed to the clerical inspection system more occupied with teaching of Christianity and the pupil's Christian proficiencies.

But the 1933 act also described the authoritative hierarchy and organisation of the compulsory school system reflecting both democratic processes and the secular state. The church was only represented with a single member (a rural dean) in one of the committees, the school directorate, sorting directly under the Ministry of Education. The act also distinguishes between "Folkeskolen outside Copenhagen", "Folkeskolen in Copenhagen" and "urban schools". The administration differed a little within these three areas as pointed to in the comments beneath. At the national level authority and inspection naturally was held by the Ministry of Education. Beneath this level was the:

- School directorate (except from købstadskommunerne)
- School director (only Copenhagen)
- County school inspector (except from schools outside Copenhagen and not in market towns)
- School commission (except from schools in market towns)
- Municipal council
- School council
- Common teachers' council (in counties)
- Head of school
- Teachers' council

- Parents' council

The authorities and committees mentioned above had different responsibilities and authority according vis-à-vis supervision. The school commissions should keep control with school in general, with pupils attending schools and enforce the law. The democratic process is reflected in several statements and formulations framing the way accountability could be practiced. For instance the law says that the school commission makes decisions on teaching resources in “*negation* with the teachers’ council”.

The 1933 act of inspectorate formally introduced parents to the equation for the very first time. Parent councils became a possibility, but they were only mandatory in Copenhagen schools. Parent councils had the right to observe teaching, to call upon the school commission and to be heard in the hiring of new teachers. In the 1940s less than 10% of Danish schools had a parent council (Skovgaard-Petersen 2000: 634). The parent council kept control with the local school. Specifically it is described that the council should keep control with pupils being present enforce the legal framework for countering pupil absence from school. The parent council had the authority of fining parents for pupil non-attendance.

Example from a report about the inspection of physical education

1943

Gymnastikinspektionen

Idet jeg herved på ny fremsender vedlagte sag angående Gymnastikundervisningen ved Søften Skole, skal jeg herved tillade mig at foreslå, at undervisningsplanen ændres, så at alle elever i forskolen kan få undervisning i en for deres alder afpasset gymnastik med lege.

Allerbødigst xxxx

Til Undervisningsministeriet

The 1949 act of inspection specifically focused on extending parents’ influence in the School Council. At the same time the law gave extended authority to the School Council. It was still expected to keep the supervision on school attendance, and they could still fine parents. As something new they should also, in cooperation with the Teachers’ Council, make an outline of the curriculum for the school, participate in decisions on teaching materials, make an annual report about the activities of school for the School Commission, and, in cooperation with the School Commission, make decisions on the engagement of teachers.

Example from a report about pupils’ absenteeism

1950

Søften-Foldby Skolekommission

Til Aarhus Amts skoledirektion

I anledning af ovenstående forespørgsel, kan man meddele, at det langt overvejende antal af forsømmelser hidrører fra to hjem. Disse to hjem opretholdes i væsentlig grad ved kommunehjælp. Skolemulker kan ikke inddrive og at indsætte familjefædrene til afsone vil medføre at kommunen helt må overtage forsørgelsen af de to meget børnerige familjer. Desuden er der npppe grund til at tro, at omtalte fremgangsmåde i nærværende tilfælde vil nedbringe forsømmelserne i nævneværdig grad. En advarsel til hjemmet fra børneværnet hjalp en overgang, men man vil meget nødig rejse en børneværnssag, idet der er et meget godt forhold imellem forældre og børn. Hjemmesørger i alle måder godt for børnene undtagen med hensyn til – skolegang.

P.skm.v. XXXX

Tilbagesendes Undervisningsministeriet under henvisning til sammes skrivelse af 17. f.m. og med bemærkning, at man d.d. har henstillet til skolekommissionen at søge rejst børneværnssag de 2 nævnte tilfælde, således at der an beskikkes tilsynsværge for børnene.

Aarhus Amts Skoledirektion 26. maj 1950

Example from a report about assessment of pupils

Om det skolepsykologiske arbejde i amtet beretter konsulent xxx

"I året 1953 er der foretaget gruppeprøver, standpunktsprøver i dansk og regning, samt individuelle prøver ved 42 skoler. I alt er i årets løb henvist 170 børn til individuel undersøgelse. Af disse var 54 ordblinde, 40 normalt begavet, men mere eller mindre læsesvage, mens 53 måtte betegnes som svagtbegavet. 16 er henvist til eksternatskolerne i Århus og Horsens, mens 2 henvistes til undersøgelse på Brejning. [...]"

Konsulent xxx, der ansattes 1.8.1952, har overalt i amtet på inciterende vis fået udmærket gang i særundervisningen, og det skal nævnes, at landsbyskolerne med stor interesse er gået ind i den nye opgave. Nyordningen fungerer absolut tilfredsstillende.

The ministerial tests

Apart from the new legislative framework it is noteworthy that a new instrument for control of schools were implemented. This was the instrument of tests and assessments. This is a

major shift in control instruments, which reflected the surfacing of a new knowledge regime; namely that of objective measuring on the basis of a positivist philosophy of science.

By the twentieth century, a ministerial inspection system centred on proficiency assessments (tests) distributed to selected schools was introduced and came to play a crucial role in years 1915-1954. The 1915 circular concerning the ministerial tests dated March 1st of that year notes:

‘Since the Ministry wants to form an estimate over the proficiency of the public school in written Danish, a common and simultaneous test in the subject mentioned is to be held at the listed public schools in the cities and in the countryside for this purpose’.

In the 1933 reports concerning the elementary school and the training colleges, regarding the introduction of the ministerial assessments, it is stated: ‘The intention was to establish the level of proficiency at the end of compulsory education; – to which skill level in the basic subjects were the children actually brought. Thus, the goal of the school was to be revealed on the basis of experience’.²³ Thus, we see the main reason for this step was linked to accountability issues. Moreover, from time to time, the business world launched a severe critique of the proficiency level of public school graduates.²⁴ In response, the Ministry introduced a measure that would document – if only randomly – the actual achievements of the public school system.

In 1915, the first ministerial assessments were distributed to such selected schools: 11 urban, 4 semi-urban, and 100 rural throughout the country, with the purpose of studying final year pupils’ proficiency in written Danish; from 1917, arithmetic was also included in the ministerial tests (Ydesen 2013). The assessments were distributed in March and were aimed at pupils turning 14 years old in the year under consideration. After the introduction of the exam-free middle school with the 1937 education act, the ministerial assessments were aimed solely at pupils in this school department. While the number of children who were tested varied over time, they numbered between 1,100 and 3,500. The exam-free middle school was terminated with the 1958 education act, but the ministerial assessments had already ceased in 1954 – probably due to criticism from the stakeholders.²⁵

²³ Meddelelser vedrørende Folkeskolen, Seminarierne mv. [Reports concerning the elementary school and training colleges, etc.], 1933, p. 19.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁵ Erik Nørr, *Genforeningens bedste gave – skoleordning og amtsskolekonsulenter i Sønderjylland og Danmark 1920–1963* (Aabenraa: Skrifter udgivet af Historisk Samfund for Sønderjylland, no. 90, 2003), p. 152.

The Ministry did not use the ministerial assessments to compare schools or teachers, but solely to ascertain whether the pupils leaving compulsory education had achieved a reasonable level in the basic subjects of Danish and arithmetic. But school directors, head teachers, and teachers often requested the results from the Ministry, because they wanted to learn the proficiency levels of schools and classes.²⁶ Examples abound pointing to local school commissions having used the results 'publically or to assess or compare different classes, school forms, or teachers' work'.²⁷

Following a complaint from the teachers' union, the Ministry changed its practice in 1938. Henceforth results were no longer to be handed over to local school authorities or schools, but teachers from the participating classes could still gain access to the results. In a ministerial letter dated June 21, 1938, it stated: 'It has not been intended that school commissions should use the results to assess and compare the work of particular schools'.²⁸

Despite this new stipulation from the Ministry, the teachers' union retained its critical stance towards the ministerial assessments, and when the Ministry called for hearing reviews among the stakeholders in November 1947 concerning whether the practice employing bi-annual ministerial assessments should continue, the teacher's union wrote in their answer:

*On this occasion, the board wishes to express that it finds the value of these assessments highly doubtful. They give no reliable impression of the proficiency level reached in the public school system, in some cases they even generate a distorted picture of the school's standard, and add to this that they are used to assess the matters of both the school system and particular schools, of course that has never been the intention, but it is impossible to avoid. The board must therefore recommend that the ministerial assessments be terminated.*²⁹

26 Rigsarkivet [Danish National Archives], Statskonsulenten for Folkeskolen og Seminarierne [The General Inspector of the elementary school and training colleges], Ministerielle prøver [Ministerial tests].

27 Rigsarkivet [The Danish National Archives], Statskonsulenten for Folkeskolen og Seminarierne [The General Inspector of the elementary school and training colleges], Ministerielle prøver [Ministerial tests], Letter dated February 7, 1945.

28 Meddelelser vedrørende Folkeskolen, Seminarierne mv. for Aaret 1942 [Reports concerning the elementary school and training colleges, etc. for the year 1942], p. 62.

29 Rigsarkivet [The Danish National Archives], Statskonsulenten for Folkeskolen og Seminarierne [The General Inspector of the elementary school and training colleges], Ministerielle prøver [Ministerial tests], Letter from the Danish teachers' union to the Ministry of Education dated May 27, 1947.

County school inspectors, on the other side, generally expressed positive comments towards continuing the ministerial assessments. Some even suggested that the county school inspectors should always receive a copy of the results for comparing schools and teachers. One county school inspector in his argument referred to a previous complaint made by a parent over a teacher whereby he had dismissed the complaint with reference to the ministerial assessment results.³⁰

The history of the ministerial assessments bears a strong resemblance to contemporary debates about national tests, where, among other things the use (or misuse) of test results is a key sticking point. Then, as now, the need to know a given school's results is promoted by critiques of its standard along with an awakened consciousness concerning international competition. During and after World War I, a strong mindset of both utility value and international competition in education is in evidence in Denmark. One such example, and its impact on Danish education, is seen in the 1920 call from the teachers' unions to establish an experimental school and a laboratory, as 'through the ability to stay in contact with the best produced abroad, such institutions will be able to contribute significantly to keep our educational system at an equal level with theirs'.³¹

Thus, the history of the ministerial assessments also reveals an unmistakable international dimension, long present in the history of testing and accountability. At the same time, it shows how differing agendas among stakeholders involved with school accountability permeate the educational field, with consequences for governance across all levels of the educational system. Finally, it indicates that testing – and more specifically the value of testing – is a key battleground for these diverging interests in the educational field.

After the Second World War, data were more and more considered as the most objective way of understanding reality (Borer & Lawn 2013: 50)

Analytical and concluding remarks to be inserted: *who is accountable to whom, for what purposes, for whose benefit, by which means, and with which consequences*" continuities and ruptures in this period... related to form of government... the configuration between stakeholders...

School accountability in the competitive state 1990-2013

From the late 1980s accountability practice in Danish schools became influenced by tendencies dominating school systems worldwide and having its origin in practices initiated

³⁰ Rigsarkivet [The Danish National Archives], Statskonsulenten for Folkeskolen og Seminarierne [The General Inspector of the elementary school and training colleges], Ministerielle prøver [Ministerial tests].

³¹ Christian Tybjerg, 'Forslag om Oprettelse af et pædagogisk Laboratorium og en Forsøgsskole', *Tidsskrift for eksperimental Pædagogik* (1920), pp. 85–97.

by international organisations such as UNESCO, CERI and OECD. Education was considered as an important economical resource nations, to ensure economic stability and growth. For such reasons and intentions UNESCO established an international office to collect data to make comparisons between schools systems in member countries possible (UNESCO, 1948 p. 17³²).

Inspired by such tendencies which gained currency through the next decades (years 1950 – 1980) and became integrated in practices of accountability in countries in western world, the Danish government of the time in 2005 decided to introduce national mandatory standardised testing of all pupils in selected subjects a number of times through their time in basic school. From 2010 these test was run nationally for the first time. The intentions of such practice was to try to get some estimate of pupils performances to improve quality in school. But on the other hand the education system could also be said to made safe against criticism by its adopting of measuring, the delivery of efficiencies, and use of business methods (Lawn 2013: 113) – **compare with the Danish ministerial assessments**

In 1990 a new law of administration and control of basic school was introduced. Besides giving more authority to the head of the school a new practice relating to accountability was reflected. The national test became integrated in systems of control, as schools from 2006/2007 became obliged to make a so called quality report and related action plan, which should both be made public and accessible at the homepage of the school for anyone to read. These documents are processed and approved by the local municipal council.

A new authority “Kvalitets og tilsynsstyrelsen” was established 2011 (substituting skolestyrelsen), and *”fører tilsyn med, at kommunerne løfter deres ansvar for folkeskolerne”*. This authority *”undersøger på baggrund af et indikatorbaseret tilsyn, om der er folkeskoler, der gennem en længere periode er lavt præsterende”* (UVM). Styrelsen fører tilsyn with both quality of subject matters and the number of lessons.

Kvalitetstilsynet³³

Børne- og undervisningsministeren følger og vurderer kvaliteten i folkeskolen målt på skolernes faglige resultater. Kvalitets- og Tilsynsstyrelsen har ansvaret for at hjælpe undervisningsministeren med denne opgave. Det sker ved, at styrelsen screener skolernes resultater, herunder skolernes karaktergennemsnit i de bundne prøvefag ved folkeskolens afgangsprøver”

Hvis styrelsen i sin screening konstaterer tegn på vedvarende dårlig kvalitet på en skole, indleder den en dialog med den ansvarlige kommunalbestyrelse om, hvordan skolens faglige niveau kan forbedres.

32¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001145/114593e.pdf>

33¹ <http://uvm.dk/Uddannelser-og-dagtilbud/Folkeskolen/Styring-og-ansvar/Tilsyn>

Hvis dialogen ikke fører til, at kommunalbestyrelsen tager initiativ til at forbedre skolens kvalitet, kan børne- og undervisningsministeren pålægge kommunalbestyrelsen at udarbejde en handlingsplan til at forbedre det faglige niveau.

Som led i kvalitetstilsynet gennemgår Kvalitets- og Tilsynsstyrelsen også de kommunale kvalitetsrapporter. Oplysninger fra kvalitetsrapporterne kan ligeledes indgå i opfølgningen på skoler med tegn på vedvarende dårlig kvalitet.

The question if results from the national standardized test should be made public or not, has been very much discussed. A key question here is related to accountability, as authorities in the democratic state has different and in some ways weaker access to add any consequences to schools if they do not – in the opinion of the state – live up to certain criteria. But being criticised in public might have severe consequences for schools. Ranking schools at the homepage of the ministry has been tried, but this practice was stopped as too many mistakes could be identified in the data collection thus leading to wrong rankings (!).

But the quality report also report schools performances at the standardized test, and some schools even supply this with diagrams showing improvements of the school through the years.

About the number of lessons: "Styrelsen har ingen egentlige sanktioner overfor kommuner, som ikke overholder reglerne [concerning number of lessons], men kan indbringe sagerne for det kommunale tilsyn, som varetages af statsforvaltningen i den region, som kommunen ligger i".

...

According to Stefan Hopmann, most international accountability analysts agree that accountability measures and practices actually change the ways and means by which societies approach their cultural edifices.³⁴ One example is the emergence of a strong preoccupation with numbers and quantifiable variables – a tendency that has engulfed public sectors across the industrialised world, not least as a consequence of the New Public Management wave and a general inspiration taken from the business world. In other words, these tendencies are linked by the same development that emanates from the commercial sector.

For Denmark, this has resulted in the government losing its monopoly over the public education system, along with its attendant description of school practices and outcomes. This prerogative instead has been delegated to a disparate group consisting of

³⁴ Stefan Hopmann, 'No child, no school, no state left behind: Schooling in the age of accountability', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40(4) (2008), p. 422.

international organisations, reporters, and research institutions.³⁵ The rise of accountability in Danish education thus generates a new governance situation.

It must be noted this qualitative change in Danish education is closely linked with international currents and movements in other industrialised countries. According to Pernille Fryd, contemporary Danish educational policy draws heavily on the United States' 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act*.³⁶ In addition, Christian Lundahl, in his report for the Danish government concerning the publication of education results in Scandinavia, notes when a new grading scale was introduced in Denmark, it resulted in a requirement that grades be internationally comparable and thus in alignment with the international European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).³⁷ In Denmark, as has been the case in the United States for decades, statistical accountability has become so overarching, that it appears inevitable.

At the same time, a host of experts and international organisations have emerged, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the European Union (EU), all of which create data '(...) through common tools and categories'³⁸ and move towards transcending national policy debates, because this data enables cultural exchanges across borders and places, creating a new type of virtual and borderless policy space.³⁹ This induces a shift from state-based government to the networked or co-produced actions of many actors and agencies working on behalf of and across different nations.⁴⁰ The existence of this new space implies controls without apparent political intervention. In other words, standards and benchmarks created by

35 Peter Dahler-Larsen, *Evalueringkultur – et begreb bliver til* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2006), p. 61.

36 Pernille Fryd, *Team and test – en systemteoretisk komparativ interviewundersøgelse af implementeringen af accountability-reformpolitik i grundskolen i Danmark og USA* (PhD dissertation, Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus, 2009).

37 Christian Lundahl, *Att samla in, publicera och använda skolresultat i de nordiska länderna* (Danish government report, 2010), p. 10.

38 Jenny Ozga, Peter Dahler-Larsen, Christina Segerholm, and Hannu Simola, (eds.) *Fabricating Quality in Education: Data and Governance in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011).

39 M. Lawn, 'Standardizing the European education policy space', *European Educational Research Journal*, 10(2) (2011), pp. 259–272.

40 Ibid., p. 260.

these organisations are used to govern several countries' educational systems across a different kind of policy space, removing the necessity for legislation and hiding education politics through creating seemingly comparable services.⁴¹ This then is the climate in which accountability has gained favour as a way to govern education, one that is viewed as capable of providing the system's requirements, namely, standards in schooling.

Accountability in twenty-first-century Danish education is closely linked with national tests originating from the Danish Ministry of Education and annual quality reports regarding education compiled by municipalities. A distinct trend toward international comparisons is also in evidence and most explicitly manifest in the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Comparable results at various levels have become the dominant means by which researchers and politicians describe schools' performance, and accountability has become a central component in steering and managing Danish schools. Since the passage of the Danish 2002 Act on Transparency and Openness in Education (L414), year-end examination results from each public school have been published on the internet in Denmark. Although a new centre-left government took office in September 2011 and suspended league table publications based on national tests, the previous government aimed at full transparency of national test results for the schools.⁴² But according to a survey from the autumn of 2011 some 17 % of Danish municipalities still publish national test results from local schools.⁴³

Conclusion

Who disciplines? – the first period: the church, the second period: the state, the third period: the market

I den demokratiske stat – når forståelser af heraf betoner dialog og mulighed for magt "nedefra" – er konsekvenserne ikke så ultimative. Skolelukninger er f.eks. ikke nogen entydig mulighed, det skal i al fald gennem lange processer. Men sociale konsekvenser, som brugen af udhængning på internettet på rankinglister er overvejet og også ved lejlighed forsøgt anvendt. Samme tilgang afspejler sig i kvalitetsrapporten, der også skal være offentlig.

The influence and importance of contextual factors on the practice of accountability are reflected in relation to systems of control with school in the democratic state. Democracy

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 261.

⁴² Danish Ministry of Education, *Faglighed og frihed – regeringens udspil til en bedre folkeskole* (Danish government report, 2010), p. 10.

⁴³ Berlingske research, article published September 2011

seems to request new ways in practicing accountability as both the relationship between involved parts, means and consequences has changed, which the example described below illustrates.

From the late 1980s '(...) indicators of performance, institutional competition, public data and accountability, and reporting systems became a new American norm, and through the OECD, a European norm.' (Lawn 2013: 118).

Today several accountability tools permeate the Danish public school system: elevmålcirkel, elevplan, klassemøde, forældrekontrakt, tests (Bjerg & Knudsen 2012: 81) ... The teachers needs documentation in order to maintain authority... Mutual or reciprocal accountability: teacher/school and parents (Bjerg & Knudsen 2012: 90)... according to Hanne Knudsen five different discourses have surrounded the school – home relationship (responsibility negotiations) (Knudsen 2010: 59ff.)

“(...) a distrust of experts is to be countered by a trust in numbers.” (Miller 1996: 60)

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