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When top-down planned reforms meet educated and independent professionals in Norwegian schools

Master degree in Change Management

Faculty of Social Science

University of Stavanger

Autumn 2010

MASTER OF ENDRINGSLEDELSE/CHANGE MANAGEMENT

MASTER THESIS

SEMESTER:

AUTUMN 2010

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR OTTO OTTESEN

TITLE:

WHEN TOP-DOWN PLANNED REFORMS MEET EDUCATED AND INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONALS IN NORWEGIAN SCHOOLS

KEY WORDS/SUBJECTS:

MINTZBERG, PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS, CONFIGURATION THEORY, BOTTOM-UP, TOP-DOWN, STRATEGY, DECISION MAKING, PROFICIENCY, OPERATING CORE, THE KUNNSKAPSLØFT, PRIMARY SCHOOLS, PIGEONHOLES

NUMBER OF PAGES: **112**   (INCLUDING REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS)

STAVANGER, 17.01.11...

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2.   INTRODUCTION

2.1.   PREFACE

Thank you to my supervisor Otto Ottesen for being patient, encouraging and calm during my times of frustrations as well as excitement about this thesis.

Thank you also to Ingvill Moen Hovlund who has been my student buddy throughout the whole process, and particularly when we shared an office while writing our theses. I could not have done it without our heartfelt laughs, as well as her encouragement and good advice.

My workplace has been very positive of me working on my masters, and have allowed for much flexibility in my daily work. My colleagues and management have also shown great interest in my project, which has been motivating for me. I thank you for this.

Thanks are also extended to all the participants. They provided great insights on the topic, and showed great interest in my work. This interest was essential to my motivation as well as the results of this thesis.

Thanks also to fellow students, friends and family who have supported me and been around to make this an interesting, meaningful, developing, and fun journey!

Kjersti Birkeland
Stavanger 15.01.11.

2.2.   ABSTRACT

Presented here is a qualitative study of what happens when top-down planned reforms meet educated and independent professionals in Norwegian schools. The Kunnskapsløft in Norwegian primary schools is used as an example of such a reform/strategy, with the sampled participants (teachers and principals) for personal interviews representing five different schools from the municipality of Sandnes. The study is based on the theoretical viewpoints of Mintzberg, viewing primary schools as compliant with Mintzberg´s configuration of professional organisations, in which professional behaviour is guided by standardised skills, and decisions are made in a three-layer model with regards to strategic behaviour. Mintzberg further views strategy as emergent bottom-up patterns of action, in which the workers in professional organisations and their knowledge and skills largely influences their behavioural patterns and thereby the strategy. Due to this proposed influence of the workers, I question the usefulness and actual implementations of top-down strategies such as reforms. I therefore expect a discrepancy between the formulated reform and the behaviour of the operating core, different working strategies between schools as a result of different operating cores, and possible redefinitions of existing behaviour to comply with the Kunnskapsløft, in order to allow for continuing the existing working strategy as based on professional skills and knowledge, while not being interrupted by top-down demands. Results support all of the hypotheses, suggesting considerable influence of the professionals on strategy, and that top-down strategies may not be appropriate for professional organisations.

2.3.   BACKGROUND

Most organisations in public and private sector have some form of strategy which the board or management will be able to describe. Management is likely to have a written strategy on the bookshelf in their office, and they are likely to arrange regular strategy meetings in which they discuss appropriate strategies of the present as well as the future. Traditional strategies have existed since before 1960, and resemble corporate plans based on analyses of the organisations and their environment, and predictions of the future (Busch. et.al., 2007; Faulkner & Campbell, 2003).

However, recent research and management theory suggests that planned strategies are not necessarily appropriate, as human beings can not predict the future and therefore not plan for it in detail (Busch. et.al., 2007). Furthermore, suggesting that strategies can simply be planned in detail and implemented by management into the whole organisation, presumes that the people who work there are merely blank minds who can be influenced and controlled to believe in and perform ideas and duties developed at the top of the hierarchy.

Although management is likely to have the power to make decisions and suggest implementations, I expect it to be unlikely that plans can be developed and implemented perfectly into organisations without any issues, resistance by workers, transformations of ideas, different perceptions, avoidance, etc. I expect that employees largely influence organisations with their own beliefs and understandings, in addition to management influences. As I will show later in the paper, the expectation of challenges associated with the implementation of corporate plans is further supported by the theories of Henry Mintzberg, who proposes that strategies are emergent bottom-up concepts, rather than planned top-down implementations. Mintzberg further claims that the degree to which planned strategies can be easily implemented is, among other things, dependent on types of organisations.

Considering the fact that strategies are readily developed and introduced to large amounts of organisations, I am curious to investigate to what degree planned strategies are actually implemented and integrated in organisations as originally planned. Alternatively they may just be apparently implemented while the real strategy in the organisation remains the same, they may not be implemented at all, or they may be understood and implemented differently by different organisations.

A current example of centrally developed strategies to be implemented in organisations, is that of reforms to be introduced in the Norwegian school system. The most recent reform, the Kunnskapsløft (knowledge promotion) has been given much attention in the media, and has stimulated opinions and debate among large amounts of people. It was originally introduced and perceived by some as the salvation of the school system, while it has been highly critisised by others, both before and after implementation (for media examples, the following newspaper articles are referred to: Andersen, 2006; Aslam, 2006; Holm, 2010; Hølleland, 2006; Lerbak, Moe, & Tessem, 2008). Accordingly it is a reform that means something to many people, and schools are organisations that most people can relate to from their own experience or the experience of their children. For this reason I believe the Kunnskapsløft to be a current and interesting example to study, and that what we learn from this study can be useful to understand and evaluate strategies in other organisations as well.

In this paper, I will aim to investigate what happens to strategies such as the Kunnskapsløft when they are implemented in schools, as planned by the government, or by management or the board which would be the case with strategies in private institutions. Attention will accordingly be given to a hypothesised discrepancy between the planned strategy of the government and the working strategy in schools, or at the very least, variations between schools as to whether and how the reform is used. Such variations would naturally follow if the expectation that strategies can not simply be implemented top-down is supported, because the influence of employees is thought to affect strategy bottom-up, constituting the working strategy. Working strategy can in this context be defined as patterns of action, the actual behaviour and strategy that is evident in organisations (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 1998),

2.4.   PRELIMINARY RESEARCH QUESTION
What happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to the working strategy in schools?

2.5.   PAPER OVERVIEW
Before attempting to address the research question, I will describe the Norwegian education system and the Kunnskapsløft, and define some key terms. The Opplæringslov will be introduced, describing goals, rights, obligations, and content of schools. Additionally, the general politics of

schools will be mapped out in order to define areas of responsibility.

Next, the Kunnskapsdepartement will be introduced as the strategy maker in schools, with reforms as their most important tools. Reforms, in this case the Kunnskapsløft, will be presented as a planned strategy to be implemented in schools, and will be described in some detail. Two parameters of the Kunnskapsløft will be chosen as indicators to be used in studying the reform in schools, related to learning strategies, motivation, and the accommodation of individual needs.

Mintzberg will be the key theorist throughout the paper, with his theories of configurations used to categorise organisations. I will argue that schools be viewed as professional organisations within the configurational theory, and Mintzberg´s theory of decision making as a three-layer process in such organisations will be described.

Focus will be shed on the hypothesised importance and influence of the operating core (the workers) in professional organisations, and this will be presented in context with the planned and centrally developed reforms that are attempted implemented in schools by the government. Based on the power of the workers and the decision-making processes in professional organisations, discrepancies and variations will be hypothesised between the government plans and the actual strategies and behaviour in schools. Additionally, variations between schools will be expected based on differences in operating cores or work groups. A third factor which will be explored is potential redefinitions of what organisations already do, in order to create a good fit between the Kunnskapsløft and the behaviour of the operating core. The idea in regards to the latter, is that few real changes occur as a result of reforms, but on the surface it seems as though the reforms are indeed implemented.

The specific research question to be addressed will be;

"*to what degree, and how, do the professionals in the operating core of primary schools influence what happens to the Kunnskapsløft (the strategic plan) when introduced to the working strategy in schools (the patterns of action)?* "

A qualitative explorative study will be conducted to address the research question and the

hypotheses, and principals and teachers at five different schools in Sandnes, Norway will be interviewed. Each of the participants will be asked about their knowledge of, attitude towards, and active use of the Kunnskapsløft based on the chosen parameters and hypotheses, by the method of open, personal interviews. Furthermore, I will present some strengths and weaknesses regarding my choice of methodology, and argue my choice as well as pronounce limitations.

I will then move on to analyse the information provided by the participants, in relation to the formulated expectations. I will do this by presenting results in relation each of the hypotheses as well as a few additional categories, and commenting on each of the categories in relation to Mintzberg´s theories and my hypotheses. Lastly, I will provide a summary of the results and present them in a larger context and theoretical viewpoint, together with the implications that can be made from the results. At the very end I will present some reflective comments on the process of performing this study, and point to some strengths and weaknesses that may be worth noting.

3. NORWEGIAN GRUNNSKOLE AND THE KUNNSKAPSLØFT

3.1.   THE NORWEGIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The term ´Grunnskole´ describes 10 years of compulsory education. Children generally attend primary school year 1 through to 7 at one school, followed by year 8 to 10 at a separate secondary school. They start school the year they turn 6 years old, and generally complete their compulsory education the year they turn 16.

The Grunnskole in Norway is governed by ´the Opplæringslov´ (the Education Act), which provides a range of guidelines indicating the framework within which local schools should be managed. Other sets of laws that govern or particularly influence the Grunnskole are ´the Forvaltningslov´(Law of Public Administration), ´the Kommunelov´(Local Government Act, within each municipality), laws regulating parental responsibilities and – rights, ´the Barnelov´ (the Children´s Act), ´the Helselov´(the Health Act), ´the Arbeidsmiljølov´(the Working Environment Act), and regular legislation whenever relevant and appropriate. The Opplæringslov is nevertheless the most central law in schools.

The purpose of the Opplæringslov is, amongst other things, to make explicit the objectives, the scope, and extent of the education provided. Furthermore, the act defines rights and obligations

related to children´s education, the content and curriculum of the education, as well as frameworks for concepts such as school environment, children´s right to empowerment and participation, school rules, personnel and management, government supervision, quality control procedures, and the location and organisation of the education service (Helgeland, 2006; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2009).

3.2.   THE GRUNNSKOLE IN A POLITICAL AND MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

´The Kunnskapsdepartement´ (the Ministry of Education and Research) is a government branch/department acting as the political body of the Grunnskole. The Kunnskapsdepartement has been assigned a specific role and responsibility towards, and is essentially in charge of, the Grunnskole. The department assumes the majority of the public administration responsibilities and tasks related to schools, and there is a separate education unit within the department which is responsible for the formulation of policies and the politics in regards to Grunnskole education, namely the Utdanningsdirektorat (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2007).

´The Utdanningsdirektorat´ (the Directorate of Education and Training) implements politics and policies developed by the Kunnskapsdepartement, and is responsible for quality control procedures, regulations, curricula, evaluations (exams, tests etc), development, and international comparisons (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2008).

The Kunnskapsdepartement carries the authority in regards to quality control, supervision, and appeals towards the Grunnskole. However, these responsibilities are delegated to the Utdanningsdirektorat, which delegates them to ´the Fylkesmann´(the County Goverer) in each county (Fylkesmannen, 2007).

Each municipality is considered the owner of the schools in Norway. Within each municipality, ´the bystyre´(the City Council) and ´the Rådmann´(the Alderman) essentially carry the responsibility, but some municipalities choose to delegate this to a Municipal Director before further delegating the responsibilities to the principal at each school (Sandnes kommune, 2010). Accordingly, the principal is responsible for each school, but several layers of bureaucracies and formal legislation and guidelines exert strong influences.

3.3.   THE KUNNSKAPSDEPARTEMENT´S STRATEGY IN THE GRUNNSKOLE

From the description above, it is evident that the Kunnskapsdepartement, in cooperation with its various branches, develops guidelines as to how schools should be managed and which measures should be taken to ensure equality and quality in Norwegian schools.

One element that helps the department ensure quality in schools, is the Opplæringslov which all schools are obliged to follow. However in addition, the department, via the Utdanningsdirektorat, develops reforms to be introduced in each school, with reference to the Opplæringslov. Reforms provide more detailed guidelines for schools to use, and serve as practical tools to ensure implementation of requirements. Reforms can be viewed as organised strategic plans to be implemented in schools, developed by the Utdanningsdirektorat, on behalf of the Kunnskapsdepartement. The Opplæringslov defines rights, obligations, responsibilities etc, whereas reforms further describe and define how those rights, obligations etc should be accounted for. Because the reforms are developed by government bodies describing the content of schools and how they should be managed, the reforms can be viewed as plans or strategies of how each school should act in order to fulfill the requirements of the Opplæringslov, which is the ultimate goal and essential to the survival of the school.

The most central and most debated reform in the Norwegian school system today, is the Kunnskapsløft (see introduction for media references). This reform considers primary, secondary, and upper secondary school as a whole, providing guidelines related to the Opplæringslov (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2008).

For the purpose of this paper, focus will be on primary schools, year one through to seven. This distinction is made in an attempt to clarify and simplify the topic, and to ensure valid comparisons between schools experiencing similar demands and contexts.

3.4.   THE KUNNSKAPSLØFT (KNOWLEDGE PROMOTION)

The Kunnskapsløft reform was introduced to Norwegian schools in 2006, and provides guidelines for organisation, school structure, and curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006; Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 2005).

The overall goal of the reform is to ensure all pupils have basic skills and knowledge that enable them to be active participants in our society of knowledge. The education system should include

and integrate all pupils, regardless of their abilities and background, and the education should accommodate for differences, and teach the children useful learning strategies.

The following elements are characteristic to the Kunnskapsløft:

◆ Four sections

  ✖ General section

  ✖ Principles for the education

  ✖ The distribution of teaching hours per subject

  ✖ New subject syllabuses for each subject (including defined goals regarding the competence of the pupils)

◆ Each school is given increased freedom of choice regarding working methods, use of teaching materials, and how classroom teaching is organised

3.4.1. The general section

The general section concerns the values and humanistic aspects of education, and elaborates the mission statement of the Opplæringslov. The section further provides overall goals for the education, and addresses the culture, values and knowledge that education should be built upon.

3.4.2. The principles for education

The principles for education section makes explicit the responsibilities the school administration and municipalities have regarding sensitivity to, and the accommodation of, each individual pupil and their needs. Each pupil should develop and learn social and cultural competence, as well as motivation and strategies for learning. The principles additionally include the Læringsplakat (directly translated: "learning poster") which describes the basic commitments and responsibilities of Norwegian schools.

3.4.3. Distribution of teaching hours

Teaching hours are centrally distributed, in accordance with the goals of the Kunnskapsløft.

3.4.4. New subject syllabuses

The subject syllabus for each subject provides the overall goal, the main areas of interest, the competence goals, and final assessments for the subject in question. Each syllabus additionally addresses five basic skills as defined in the reform, and integrates them as appropriate into each subject.

3.4.5. Local freedom of choice

Although subject syllabuses are developed centrally, by the directorate and department, the Kunnskapsløft makes a point of only developing rough frameworks and goals for the education. The reform delegates the responsibility of developing detailed content and teaching methods to each school, within the frameworks, laws, and regulations provided both by the various sections of the Kunnskapsløft, and otherwise.

Nevertheless, the Kunnskapsløft suggests that the directorate develops national tests to be conducted in each school at certain stages in the education, in order to assess and evaluate whether each school has reached the goals of the reform (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006; Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 2005).

3.4.6. Areas of focus

The Kunnskapsløft is an extensive reform with several areas of interest, many of which are important. As indicated in the introduction to the paper, the purpose of this investigation is to address what happens to government strategies/reforms when introduced to professional organisations. In order to do so, at a concrete and detailed level, the narrowing of focus and attention is necessary. I will attempt to argue that narrow focus in the following paragraphs.

The general section is difficult to compare between organisations, as it is based on abstract values and humanistic views. Consequently, the implementation of it can hardly be evaluated efficiently. Nevertheless, the values and views are evident throughout the Kunnskapsløft, and serve as background for concepts that can be operationalised.

The distribution of teaching hours is a chapter of the reform providing very specific guidelines for schools to implement. The Fylkesmann and the municipalities are likely to ensure the implementation of this as it is visible and can easily be measured. Accordingly, I expect and assume that the suggested distribution of hours is implemented in all schools and overseen by the Fylkesmann, so I choose not to give the topic any further attention.

The Kunnskapsløft further provides subject syllabuses for each subject. The investigation of the implementation of each of those syllabuses is a major task which is beyond the scope of this paper.

This leaves us with the principles for education section which points out the responsibilities of the schools in terms of legislation and the Læringsplakat. The Opplæringslov is at the centre of this section, however a few particular topics are given much attention in the reform. Social and cultural competence, motivation for learning and learning strategies, pupil participation, cooperation with family and the local community, and the competence and role of teachers are of major importance to the Kunnskapsløft and its principles for education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006).

Although each of the focus areas may be interesting, a couple need to be chosen in order to be able to conduct a good, thorough investigation. In the preface of the Kunnskapsløft, the importance of teaching the pupils how to learn and develop their competence throughout their lives is stressed more than other elements, as well as the accommodation of the individual needs of the pupils. These factors are mentioned in the main goals of the Kunnskapsløft, and they are evident several times throughout the reform (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006).

Accordingly, it seems appropriate to focus upon learning and learning strategies as well as the accommodation of the individual needs of all pupils, as important parameters of whether and how the Kunnskapsløft is implemented in organisations. The parameters are closely linked to the descriptions and values in the general section, as they are both important aspects of inclusion, appreciation of diversity, importance of self-esteem, etc. Furthermore, they are important contributors to the subject syllabuses, as the idea is that the parameters should be evident in every classroom in order to account for all children, how they learn, etc. Therefore, I argue that the chosen parameters are representative of the whole reform, maybe with the exception of the section regarding the distribution of teaching hours.

The selected parameters will be revisited later in the paper, after the presentation of the theoretical platform below.

In the theoretical section, I will use theories of Mintzberg to describe schools as organisations in a configurational perspective, before the implications of that description for strategy in schools is visited.

4. THE THEORETICAL PLATFORM

4.1.   CHOICE OF THEORY

A large body of theory exists that addresses questions related to strategy, the implementation of it, and hypotheses proposing why attempted implementations are sometimes successful and sometimes less successful or even failures. Much of the theory is both interesting and relevant to the preliminary research question of what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to the working strategy in schools.

Resistance to change is one example (Jacobsen, 2004) of theory addressing this question, and lack of translation of the strategy into the context of the organisation is another (Røvik, 2007). Management perspectives and choice of management style could also be contributing factors to whether strategies are sufficiently implemented or not, if management lacks sensitivity to the task and context at hand (Bolman & Deal, 2004).

Some researchers even suggest that strategies can not be planned and implemented at all, as they develop or emerge for instance incrementally, in conversations in the organisations, or by intuition or improvisation (Dane & Pratt, 2004; Quinn & Voyer, 2003; Rerup, 2999; Stacey, 1993).

Although each of the mentioned theories as well as several others are interesting and worth investigating, I will in this paper particularly focus on the theories of Mintzberg (2003a; 2003b; 2003c). Mintzberg proposes that the implementation of strategy is dependent upon the type of organisation at hand. Additionally, Mintzberg views strategies as emergent patterns of actions which develop from within organisations, influenced by workers as well as management. As I will aim to show throughout this study, Mintzberg´s theories of strategy are particularly interesting and relevant in contexts where large groups of highly educated people work together, such as in schools.

4.2.   DESCRIPTION OF THE CHOSEN THEORY

4.2.1. Mintzberg´s theory of configurations

Mintzberg (2003a) claims that a variety of interdependent factors are relevant in determining how individual organisations should be, and naturally are, structured and managed. When the factors are viewed as a whole, they logically form comprehensive configurations or groupings that are internally consistent.

4.2.1.1.   Basic parts of organisations – introducing the concepts

Mintzberg describes organisations as consisting of six main parts; the operating core, the strategic apex, the middle line, the technostructure, the support staff, and ideology.

Figure 1

The six basic parts of the organisation, Mintzberg (2003b), pp. 210
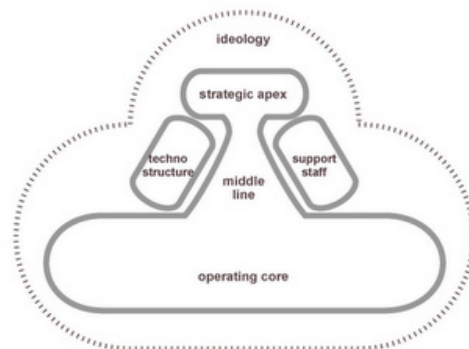
The operators at the core of the model perform the actual production of services or products in the organisation, with the strategic apex and middle management at the top of the hierarchy. Analysts in the technostructure plan and control work performed by the operating core, whereas the support staff provide services internally. Additionally, ideology is a major part of any given organisation, defining the culture, traditions, beliefs, and norms constituting their identity and uniqueness.

According to Mintzberg, all organisations of reasonable size have and are influenced by, all of the six parts presented above. Nevertheless the size of, and the power and influence associated with each of the parts, varies between and within individual organisations. This, in turn, determines the coordination mechanisms that are apparent in various organisations (Mintzberg, 2003a).

4.2.1.2.   Coordination mechanisms

Mintzberg (2003a) claims all organisations are affected by two fundamental requirements that contradict each other and are difficult to manage; namely coordination versus division of labour.

Large tasks are divided into smaller tasks and assigned to various people in organisations, because nobody can do everything alone. In order to reach a complete product or service however, those smaller tasks need to be coordinated. Mintzberg presents six essential mechanisms for coordination;

mutual adjustment, direct supervision, and standardisation of work, outputs, skills, or norms.

In short, mutual adjustment involves interactions and adjustments between colleagues through informal communications, whereas direct supervision makes use of top-down orders to promote coordination, and standardisation involves predetermined standards that guide people´s actions and decision making. Standardised outputs may be defined and controlled through procedures etc developed by the technostructure. However input may also be standardised, by shared skills and knowledge (education/formal training), or by shared values and beliefs.

Mintzberg suggests that every organisation of decent size and development will at some point use all the mentioned mechanisms. However, one is often favoured over others, determining which configuration category the organisation belongs to.

4.2.1.3.   Seven configurations

Mintzberg (2003a) describes seven organisational structures or configurations based on variations in coordinating mechanisms and configurational pulls.

Figure 2

Configurational pulls, Mintzberg, (2003b), pp.220
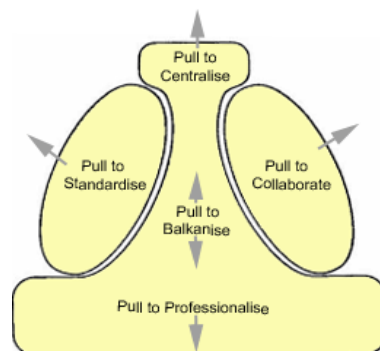
He has named the seven configurations; the entrepeneurial-, machine-, professional-, diversified-, innovative-, missionary-, and political organisations.

The entrepeneurial organisation is dominated by the pull to centralise, the machine one by standardisation, and the professional by the pull to professionalise. Furthermore, the diversified organisation is majorly influenced by the pull to balkanise, the innovative by collaboration between

experts, and the missionary- and political organisations by pulls of ideology and politics.

Looking at figure two in context with figure one, a connection exists between which pulls are dominant in the organisation and which part of the organisation facilitates coordination the most. Accordingly, in the entrepeneurial organisation, the pull to centralise as illustrated at the top of the hierarchy is the strongest pull in the organisation. Consequently the strategic apex, also at the top of the figure, is essential to coordination. Similarly in a second example, the operating core is central to the professional organisation, as the pull to professionalise is illustrated at the core of the figure.

Each of the configurations have characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses associated with them. Addressing those in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, though it may be mentioned that various configurations are associated with differences in flexibility and adaptability to change, effectiveness, centralisation of tasks, the amount of power with parts of the organisation, etc.

4.2.2. Beyond configurations

Although most organisations likely identify with one of the configurations, Mintzberg (2003b) stresses that organisations are more than categories, they are influenced by many pulls and forces, associated with all the configurations, even though one may be temporarily or permanently more dominant.

The entrepeneurial configuration is associated with the force of direction and vision, the professional organisation with proficiency, and the innovative with learning and adaption, as well as discovering new things. Similarly, the diversified organisation is closely linked with accountability following decentralisation, whereas the machine organisation links to effectiveness of production. In addition, ideology and politics are relevant forces, promoting cooperation and competition.

The configurations in organisations provide stability, identity, and order over time, while the various forces and pulls ensure that the organisations are also flexible. The forces maintain the organisations´ ability to adapt as they can be sensitive to changes in the environment. A balance between the stability of configurations and the dynamics of influencing forces therefore seems appropriate, as configurations are modified, while strengths associated with other forces can be used for the benefit of the organisation.

4.2.3. The configurations in the context of the Norwegian Grunnskole

The description and investigation of each of the configurations presented by Mintzberg is beyond the scope of this particular paper. For these purposes, only the most relevant configuration for schools – the professional organisation – will be focused upon.

As stated previously, Mintzberg claims that most organisations are influenced by each of the configurations, each of the pulls, and each of the basic parts of the organisation. However, I argue that the pull to professionalise is the most dominant in schools, due to an environment of highly educated teachers who work quite independently, and who have much control over their own work. Teachers coordinate between themselves by the standardisation of skills. They bring similar knowledge and understandings to the organisation, as they have completed similar educational requirements. Therefore, they ultimately know what to expect from each other, simply by knowing what their colleagues know, and on what grounds and with which viewpoints they make decisions.

The operating core is large and the strategic apex small in the professional organisation, with many workers per manager. Some may argue that the Kunnskapsdepartement is the strategic apex in this context, while at a more local level, the principal represents the apex. In the larger perspective, where the Kunnskapsdepartement represents the apex, the principal would be part of the operating core, while he or she would locally constitute the apex. Either way, at a general as well as more local level, the core is large compared to the apex, as the teachers largely outnumber the principals or the Kunnskapsdepartement. This naturally follows the assumption that the standardised skills promote much of the coordination with less need for management interventions or involvement, and the assumption that the professionals bring so much knowledge to their work, they can work independently. Professionals can be trusted in decision making because they have been trained to make "right" choices by their education, and as such the workers are already coordinated when they enter the organisation. Consequently the professionals are given much control over their own work, by what Mintzberg calls the "power of expertise".

Teachers are highly specialised, and they only perform a few narrowly defined tasks, such as teaching, planning, assessing, and cooperation with parents. Other tasks that do not require their specialisation, such as secretary work, archive work, cleaning, technical support, ordering supplies,

organising mail, etc, are left for others to perform, namely the support staff (Mintzberg, 2003a; 2003c).

In short then, schools are professional organisations with highly educated and independent teachers, highly specialised work, many professionals per manager, and coordination by standardised skills. In the next section the professional organisation will be described more thoroughly, by one of its main characteristics - pigeonholes.

4.2.4. Pigeonholes

Minzberg (2003c) suggests that the work of professionals is characterised by what he calls a pigeonholing process.

Professionals work closely with their clients, in this case pupils and their parents, and they develop a repertoire of alternative actions and responses to various situations. The professional, in this case teacher, identifies the needs of clients and links them to particular contingencies or sets of circumstances to which he or she associates particular responses or actions. Following this "diagnosis", the appropriate response is put into action. The various responses are acquired by universally standardised education and training, however the "diagnosis" is in many ways an autonomous judgement call, although circumscribed to the teacher´s available repertoire or "toolbox" of knowledge.

As various responses are frequently used, they are practiced, perfected, and internalised by the professional. Nevertheless professionals work in complex environments, making decisions that require discretion, and there are always variations between workers. Even so, it is naturally necessary that the professionals´ environment is reasonably stable although complex and dynamic, as the professionals´ standardised repertoire of responses would not be appropriate otherwise.

The complexity and discretion also comes into play when decisions are to be made in professional organisations, as both management and professionals are key actors in decision-making.

4.2.5. Decision making in the professional organisation
4.2.5.1.   Three layers

Mintzberg (2003c) introduces three layers in which he suggests that decisions are made in professional organisations; by professional judgement, by collective choice, and by administrative fiat.

Figure 3

Three layers, Mintzberg (2003c), pp. 377.
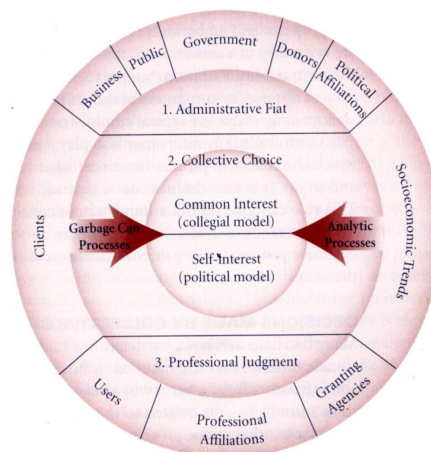
4.2.5.1.1.   *Professional judgement*

Professionals in the professional organisation enjoy the power to make decisions of which services are offered and to whom, and as such have much control over their work towards their clients or users of the service. Teachers in example, largely control what to present in their classroom and how this is to be presented.

Professionals are however, given the opportunity to make decisions within certain boundaries. A professional can be trusted to make decisions in the best interest of the organisation because several years of training has provided him or her with a repertoire of acceptable "tools" and knowledge to be used when making those decisions. However, if the professional makes decisions that do not fit the universal and agreed upon guidelines within the profession, he or she might not enjoy that same power to make decisions anymore. Due to this fact, Mintzberg chooses to name the layer professional judgement rather than professional choice, as the choices are limited in their nature, and only really valid within accepted norms and boundaries, as provided by the professionals´ training. Mintzberg suggests that the freedom to make decisions is valid explicitly in relation to external actors, but not implicitly in relation to other professionals within the same discipline. Furthermore, the power of decision making for professionals is limited to decisions regarding the

users of the service, which professional affiliations they choose to surround themselves with, and in some instances, contact with granting agencies.

4.2.5.1.2.   *Administrative fiat*

Some   decisions are exclusive to the strategic apex, such as financial decisions, control and priorities regarding support services, the designation of various committees, etc. However, the apex uses few elements of traditional management tools such as direct supervision and standardisation of outputs through procedures etc. The work of professionals can not easily be measured, as the work is difficult to operationalise. How, in example, should teaching skills be measured and compared? Complex work that requires much individuality and discretion can hardly be measured. This is also one of the reasons why the standardised input of knowledge and skills is so essential in the professional organisation, and traditional management methods become less relevant. Direct supervision, standardised outputs and work would all be useless in the context of professional organisation because they remove the chance for professionals to use their proficiency, and they assume absolute stability in the work that needs to be performed. This is not likely in professional organisations.

The operating core in the professional organisation holds a great deal of power, as the experts are highly skilled at what they do, and are trained to make decisions regarding their own work. Furthermore, there are few people in the strategic apex, namely the Kunnskapsdepartement at a general level or the principal and one or a few Undervisningsinspektørs (education inspectors) at a local level. What then is the role of the strategic apex when professionals have so much power over their own work?

Mintzberg identifies two major tasks which the strategic apex in professional organisations spend much time doing. First, the pigeonholing process requires human judgement, and often leads to disagreements and conflicts that need careful managing. Professionals being experts in their respective areas, management is unlikely to force solutions, but to mediate solutions acceptable to all parties. This is an important task of the strategic apex, that may apply both at a local (principal) and a general (Kunnskapsdepartement) level; principals may negotiate directly between teachers, and the Kunnskapsdepartement may provide guidelines based on experiences and feedback from professionals, both teachers and principals.

A second major task that lies with the strategic apex is contact with external institutions and stakeholders. In the case of primary schools, contact with various government departments is particularly relevant. For example, as illustrated in Mintzberg´s model, the administrative fiat particularly makes decisions regarding business-, public-, government-, donor-, and political affiliations and affairs. Issues are negotiated, the organisation promoted, resources distributed, and contacts established by influence of the strategic apex. This as well, occurs at a local as well as a general level, for example through the principal in local politics, and nationally by the Kunnskapsdepartement.

The description above may initially give the impression that the strategic apex in professional organisations does not hold much power, and that it basically works to serve the needs of the professionals and assist them with conflict resolution. Mintzberg however, argues that the ability to serve the needs of the organisation through negotiations of resources, of conflicts, and of other elements helpful to the organisation, is highly valued and therefore comes with power, i.e. to distribute negotiated resources. From this line of thought, it may be suggested that as long as the strategic apex in a professional organisation is successful in serving the organisation´s best interests, they will receive considerable power and respect.

In summary, the major responsibilities of the administrative fiat in the three layer model are concerned with external actors, and relations. Still it should be noted that more subtle forms of power are also relevant, as described above, although they do not necessarily involve direct decision making and formal, explicit power. Another example of decisions that the strategic apex have much influence over, is employment processes. Management largely control who is hired, and therefore also what types of people with what kinds of knowledge and beliefs should be introduced to the organisation and thereby also influence it.

4.2.5.1.3.   *Collective choice*

When collective choices are made, the strategic apex and the operating core in the professional organisation interact, cooperate, and negotiate in order to make decisions. Collective choice is particularly relevant in determining and shaping the pigeonholes that are used by the professionals, and the hiring and promotion of new professionals.

In order for decisions to be made, the need for a decision must be identified, solutions must be presented, and appropriate solutions must be chosen. In most cases, an individual brings the need for a decision to the attention of colleagues, and he or she may promote or encourage a certain outcome although other people with different views are often involved as well. When decisions are finally made, several professionals are likely involved in choosing the most appropriate option, by truly interactive processes.

Most decisions are made in a collaboration of collective choice. Such decisions may be made either by consensus of people with common goals and interests, or by the negotiations of various people or groups´ self-interests. When negotiations of various interests occur, politics come into play in trying to reach acceptable solutions. The concept of decision making is however complex, and the motivation and processes of decision making are rarely influenced by only common interest or politics. Rather, interactions between the two are likely, with the motivation behind the decision being the key element that defines whether it is cooperative or motivated by self-interest.

A third point of view, alternative to the consensus or the political viewpoint, is that of the garbage can model. According to this model, decision making behaviours are thought to be more random, depending on which solutions are available at the time, issues and feelings that need an opportunity to be aired, or people looking for decisions to be made. In this context, people who make decisions are characterised by some degree of disinterests, and which problems receive focus may be subject to coincidences. In this context, behaviour is non-purposeful as goals are not clearly defined, and the means to achieving those goals are poorly understood. Consequently, disinterest and coincidences become central to this model.

A fourth approach to decision making, the analytical one, is also evident among the professionals. In the analytical approach, the professionals structure and compare various options thoroughly before making decisions. Pros and cons are calculated for each decision, and final decisions made on the grounds of those assumptions. Rational arguments are formed and presented, in an attempt to convince colleagues of a position, and debates are carried out.

In summary then, when decisions are made by consensus, there is an agreement of what is in

everyone´s best interest. With political processes, people or groups promote their own interest, and with the garbage can view, coincidences and disinterest influence or for that matter, create the lack of influence, of people´s intentions and motivations. With the analytical model, rational forces come into play, encouraging a more detached, analytical, and comparative approach to making decisions.

However, Mintzberg suggests that the models of common interest and political decision making are far more dominant than the garbage can- and analytical models. The latter two models only explain elements of haphazardness and rationality that occur in addition to the two dominant influences.

The three layers of decision making will in the next section of this study be revisited and viewed in context with strategy in professional organisations. Before considering this though, definitions of strategy as a concept and descriptions of strategy in professional organisations is necessary.

4.2.6. Strategy

Strategy is the means organisations have for pursuing their goals and visions ("Strategy dynamics", 2010). Working with and managing the processes involved in handling strategy, is called strategic management. French and Bell more specifically (1999) define strategic management as

´the development and implementation of the organization´s grand design or overall strategy for relating to its current and future environmental demands´ (pp. 195).

The word strategy is traditionally associated with corporate plans, since as early as the 1960s (Faulkner & Campbell, 2003). Strategy was, at the time, closely linked to budgeting processes and financial and formal planning. In such strategic planning, goals are formulated, analyses performed, and interventions decided upon and implemented – in that order, before they are evaluated. Rational systems ensure and maintain the basic existence and maximum profit of the organisation, through the use of analysis and intervention (Busch et.al., 2007; Whittington, 2002).

However, the rational approach to strategy assumes that the processes of formulating a strategy involve conscious, controlled processes of thought in which the idea of the rational and economical human being is largely accepted. Secondly, the approach assumes that strategies are developed by top management before they introduce their ideas to the organisation as mandatory strategies that

are to be implemented effectively. Third, the rational approach assumes the the formulation and the implementation processes are independent and that they occur separately (Mintzberg, 1990, cited in Whittington, 2002). As such, strategy is simply developed and "installed" as a form of implementation (Røvik, 2007). As we shall see in the continuation of this paper, these assumptions are not necessarily valid.

Nevertheless are the modernistic-rational strategies still popular in today´s day and age, with top management attempting to introduce their ideas top-down in a hierarchal fashion, with plans moving down and into the organisation vertically. A problem is defined, and management choose a solution to that problem which they develop and introduce, hoping the solution will be contextualised into the organisation and its context, much like a master version (Røvik, 2007).

4.2.7.   Strategy in the professional organisation

This paper has so far been dedicated to introducing the Norwegian school system, the control- and political organs involved, and Mintzberg´s theories on organisational structure and decision making. It is evident that there is a discrepancy between how the Kunnskapsdepartement with its branches in traditional ways, with rational elements, develop and expect implementation of their reforms and strategy, and how Mintzberg suggests professional organisations are actually structured and how they operate.

In the section of this paper describing the basic parts of organisations, technostructure is defined as a planning and control mechanism that operates parallel to the operating core. The structure consists of analysts who develop procedures, instructions etc, and who actively control that the procedures and guidelines they develop are being adhered to by the operating core. The technostructure and its pull to standardise outputs and to promote effectiveness is common and appropriate in machine organisations such as factories. In machine organisations, diagnoses and outputs are always the same, and the same methods and procedures can be used in every instance that is associated with a particular procedure (Mintzberg, 2003a).

In professional organisations however, the size of the technostructure should be minimal according to Mintzberg (2003a), and the size of the support staff section is ideally large. This is a natural consequence of the fact that the skills of the professionals are what standardise the work in schools,

not the outputs. Consequently the professionals largely influence the working strategy in professional organisations. Furthermore, as stated above, schools are so complex and require such high levels of skills, discretion, and competence, it is unlikely that procedures and guidelines can be developed that will actually be appropriate and effective in a professional organisation for all purposes. Rather, strategy should be allowed to emerge as patterns of behaviour according to Mintzberg. Sometimes the implementation of strategy even precedes the planning of it, and the consistency of patterns of actions is what strategy is really about (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998).

Røvik (2007) supports and further develops Mintzberg´s suggestions about the major influence professionals have on the working strategy in organisations, and the role that their educational input plays in the matter. Røvik suggests that what he calls development arenas external to the organisations are central to the working strategy in any organisation. Development arenas are conferences, courses, seminars, studies etc, which influence the participating professionals. The development arenas are not controlled by the organisations, meaning the content that is presented can not be extensively influenced by them. Røvik claims that such external arenas introduce much information that influence the professionals, and which they bring back to their respective organisations. Such inputs may accordingly end up competing with inputs presented top-down in reforms etc. As well as introducing new ideas and information, development arenas may also influence the way professionals understand and perceive reforms presented by the department, without the department being able to control such perceptions.

Looking back at the assessment above which places schools in the professional organisation, planned strategies that are successful seem increasingly unlikely. The operating core have much power and control over their own work, and they develop their own strategies to some extent, as their work is complex and requires continuos discretion.

Some may assume that it is difficult to have a common strategy at all in professional organisations, because individual professionals work so independently and fragmented. On the contrary, Mintzberg (2003c) suggests that professional organisations do indeed have shared strategies, particularly when taking into account the definition of strategies as patterns in action. The standardisation of skills, pigeonholing processes and professional relations are essential to strategy,

as it encourages shared viewpoints, understandings, and courses of action. The negotiations that occur in collective choice further promotes strategy in professional organisations, and the professionals are likely to commit to the strategies as the development of them is an interactive process which they actively participate in. Consequently, strategies in professional organisations are generally very stable. Large revolutions or changes rarely occur, as no individual really holds the power to carry out such changes. Rather, the working strategy and the pigeonholes are constantly adjusted and small changes are made within the organisation, also influenced by external development arenas. Consequently, although professional organisations are remarkably stable, they also undergo continuos changes.

In summary then, external agencies, directorates or departments parallel to the operating core, in the technostructure, are not likely to be able to exert much real influence on professional organisations. Careful plans and procedures may be developed, but according to Mintzberg´s claims of the importance of standardisation of skills and the large amount of control professionals have over their own work, it seems unlikely that they be implemented successfully as intended. On the same note, the perspective of strategies as being emergent rather than carefully planned first and then implemented, further reduces the chances of predetermined plans being appropriate for any organisation, but even less so for the professional organisation. Strategy in professional organisations seem to come from within the organisation, by negotiations between the administrative fiat and the professionals, although also influenced by external inputs and the standardisation of skills.

4.2.7.1.   The Kunnskapsløft in the professional organisation

Assuming that schools really do fit Mintzberg´s configuration of a professional organisation, and that the mechanisms and assumptions associated with it are valid, what is then likely to happen to the Kunnskapsløft and other reforms and guidelines provided by the Kunnskapsdepartement and its branches? The Kunnskapsdepartement and the Utdanningsdirektorat must be considered external to the organisation´s operating core, existing in the strategic apex and the technostructure, and they develop goals and requirements that are defined in the Opplæringslov. In order to fulfill the goals in the Opplæringslov, the Utdanningsdirektorat develops reforms that schools are required to adhere to in order to achieve those goals. In addition, the Fylkesmann monitors and controls the schools, to ensure that the reforms are implemented and that the goals and requirements are being met.

Looking back at the definition of strategy as a means to achieve goals, I argue it appropriate to consider the Kunnskapsløft a strategy. Providing this perspective, it seems unlikely that the Kunnskapsdepartement and the Utdanningsdirektorat will be successful in implementing their reforms as planned, given the nature of the organisation of schools and the professionals in them.

4.2.7.2.   Strategy and decision making – the three layers

In order for strategies or plans to be implemented, they need to be actively considered when decisions are made on a daily basis, at all levels of the hierarchy. The Kunnskapsløft provides a framework and guidelines for the whole organisation, for both the structure of and the content in schools. Accordingly, the day-to-day work carried out by professionals is central to the goals of the Kunnskapsløft. The Kunnskapsdepartement expect to see their reform in practice in each classroom, by what is taught to the pupils, by certain shared underlying values, by focus on selected basic skills, etc. Providing this, it is essential that each professional is familiar with and loyal to the guidelines of the Kunnskapsløft. How can this thorough implementation be achieved?

As described earlier, decisions in professional organisations are made in three layers, by professional judgement, by the administrative fiat, and by collective choice. The Kunnskapsdepartement as the general administrative fiat has developed the strategy to be implemented, before they present it to the local administrative fiat in each school, the principal, and expect to see their strategy in action. In order to ensure this, they make use of the Fylkesmann and national tests or assessments to perform random audits.

As pointed out in the section of this paper addressing the administrative fiat, it is evident that management have limited means of action for implementation or power, and they are unlikely to be able to force anything onto the work of professionals as direct supervision is unlikely to be helpful. It is also evident from the descriptions of the other two layers that large amounts of decisions are made by professional judgement and collective choice, with collective choice being particularly relevant for shaping pigeonholes which are very essential to the content of schools. Additionally, the formal training that teachers receive is of utmost importance to how teachers act and what their pigeonholes are. However, training generally occurs external to the organisations, and changing the education of teachers is a long-term concern that is not likely to keep up with the reforms presented

by the Kunnskapsdepartement. Further, the generation of teachers who have already completed their education will either way not experience changes in formal education.

Judging by the arguments that suggest planned strategies are difficult to implement in organisations in general, and even more so in professional organisations, it seems that the Kunnskapsdepartement and the schools are dependent upon the commitment of individual teachers in individual classrooms for their strategies to come to life. Seeing as human beings have different personalities, values, backgrounds and perspectives, and also considering the fact that teaching is dependent upon discretion in addition to standardised skills, it seems unlikely that all professionals in schools will simply agree to and follow the guidelines in the Kunnskapsløft as if they were robots that could simply be adjusted to the wishes of management and the technostructure. In addition, Mintzberg suggests that procedures and plans cannot account for the discretion that professionals need to use on a daily basis due to the complex nature of their work. Rather, training and the standardisation of skills should be in focus when aiming to achieve the best possible results working with professionals.

These arguments make me question and doubt the intentions and methods of the Kunnskapsdepartement when they develop reforms and expect them to be implemented similarly in all schools nationally. I will elaborate on those thoughts in the summary and hypotheses below.

4.3.   SUMMARY AND HYPOTHESES

In an attempt to summarise the arguments presented so far in this paper and to introduce my own interpretations of those arguments, I suggest the following:

The Kunnskapsløft is a reform and a strategy which is planned by the Kunnskapsdepartement and its branches, and which is expected to be implemented in schools by the local strategic apex together with the operating core.

I argue that primary schools be placed in Mintzberg´s configuration of the professional organisation, in which the professionals are experts. By their power of expertise, they have much power and control over their own work. The professionals coordinate by standardised skills and make extended use of pigeonholes, and the strategic apex is mainly concerned with external agents and relations,

conflict resolution, employment, etc. Each professional is largely in control of what happens in his or her classroom, and each professional can be said to have their own strategy.

Decisions in professional organisations are made in three layers – by professional judgement, by the administrative fiat, and by collective choice. Strategy in professional organisations is stable, as no one person has the power to change it radically. However, the strategy undergoes small but constant changes by negotiations in collective choice between and within management and professionals.

The Kunnskapsdepartement with its branches, in my understanding, exist in the strategic apex and the technostructure which is parallel to the professional organisation, developing and controlling the implementation of procedures etc. The technostructure aims to standardise outputs and to ensure effectiveness.

Large influences of the forces associated with the technostructure are inappropriate in the context of professional organisations, due to the complexity of the tasks, and the discretion that is required in giving diagnoses and choosing appropriate responses.

Furthermore, considering the assumption that strategies emerge in individual organisations, I find it questionable that the Kunnskapsdepartement attempts to introduce ready-made strategies for each school to simply internalise. On a similar note, consistent with the three layer model of decision making, the shaping of the pigeonholes largely occurs in the collective choice layer. For strategic development to be truly interactive and agreed upon, the professionals need to be included in the selection of solutions, decisions, and strategic choices. The strategic apex can identify and introduce a concept, but the concept needs to be debated, and the professionals need to choose to use that concept. This would require that the administrative fiat, every time, have the power and abilities to convince the professionals of the benefits associated with the concepts they introduce on behalf of the Kunnskapsdepartement. I do not find this likely.

4.3.1. Research question
Considering the arguments presented in the summary above, I find the simple and straightforward, non-transformational implementation of the Kunnskapsløft as a strategic plan unlikely, considering the influence of the professionals.

This bears the question;

"to what degree, and how, do the professionals in the operating core of primary schools influence what happens to the Kunnskapsløft (the strategic plan) when introduced to the working strategy in schools (the patterns of action)?"

4.3.2. Evaluation of the Kunnskapsløft

At the very beginning of this paper, my initial research question was *"What happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to the working strategy in schools?"*. This is a broad question which has been addressed in several different studies conducted or initiated by the government, from the implementation in 2006 until today. A summary of those studies is presented at the website of the Utdanningsdirektorat (2010). Conclusions and results vary, and some goals of the Kunnskapsløft seem to be more or less accomplished, while others are not.

Looking at evaluations associated with my chosen parameters however, project 1 and 2 in the summary suggest that "learning how to learn" skills and strategies, and individual needs of pupils, are not sufficiently integrated in local subject syllabuses at the schools. Furthermore, several teachers perceive the goals of the Kunnskapsløft as vague, too extensive and difficult to work with, and they can be understood differently by different people. Other teachers perceive the goals as concrete, systematic, and easy to work with, but the majority of the studies suggest the former.

The second project further suggests that the support and guidance provided by the government to the municipalities and principals has not been sufficient, and the local documents that have been developed show mere repetitions of phrases presented in centrally developed documents. Local documents additionally say little about why it is necessary to change practice, and what the proposed changes are.

The media references presented at the introduction of this paper further support the indications of the Kunnskapsløft not being perfectly and readily implemented as planned. It must however be noted that several people disagree with this, and there are success factors to the reform as well. Evaluations of those may also be viewed at Utdanningsdirektoratet (2010).

There may be many reasons as to why a reform such as the Kunnskapsløft may not be implemented

successfully or as originally planned. One major factor which has been mentioned in several newspaper articles (Andersen, I., 2006; Andersen, J., 2006; Aslam; 2006) is that of economic resources. New requirements and tasks are not accompanied by resources to perform them. Others suggest that the Kunnskapsløft is too vague and not clear enough in its goals and guidelines (Hølleland, 2006; Lerbak, Moe, & Tessem, 2008). Some claim that the Kunnskapsløft simply requires attitude changes with teachers, without specific and predetermined plans of actions to be made to achieve such changes. Accordingly, some perceive the Kunnskapsløft as just being a set of new phrases and wording to say what teachers should be doing anyway, with no real suggestions as to how this should be achieved. Others assert that there are underlying problems in schools that are not addressed, such as lack of discipline, sick leave, failed integration of immigrants etc, and that these affect the extent to which the Kunnskapsløft is helpful and can be implemented as planned (Holm, 2010).

Jørgensen and Rangnes (2010) have written an article in which they propose that the plans and goals developed by the Kunnskapsdepartement are not appropriate for the children in Norwegian schools, that some of them are irrelevant, and that they are too advanced for the age groups they are developed for. According to the authors it makes no sense having external actors to the schools making such guidelines, when the competence in this matter is located at the schools.

In summary then, several different factors may be responsible if the Kunnskapsløft is found not to be implemented as planned. Economy, lack of detailed and concrete measures to be made, vague goal formulations that are understood differently by different people, other factors that require attention and disturb the implementation, and lack of understanding of what is actually needed in schools are all examples of such factors.

I will not in this study attempt to understand and account for all those factors, as that would be an unrealistic goal. Rather, I will give attention to the operating core and their influence on what actually constitutes the working strategy and to what degree the strategy of the Kunnskapsløft is accepted and integrated. The potential influence of the operating core is mapped out in the theory section above, and I have not in my searches through evaluations, media articles etc, identified any other articles focusing on this particular aspect of implementations of reforms in Norwegian schools. It must still be said however, that the readers should be aware that there is a wide range of

possible influences on this matter, and the selection of one aspect does not eliminate the effect of the others. I am merely presenting one perspective or set of glasses through which to look at the question.

4.3.3. Hypotheses

Now that I have established my research question and the fact that I am interested to know more about the influence the operating core carries with regards to what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to schools, I need to formulate some expectations that I can investigate and collect empirical data in relation to. Simply asking participants about the research question would be to wide and difficult to talk about, but with formulated expectations based on theory and interpretations, will provide a base of comparison and discussion. I will now present three such expectations;

Naturally, the research question suggests an exploration of the original formulations of the Kunnskapsløft by the department, and the working strategy in schools. Only this way can I identify possible discrepancies which would be expected if the operating core does not simply change their behaviour as the Kunnskapsløft is introduced. Accordingly, I will investigate whether the Kunnskapsløft has resulted in any actual changes in the perceptions and behaviour of the operating core. Additionally, I expect that strategy emerges and develops differently in different organisations as a result of a variety of influences, and by influences of the operating core in particular. If operating cores do indeed carry much influence, schools would necessarily vary in implementation because different people work at different schools, thereby constituting different operating cores. Accordingly, I also expect it to be useful make comparisons of different schools with different people in the operating cores, and how each school has understood and implemented the Kunnskapsløft. Lastly, I believe it to be likely that independent professionals, with their own strategies, knowledge, understandings, and opinions, may keep doing what they have "always done", by simply redefining their behaviour to be in compliance with the Kunnskapsløft. In this way, they can keep doing what they do and what they personally believe to be the best strategy, while they still, at least apparently, adhere to formal requirements of the apex. If Mintzberg´s suggestions are true and professionals work by their standardised skills, top-down reforms would not change their behaviour much. Nevertheless, in order to survive in a bureaucracy with legal demands, they can not simply choose not to obey the rules and reforms. Accordingly, a redefinition

seems a likely choice of strategy for the professionals.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following expectations can be formulated if my interpretations and expectations with regards to Mintzberg´s theories are true:

− The schools and the individual professionals vary as to whether or not the Kunnskapsløft has produced changes in how the people in the operating core perform their work (working strategy)

− Different schools understand and use the Kunnskapsløft differently, as their understandings and implementation of the reform are dependent on existing working strategies of the operating core

− Some schools and individual professionals may attempt to redefine what they already do in ways that are compliant with the Kunnskapsløft, without actually changing much

As argued in the Kunnskapsløft section of this paper, the following parameters of the reform will be focused upon, in context with the hypotheses above:

- Teaching the pupils how to learn (motivation and learning strategies)

- The accommodation of individual needs, and thereby the integration of all pupils

4.3.4. The Kunnskapsløft on the selected parameters

By learning how to learn, the reform distinguishes between motivation for learning, and learning strategies. Learning strategies are methods for pupils to organise what they learn, and to plan, carry out, and evaluate their own learning (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2006).

When addressing motivation, the Kunnskapsløft points to the importance of children being curious, persistent, focused and confident, and of them experiencing mastery of skills and tasks. The reform further suggests that for children to be motivated, contributing factors are physical activity, good health, confident and inspired teachers, variations in teaching methods, evaluation and guidance, defined goals, and pupil participation.

In terms of learning strategies, the reform proposes that children should be made aware of what they

have learned and what they need to do to achieve their goals, and they should learn strategies for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own work. The reform further suggests that the pupils should be made aware of their own abilities and strengths and how they function in different learning situations.

In regards to the accommodation of individual needs, it is clearly stated in the reform that this is a matter of adapting to individual needs within the framework of the regular and common school (otherwise special education legislation applies). The pupils should be given the opportunity to experience joy and achievements, and a sense of contribution to the group they find themselves in. Pupils should furthermore experience challenges that require them to make an effort to achieve alone or with others, but that are still obtainable. Diversity in the group should be valued, such as abilities, interests, backgrounds, sex, language, social skills, and talents. Each pupil should be given the opportunity to develop an learn equally to everyone else, in an including learning environment.

The accommodation of individual needs may be achieved by the use of a variety of teaching materials, methods, and organisation and intensity of the education. Pupils are different from each other, they use different learning strategies, and they reach national competence goals at different rates.

4.3.5. The actual study to be conducted – an overview

4.3.5.1.   Research question

"to what degree, and how, do the professionals in the operating core of primary schools influence what happens to the Kunnskapsløft (the strategic plan) when introduced to the working strategy in schools (the patterns of action)?"

4.3.5.2.   Hypotheses

− The schools and the individual professionals vary as to whether or not the Kunnskapsløft has produced changes in how the people in the operating core perform their work (working strategy)
− Different schools understand and use the Kunnskapsløft differently, as their understandings and implementation of the reform are dependent on existing working strategies of the operating core
− Some schools and individual professionals may attempt to redefine what they already do in ways that are compliant with the Kunnskapsløft, without actually changing much

4.3.5.3.   Selected parameters assumed to be representative of the Kunnskapsløft

- Teaching the pupils how to learn (motivation and learning strategies)

- The accommodation of individual needs, and thereby the integration of all pupils

In the next section, I will present and discuss how I will go about trying to answer the research question, and how I will explore the hypotheses.

5. THE EMPIRICISM

5.1.   METHODS

5.1.1. Population

I have established that I am interested in exploring what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced in schools, and I have chosen to focus on primary schools. Accordingly, all primary schools in Norway would be defined as my population, as they are all professional organisations required to implement the Kunnskapsløft.

The studying of all primary schools in my population is unrealistic in terms of both time and available resources, and it is unnecessary. I am not aiming to prove that certain phenomenas exist in all schools, nor am I trying to find terms for describing schools that are universally applicable. Rather, my goal is to explore and describe something that is not, to my knowledge, well understood and which likely varies between schools. Accordingly only a few schools need to be studied.

5.1.2. Representativity

When the whole population can not be studied, one would often aim to select a sample that is at least representative, possessing similar characteristics as the larger population. This is often achieved by the random sampling of participants, assuming that the method ensures the sample is as similar to the population as possible, as selection criteria will not skew the results (Jacobsen, 2005). The use of random sampling of participants would probably turn out very costly, as I would be sampling people from the whole country, and maybe having to travel far to meet with the participants. For a masters thesis of a limited time frame and resources, this is not an option for me.

Because I do not know what to expect and what results the study will produce, I can not easily draw an attempted or simulated representative sample either, by ensuring that key characteristics relevant

to the study are representative. I will simply not know which characteristics are relevant before I have explored the concept in more detail. Accordingly, the experimentation with characteristics will have to be a topic for a potential future study.

Additionally, I do not have unlimited access to informants, as my network is limited. Furthermore, teachers and principals frequently receive requests to participate in various studies, and have to limit their participation to a few studies only. Accordingly, I will have to use what may be called a "convenience" sample, meaning I need to use whoever I have access to (Jacobsen, 2005). Nevertheless, I will aim to select participants that are representative in obvious characteristics that are relevant to the theory and questions of this paper. Therefore, I will try to select participants from both layers of Mintzberg´s model (strategic apex locally and the operating core (teachers)), and I will try to ensure that participants have several years of work experience and that they have worked as teachers and/or principals both before and after the implementation of the Kunnskapsløft.

The issues with sampling and representativity do not in my opinion offer much of a challenge in this study anyhow. As mentioned before, the aim of this particular study is not to identify shared characteristics that are representative of the population. Rather, I aim to reveal potential differences between schools that will support or reject my expectations regarding the operating core and its influence on strategy. I am exploring the topic, and trying to describe the phenomenon, not to test it. In order to achieve this goal, all I need to do is speak to knowledgeable informants who can describe to me what actually happens to the Kunnskapsløft in schools, and thereby help me answer my research questions. At a later stage, someone may use my study to try and identify similarities/differences/gaps that they can further explore (Jacobsen, 2005), but the exploration will have to begin somewhere. For now, it is an either/or matter; does what actually happens in a selection of schools regarding strategy support my expectations of the influence of professionals, or not?

My expectation will be somewhat supported even if this influence is present in just one single school, indicating that the concept should be further explored and that it may be present in other schools as well. Metaphorically, seeing one black swan indicates that black swans do exist, even though all the others are white. This is also applicable to the context of my research question. We do not need to investigate large amounts of schools to identify a concept and suggest that it exists. As a

matter of fact I suggest that 5 or 6 different schools is enough for the purposes of this study, and that any more would produce so much data the analysis would not be thorough enough to address the questions sufficiently.

In summary then, I will aim to study 5-6 schools that are accessible to me. I will not strive for them to be representative of the population, but I will make sure the topics I am studying are relevant to the participants and their experience, and that they have some knowledge of the Kunnskapsløft Only then can I explore the research question with them in interesting ways.

5.1.3. Method of study

Because I am studying a phenomenon which is poorly understood, I need to use an open method of study which can accommodate for new and unexpected information as defined by the reality of the informants. The study is therefore explorative and qualitative in nature, and data are collected in the form of words that express meaning (Jacobsen, 2005).

The information will be collected by explorative personal interviews, where teachers and principals are given the opportunity to speak of their own experiences with the Kunnskapsløft. The aim of the study is not to understand causality and relevant mechanisms and processes in detail, but to explore and describe processes that come into play when strategies are attempted implemented in professional organisations. Explorative interviews are open to details, moderations, uniqueness and contexts, and they let the interviewees define the correct understanding of topics, based on their own perspectives and viewpoints.

The fact that the interviews are conducted in person and not by telephone is likely to make it easier for me to prompt interesting topics, to observe body language, to encourage the participants by showing interest, and to keep an open and comfortable dialogue with them, without interrupting elements disturbing the interview setting. As I will explain later in this section, I will also give the participants a section of the Kunnskapsløft during the interview and read through it with them. This is likely easier when meeting with the participants in person.

However, there are also limitations to personal interviews which the reader should be aware of, in addition to the issues of the representativeness which have been addressed in the previous section.

In example, they are time consuming, and only a few participants can be selected. In addition, qualitative interviews provide large amounts of information that may be complex and difficult to understand and interpret. Even still, not all the information can be understood and analysed anyhow. One can only use the information that seems relevant for the theory in question, and achieve increased understanding even though it is not complete. This is what will I attempt to do, and I choose to spend the necessary time that it takes to perform the interviews, as I believe it to be important, and the appropriate choice of method for this particular study.

5.1.4. Operationalisation and detection of the Kunnskapsløft and strategy in schools

Having decided that personal interviews is the most appropriate method for this study, the next question that presents itself is how I can use those interviews to gather data that will help me understand what i want to understand. How can I operationalise and measure the implementation of motivation and learning strategies and the accommodation of individual needs? And how will i go by detecting the influence of professionals on strategy and implementation?

The influence of professionals on strategy is abstract, integrated in the organisation, based on perception, and may take several different shapes and directions. Accordingly, as mentioned earlier, the method of personal explorative interviews is useful as it does not measure what you or I define as the Kunnskapsløft. Rather it measures the experiences that the professionals themselves have. One could even say that the participants operationalise the Kunnskapsløft, based on their own perceptions, understandings, and experiences, which is exactly what I am interested in for the purposes of this study.

By investigating both the operating core and the strategic apex, the views of both the true operating core and the principals who hold two roles as a local strategic apex and as part of the operating core in the larger context, will be represented. In this way, the concepts are operationalised by both layers in each school, with the possibility of detecting variances between the layers. Further, by interviewing participants from different schools, I allow for the opportunity to detect potential differences between schools, as my hypotheses suggests this may be present.

For a strategy to be implemented, it seems essential that the people required to use it are familiar with it, and have knowledge about it. Further, a natural assumption of strategy may be that people

who are to implement it need to have a positive attitude towards it, otherwise they are likely to resist its implementation. Lastly, the actual use of the strategy is important as this is where the implementation lies, determining whether it is evident in the organisation, and whether differences exist between schools. I choose to assume the above points when developing my interview guide. I expect that these assumptions will help me further understand and describe how and whether the Kunnskapsløft is understood and implemented in schools, and therefore I will ask the participants about their knowledge of, attitude towards, and perceived implementation of the Kunnskapsløft.

I argued earlier in this paper that we need a couple of selected parameters of the Kunnskapsløft. The parameters of learning how to learn and the accommodation of individual needs are difficult to measure, and provide wide topics that may be difficult to talk about in ways that are meaningful and characterised by shared concepts to both the participants and me as the researcher, and between participants. To address this, I have developed two texts describing the parameters to ensure that we are talking about the same themes. The wording of the texts was retrieved from the Læringsplakat and from the relevant paragraphs in the "Principles for the education" section of the Kunnskapsløft. Within each of the texts certain words are highlighted, based on which words I consider to be the most practical and concrete descriptions of expected behaviour and actions (see appendix C and D). The purpose of highlighting the words is to provide the participants with common grounds for them to comment on, which is also concrete and reasonably easy to link to organisational behaviour.

5.1.5. The participants

All participants work in the municipality of Sandnes. The 9th largest municipality in Norway, located in the south-west of Norway, with a population of approximately 66 000 people, and 22 primary schools (Sandnes kommune, 2010). I myself work in this municipality, and have reasonably easy access to people working in it. In addition I expect it to be useful to the study that the participants find themselves managed by the same municipality director, and thereby the same formal guidelines and perceptions at the municipality level. Accordingly, variations in schools within the municipality can more likely be attributed to processes at each school and not to the next level of the hierarchy.

Before recruiting participants, I asked permission from the municipality director in Sandnes, by email, to do the study. She agreed to this, and suggested that i call the principals rather than email them, as they are very busy and more likely to say yes if invited by telephone.

I was given names of schools by the principal at one school, based on who he thought would be interested in the study. Each principal was contacted by phone, and requested to participate in the study. One was difficult to get in touch with, so I sent him/her an email instead, informing of the study. With the exception of one principal, every one of them agreed to be interviewed. The selection process may potentially be considered a flaw to the study, as the principals were selected by another principal. However, the purpose of the study is not to generalise results, but to describe a phenomenon which is unique and likely different between all schools, due to different operating cores. Therefore I do not expect the selection process to influence the results significantly, as the schools have different operating cores regardless of other characteristics.

Each principal (except one, who I could not get hold of) was, by telephone, presented with a brief information of the study and the chosen methods, and were requested to participate in a one-hour interview. After agreeing to participate, they also received an identical email informing of the study, to ensure that all participants had received the same information (one principal received the email only). Additionally they were requested to provide a teacher who could also be interviewed (see appendix A for copy of email which each participant received before the interviews). The principals were asked to select which teachers should participate. They were also given the choice of whether the teacher and the principal should be interviewed together or separately. I chose to give them this option both to increase the chances of them finding time to sit with me, and because I was curious as to whether the different settings would produce different answers. I did not send any information to the teachers before the interviews, assuming that the principals would forward the email I sent them when requesting the participation of teachers.

All together, five principals and three teachers from a total of five different schools participated in the study. At two schools the principal and the teacher were interviewed together, and at one school, they were interviewed separately. At two schools, only the principals were interviewed. I had originally planned to interview two more teachers, but after speaking to the eight other participants, I browsed my data and concluded that I had enough information to perform a good analysis, and that I was not getting much new information from the last interviews than i had from the first ones. This decision was also concerned with the fact that the teachers are very busy and that the interviews required me to occupy a part of their work days that they otherwise would have spent

performing other tasks that were also important. Accordingly, I concluded that as long as I thought I had enough data, I would not take up more of the teachers´time than what was absolutely necessary. However, in hindsight, while evaluating and discussing my results, I reevaluated and regretted my decision to not follow up on finding two more participants to interviews. The main reason for my regret, was that as my analysis progressed, I realised that there seems to be interesting variations between teachers and principals and how they use and understand the Kunnskapsløft, that I had not fully expected and therefore not allowed for the exploration of. This will influence my results as some of the perspective of the teachers will be missing, as well as the differences between teachers an principals in regards to the perception and use of the Kunnskapsløft.

The interview settings may also affect the validity of the study because some participants may provide different answers in the presence of a colleague/manager than they would if interviewed individually. However, the interview settings may also ensure a wider understanding of the questions at hand, because some participants have the chance to speak freely with no one else present, whereas others are stimulated and prompted by the other person´s comments and ideas. Disagreements and discussions may also surface when interviewing more than one person at a time, providing more in-depth and dynamic information, as well as awareness of processes that have occurred in the organisations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this factor may also be considered a flaw in the study, as one can make fewer direct comparisons due to the different interview settings, and the settings may have produced different answers. However, in most of the interviews, both the principals and the teacher representatives participated actively, though the principals generally spoke a little bit more than did the teachers.

The selected teachers largely had special roles at their schools. One of them was an inspector, one was a teacher with a dedicated role towards social work in the school, while one was a teacher only. I will refer to them all as teachers in the method section, in the interest of confidentiality so they can not be easily identified.

The large representation of special roles was due to the fact that regular teachers have teaching commitments throughout most of the day, whereas teachers with various extra responsibilities have more available time that is not attached to teaching classes. Accordingly they could more easily find time to be interviewed. Nevertheless, a selection criteria of the study was that the representatives of

the teachers perform minimum weekly classroom teaching in which they are required to use the Kunnskapsløft actively. I chose this criteria because it was important to me to speak to someone who actually use the Kunnskapsløft in classroom settings.

With regards to this study, the special roles could however still be a flaw. One may for example speculate that people who get selected to perform such roles have certain characteristics. Similarly it is possible that principals select participants that are likely to agree with their own opinions and understandings, or that are particularly knowledgeable of the Kunnskapsløft. These are factors that are difficult to eliminate due to the availability of participants, and I choose to simply be aware of the potential flaws when analysing the results of the study. Also, even though they have various roles in addition to teaching, they are still likely to have interesting and probably different perspectives of the Kunnskapsløft than do the principals. Therefore I still expect the results to be useful and to some extent representative of the opinions of teachers as a group.

5.1.6.   How was the study done?

The same structure and guide was used for interviewing both teachers and principals (se appendix B, C, D, as well as descriptions in the "*Operationalisation and detection of the Kunnskapsløft and strategy in schools*" section of this paper).

First, the participants were informed of the topic of the study, namely to what degree the teachers in schools influence whether and how the Kunnskapsløft is implemented. The participants were then informed that I distinguish between planned and actual (working) strategy, between formulated plans and actual behaviour. The participants were also informed that I distinguish between teachers and management (principal/inspector) for the purposes of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured (Jacobsen, 2005). They were not planned in terms of closed questions, but some key words and topics were planned in advance. The interviews were carried out at each teacher and principal´s workplace, in closed rooms, with only the interviewee(s) and the interviewer present in the room. I was the interviewer every time, and a recorder was used. Participants were informed that the name of schools and individual participants would not be published, that the recordings would be deleted after the completion of the thesis, and that only the interviewer and the participating professor at the University would have access to the recordings.

During the first part of the interview, after presenting information on name, sex, position, and duration of work experience in and outside their current workplace, the participants were asked how much knowledge they consider themselves to have of the content of the Kunnskapsløft, and what their general perception of and attitude towards the reform is.

In the second part of the interview, the participants were presented with the two texts described in the operationalisation section of this paper (see also appendix for the texts as well as the interview guide).

For each of the parameters, the participants were asked the following questions, though the formulations of the questions varied:

- Has this formulation had any impact on your school?
- If yes, what has it lead to/how is the formulation accommodated for in your school?
- To what degree have the teachers influenced what has happened/not happened?

The questions are based directly on the hypotheses related to my research question (see theory section). The goals of asking the questions were to find out if the reform had an impact on the schools at all, to determine how the reform had an impact (necessary to be able to identify differences between schools), and what role the professionals played in the introduction of the reform, as this is the key to my research question.

At the end of each interview, participants were given the opportunity to provide additional relevant comments or clarifications on what had been discussed.

Although a pre-developed and semi-structured interview guide was used, the subjects were not always addressed in the same sequence during each interview. The interviewees were presented with the topics at the beginning of each interview, and addressed the questions in their own sequence. Furthermore, I prompted certain topics during the interviews, asked additional questions, and asked participants to clarify some comments. Those questions varied between the interviews, depending on the nature of the information that was provided. Not every participant had the time within the one hour timeframe to address all of the highlighted words. Nevertheless, they all had

time to provide some examples for each parameter. During the interviews, I stressed that it was not important for the participants to address all topics, but to provide examples of the ones they thought important and relevant to their school and to my study.

Each interview lasted anywhere between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 18 minutes. All the interviews were carried out before I started analysing the results.

5.1.7. Organising and analysing the data

I used a recorder during the interviews, and took notes. I did not find it necessary to transcribe the interviews, as I was not searching for hidden meanings or patterns in the data. Rather, i wanted to identify broad patterns, attitudes, opinions and understandings that I could use to explore my research question. Therefore I used the notes I had taken during the interviews, and simply browsed through the tapes to make sure I had not missed any important information in my notes.

I entered the bullet point notes that I had written during the interviews, onto my computer. Next, I used the headings of my hypotheses, and cut and pasted the bullet points that were relevant to the different hypotheses under the associated headings. While working with the data, additional categories, patterns, or topics surfaced that I found interesting with regards to my study and the selected theory. I will introduce those categories in the next chapter.

The use of headings associated with the hypotheses as well as a few additional headings, is also how I will present my results in the next chapter. Furthermore I will use quotations from the recordings to illustrate and exemplify feedback from the participants. For each of the headings I will provide some results and comments from the participants, before I comment on each of the sections and link them to relevant theory. I will make the comments and present the associated theory after each heading, before moving on to the next topic, as I believe this will make the results and discussion easier to follow. Additionally, towards the end of the results and discussion section, I will attempt to pull it all together, and provide a more general discussion of the results in relation to the theory chapter and my expectations in regards to the results. Lastly, I will address the general validity and reliability of the results, and the degree to which they can be generalised to larger populations, or even to different organisations.

Before presenting the results, I would like to stress that although the chosen parameters were very useful in providing topics for me to discuss with the participants that were reasonably concrete and that provided a useful starting point for discussion, I will not assign much attention to the parameters for the remainder of this paper. As I have indicated earlier, this study is not about evaluating how and whether the parameters are implemented as much as it is about identifying processed that are generated in professional organsations when facing top-down strategies, regardless of what they are. The parameters are simply just useful starting points of discussion that the participants have taken what they wanted from, and used for reflection.

Please note as well that the language of communication during the interviews was Norwegian, and that I have translated the results to English before reporting them. Translations are always subjective to some extent, and may be prone to misunderstandings. Nevertheless, I believe that I have managed to report the meaning and the main content as provided by the participants. However, because of the language element, I have chosen not to report any direct quotes from the participants. I have rather reported the content of the responses, simply because I believe word by word translations are more prone to misunderstandings. Furthermore, by me reporting content rather than quotes, readers are aware of the element of interpretation, and I do not falsely give the impression that the quotes are 100% correct when they can not possibly be so. Unfortunately, the lack of quotes in my opinion also makes papers less dynamic to read and may come across as less concerned with reality and real life experiences than direct quotes are. I nevertheless, in the interest of providing correct and reliable results, believe that the use of translated quotes for this paper would be inappropriate. I therefore attempt to present several real-life examples and situations as provided by the participants, to promote the dynamic and "real" nature of this study in an alternative way.

5.2.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I will start this section by discussing general attitudes towards the Kunnskapsløft, as provided by the first question at each interview. I have already argued why attitudes are relevant, as positive attitudes likely facilitate the implementation of reforms.

Another interesting theme that surfaced during the interviews and which I expect to be useful to our understanding of reforms in professional organisations, is how several participants made frequent comparisons between the current and the previous reform (L97), in which the latter is even more similar to traditional corporate plans than is the Kunnskapsløft. Accordingly, I will dedicate a

section in the results and discussion to the differences between the two reforms, as I believe it will provide useful information about my research question and the influence of the operating core on strategy in professional organisation.

I will then follow up with results related to the three hypotheses as presented at the end of the theory chapter, before I move on to a heading which addresses management styles in the local strategic apex. Several participants mentioned management styles which I found relevant to Mintzberg´s theories, and I therefore choose to discuss this in some detail as well, although it does not fit naturally with any of the initially formulated hypotheses. The interesting observation I made while analysing the result and which I will explore further, is how management styles can reflect the characteristics of the operating cores in professional organisations, and how the operating cores operate and respond to management.

The labeling of the different headings or categories derive from the hypotheses, and from topics that the participants simply spent much time discussing. As previously stated I am not searching for hidden meanings, I am exploring a topic that the participants know more about than I do. Accordingly, I assume and trust that what they shed focus on when presented with my research question and my interview guide/parameters, is relevant and important to my study. I have also, obviously, made sure to select information for the result and discussion section that I can naturally link to my theoretical viewpoint and my research question.

Underneath some of the headings, I have created sub-categories of topics and examples that were particularly interesting, and that the participants spent much time discussing. I will not address each of the highlighted words in the selected parameters and the interview guides systematically, some might not even be mentioned at all in the results section. This is due to the fact that in open interviews such as the ones in this study, the participants define what is important, and they choose which topics should be discussed more than others. I did not, during the interviews, make a point of discussing each and every subject. However, I did encourage the participants to provide a variety of examples and relate them to a few different topics within the parameters. Consequently, I am now able to present a variety of comments and examples related to both parameters, with headings simply derived from what the participants spent time talking about.

As a consequence of my chosen method of study being open, explorative, personal interviews, there are obviously large amounts of information that were provided during the interviews which will not be included in this paper. I have selected results that I believe to be relevant to our understanding of reforms or planned strategies in professional organisation, but my opinions are subjective and coloured by what I am looking for and what my theoretical viewpoint is. Therefore I do not claim to be objective, though I have aimed to be somewhat neutral. Rather I provide an exploration of a topic based on, and coloured by, my personal perspective and understanding of the themes.

Similarly, the results that I have selected to focus on and the perceptions and understandings I make of them, are skewed by the same factors and by me being a subjective human being. Accordingly it is important that the readers view the results and analysis/discussion for what they are – subjective explorations of a topic, coloured by the participants as well as the researcher, but nonetheless interesting and useful information based on academic theory and a research question. The study can further be a starting point for future research on the topic, and for testing and elaboration.

I will now start the reporting of the results by describing and discussion the comments the participants made of their attitude towards the Kunnskapsløft.

5.2.1. Attitude towards the Kunnskapsløft

Every one of the participants used terms such as good, fantastic, pretty good, and positive when describing their general attitude towards and perception of the Kunnskapsløft. A few participants expressed a particular liking towards the general section, and the basis that the Kunnskapsløft provides for understanding and perceiving pupils. Furthermore, some participants said they appreciate the framework that the reform provides for their work.

Nevertheless, four participants said that the reform is ambitious, and that some of the goals are difficult to achieve. One principal described a few particular goals as politically correct, and not very concrete and useful to work with. Another principal said that the Kunnskapsløft is extensive with many and demanding goals, and pointed out that each of the goals are mandatory, none are optional.

Other general comments that were made regarding the perception of and attitudes towards the

Kunnskapsløft, were that the local freedom that is given to the schools is appreciated, and that the increased focus on goals and what the pupils should learn is useful and, as stated by one participant, important for learning.

Although the participants generally expressed positivity towards the Kunnskapsløft, participants from four of the schools spoke of reforms in general in more moderating or even negative terms. One suggested that transitions between reforms are often slow, that they require teachers to "unlearn" what they have already learned, and that they then need to acquire knowledge of the new reform. These are demanding processes. In addition, not all schools even need new reforms according to a participant, but they are forced to obey by them as they are introduced by the government. Another participant pointed out that new reforms are presented more and more frequently, and naturally spark resistance, particularly if the teachers feel that they are not necessary and useful to the organisation. Even still, several of the participants pointed out that teachers and management generally feel more positive towards new reforms as they become familiar with them, receive training, and start using them actively in their daily work.

5.2.1.1.   Comments and link to theory

Judging by the responses, the participants generally expressed a reasonably positive attitude towards the Kunnskapsløft, but they are somewhat less positive about reforms as a concept. The responses indicate that the participants perceive the Kunnskapsløft as an ambitious reform with many and lofty goals, however they seem to have accepted it and even come to like it as they have become more familiar with it. The responses further suggest that the participants agree with and can identify with the views of and attitudes towards children that the reform represents, and the base that the general section and the framework of the reform provide for their work. As defined previously, the general section addresses the culture, values, and knowledge that education should be built upon.

The positive attitudes as expressed during the interviews are likely helpful to the implementation of the Kunnskapsløft, as the professionals seem to have accepted the reform. The fact that the professionals feel they can identify with the values and general basis and views of children and education, is also likely to ease the implementation processes. This agreement in values may also be a contributing reason why the professionals seem to distinguish between the Kunnskapsløft and

other reforms. The Kunnskapsløft may be accepted simply because it largely agrees with the perceptions and the pigeonholes of the professionals, or because the pigeonholes have gradually been shaped towards the Kunnskapsløft in the last four years since implementation. In contrast, reforms as a concept may seem more threatening as the professionals do not know what the content of them are and whether they can identify with them.

The positive attitude towards the Kunnskapsløft as in compliance with the values of the operating core would be expected with consideration to Mintzberg´s theories. Professionals need to base their working strategies on personal perceptions and their knowledge and skills, rather on just forced strategies. The initial idea of top-down reforms may be negative in the view of professionals, but when the reform actually complies with their values it becomes easier to accept and implement. Even still, the remarks about the reform being ambitious and difficult to work with may impede implementation somewhat, as the reform seems like an unrealistic expectation in the view of some of the professionals, though the content does not necessarily compete with the personal perceptions of the professionals.

When the participants spoke of or questioned the use of frequent reforms in general, I noticed that they did not consider or speak much of the motivation behind or purpose of the reforms and the reason they even exist. After completing the interviews, I am under the impression that a reform is perceived as just something that "needs to be done" by all, and when it does, as much freedom and, and as much compliance with current personal work methods as possible, is appreciated by the professionals. Good or bad, reforms are mandatory and have to be implemented, which is demanding and time consuming. Accordingly, the local freedom is important to the professionals, as it means less restrictions on their work, and allows for their judgement and discretion in their daily work. I even speculate that the level of ambitiousness and "loftiness" may be a consequence of the Kunnskapsdepartement realising that the reform needs to be general enough for the professionals to work reasonably freely within it, while still being able to mediate their personal and professional perceptions with the reform. This line of thought will be further explored in the next section when the Kunnskapsløft is compared to the previous reform in the Norwegian school system.

The fact that the participants did not, during the interviews, dedicate focus to the basic intentions of reforms in the first place, makes me question whether they believe them to actually serve an

important purpose in their daily work. On the contrary however, some participants indicate that they appreciate goals to work by, and that they wish the goals were more concrete. This may suggest that they still use, and find necessary, the formulation of clear goals to work towards, provided they have the freedom to choose how to reach those goals. This theme will be clarified under the heading following this section.

For now, I nevertheless suggest that the responses in regards to attitudes towards the Kunnskapsløft are more or less expected, as based on Mintzberg´s propositions. Because professionals are highly educated and work by the standardisation of skills, because they are independent and enjoy control over their own work, and because they work by learned pigeonholes, they would be expected to prefer as little interference from the government as possible. This is demonstrated by the appreciation of local freedom, and the general scepticism towards reforms, although the Kunnskapsløft seems to be largely accepted. When they have accepted that some interference is necessary, the professionals naturally hope for it to cause as little intrusion as possible, and for the distance between the content of the reform and their professional skills and opinions to be as little as possible. Consequently, because of the local freedom, the professionals can largely do what they have always done without changing much. I will revisit this point as well later in the paper, when discussing redefinition of existing behaviours, my third hypothesis.

In an attempt to summarise my interpretations in regards to the professionals´attitudes towards the Kunnskapsløft, I suggest the following; Professionals are generally moderate in their liking of top-down reforms, and they do not seem to be focused on the purpose of such reforms. However they accept that the reforms exist, and they are familiar with the Kunnskapsløft as the current reform. The professionals have a reasonably positive view of the Kunnskapsløft, possibly because it is general and allows for local freedom, and because the professionals report that they agree with the content of it. I therefore assume that the reform is a good match with the standardised skills of professionals, which facilitates its implementation and acceptance. Accordingly, professionals can largely "be professionals" and work by their standardised skills, independence, high levels of control, and professional knowledge as characteristic of the operating core, within the framework of the Kunnskapsløft.

Strongly related to the themes of the discussion above, the next pattern of interest that developed

during the interviews was that of the Kunnskapsløft versus the previous reform in the Norwegian school system. As I will attempt to show under the next heading, this further demonstrates some of the points that I have made in this section.

5.2.2. The Kunnskapsløft versus L97

During the interviews, and particularly while speaking of the attitude the professionals have towards the Kunnskapsløft, several participants compared the Kunnskapsløft to the previous school reform, L97 (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2005; information about the reform has been removed from the governments website, so the information below is based on information from the participants only. This is sufficient for the information required for the purposes of the point I am about to make). According to the participants L97 was used actively for about 10 years, and it was quite different to the Kunnskapsløft although in some ways also similar.

The participants agreed that the L97 reform was very detailed in defining what methodology should be used in the classrooms, and that it was not focused on goals in the same way the Kunnskapsløft is. However, three of the participants said that the general section on the main ideas and humanistic views behind the reforms are similar.

The Kunnskapsløft is, by the participants, perceived as more open to variation than L97, though very specific about what goals should be met. Nevertheless, the newest reform says little about how the learning should occur in regards to methodology, as opposed to L97.

Even though the L97 reform said more about teaching methods, participants from four different schools, teachers as well as principals, described the Kunnskapsløft as more concrete and easier to work with, referring to the formulated goals in the subject syllabuses. Even still, the participants said that the Kunnskapsløft requires more work by the teachers than did the L97 reform, because local syllabuses need to be developed and adjusted as required.

5.2.2.1.   Comments and link to theory

The comparisons that the participants made between the two reforms, and actually also the nature of the two reforms, further support my expectations as based on the theory chapter of this paper.

I have already visited the idea that the participants distinguish between the Kunnskapsløft and reforms in general, and that the participants, due to them being professionals, appreciate the local freedom of the Kunnskapsløft.

As demonstrated by the comments on the Kunnskapsløft versus L97, participants expressed dislike towards the more controlling reform. They expressed a preference of goal formulations over methodological formulations, namely how they should actually perform their day-to-day work, which concerns their pigeonholes. As we have seen in the theory chapter of this paper, pigeonholes should ideally be developed by standardised skills and collective choice, and they are unlikely to change by forced implementations from the administrative fiat. Goals on the other hand, might not be so difficult and dramatic to change. The pigeonholes are a set of responses to be used in response to situations as evaluated by professional discretion and judgements, and are in some ways the core of professionalism. Goals interfere less with daily work than do methodological interferences, as they do not directly address pigeonholes. Accordingly, professionals can maintain their professionalism or proficiency more within the Kunnskapsløft than the L97 reform.

I will even go as far as to speculate that the formulation and existence of the Kunnskapsløft may at least partly be a result of the professionals resisting the direct top-down supervision and procedural ways of L97. Judging by the descriptions provided by the participants in context with Mintzbergs theoretical viewpoints, I suspect the methodological procedures of L97 are really more appropriate in machine organisations with larger technostructures. Taking into account that the professionals might have objected to the previous reform, or the idea that the efficiency oriented L97 reform may not have been successful as a result of a mismatch between the type of organisation and management structure, a new reform may have forced its entrance. However these are only speculations as I do not in reality know enough about how and why the Kunnskapsløft came about to draw such conclusions. The exploration of those speculations will have to remain a possible theme for a potential future study. What I do know however, is that new reforms are unlikely to be introduced if the "old" ones actually work.

What I can conclude nonetheless, based on the reponses of the participants without speculations, is that the Kunnskapsløft is more in tune with how professionals work than the L97 reform was, as the Kunnskapsløft allows for more use of standardised skills, and increased independency and control

for the professionals. I can also conclude that the professionals of this study prefer the top-down formulation of goals over top-down formulations of how they should actually reach those goals, namely methodology and actual work strategies. This conclusion supports both the previous suggestions I have made, and some of the expectations I have formulated based on Mintzberg´s theories. As an additional remark, the participants´claim of the general section of the Kunnskapsløft and L97 being similar can also be incorporated into the theory section of this paper, as the general section has gradually, through training, education and collective choice over 10 years, become part of the professionals´ standardised skills. Accordingly, the Kunnskapsløft is increasingly likely to be accepted as in agreement with how the professionals work.

Moving on from the attitudes and perceptions the participants have of reforms, the next topic to be addressed, is more behaviour oriented. We will now be looking at variances between operating cores as to whether the Kunnskapsløft has actually caused any changes.

5.2.3. Hypothesis 1
The schools and the individual professionals vary as to whether or not the Kunnskapsløft has produced changes in how the people in the operating core perform their work (working strategy)

For this section I will use an example as provided by professionals, to explore the extent to which schools have incorporated the Kunnskapsløft. Obviously, the Kunnskapsløft and even the chosen parameters, is wide and complex, and what will presented here is only one example to stimulate reflection on the topic rather than to make suggestions as to whether the Kunnskapsløft as a reform is implemented or not. The example concerns physical activity simply because each and every one of the participants visited the topic, and because I find it to be an interesting point of reflection. Also, physical activity is the easiest and clearest topic for discussing the hypothesis, because it has a mandatory circular attached to it. The circular is far more concrete than other elements of the Kunnskapsløft, thereby making it easier to address the question of implementation or not.

5.2.3.1.   Physical activity
Physical activity is mentioned in the Kunnskapsløft, in the "learning how to learn" section, in the "principles of the education" chapter. When asked directly about this parameter as it was addressed in the interview guide, several teachers and principals referred to a circular associated with the

Kunnskapsløft. The circular obliges the schools to offer pupils from grade 5 till 7 a minimum of 76 hours of physical activity in addition to regular physical education, equalling approximately 1 hour each week (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2009b). The circular in question is authorised by the Opplæringslov as of August 2009, and each school is given some local freedom of how this requirement should be met. Nevertheless, the circular clearly states that physical activity should not replace recess or classes, and it should lead to a time-expansion of the school day for the pupils. The circular further points out that physical activity should be carried out regularly, and that the physical activity classes should not be too short (no less than 10 minutes).

These are reasonably specific guidelines, authorised by law, but still each of the schools in this study have solved this very differently. At one school, the physical activity is organised twice a week, based on teaching stations, where the pupils can choose which activities they would like to participate in. The school has further added chess to these sessions, arguing the brain exercise is also a form of exercise/activity. Two assistants manage the different classes or stations.

At another school, the physical activity is spread out over four days, with one class doing 30 minutes of physical activity each day, twice a week for each class, and with one assistant in charge. At this particular school, the assistant plans and performs a chosen activity with the children for each session.

A third school has chosen not to do organised physical activity as such. According to the principal this was a decision that needed to me made due to cutbacks in human resources. Accordingly, the school in question chose to focus on what they already did that is associated with physical activity, such as encouraging physical activity at recess, bicycle projects, purchasing extra equipment that encourages physical activity, etc. At this school, two employees were dedicated the responsibility of physical activity, purchasing equipment, etc.

At the next school, the principal started by saying that physical activity is an area of improvement for their school. Nevertheless, two assistants reportedly carry out organised physical activity with year 5-7 each week.

Lastly, at the fifth school, the physical activity sessions are carried out all in one day, by two

assistants. It used to be organised differently over more days, but management reevaluated due to several different factors, and chose to concentrate on the one day.

One of the participants who was interviewed provided an additional interesting perspective. (S)he used to work as a teacher in a different municipality approximately 1.5 years back, and experienced the introduction of the physical activity circular while working there. According to the participant, management at the previous school chose not to make any changes as a suggested by the circular. They argued that the natural environment and location of the school required them to walk more than other schools while at excursions, that they had longer recess than other schools, with particularly good opportunities for physical activity, and equipment and toys that stimulated activity. Other than that, they chose not to give the circular much attention, and teachers nor management ever really spoke of the circular. When municipality representatives were made aware of this, they contacted the school and asked them to change this practice, and to implement the circular as intended. According to the teacher providing this example still no changes occurred, and the school continued to do what they had always done.

5.2.3.2.   Comments and link to theory

The physical activity part of the "learning how to learn" parameter gave me a direct grounds of comparisons between schools, and it was very specific as to what should be done and how. In agreement with my hypotheses, variations did surface when participants were asked about the subject, despite clear guidelines.

For the purposes of this hypothesis, I will consider the principal part of the operating core, and the Kunnskapsdepartement/Utdanningsdirektorat the strategic apex. This because the principals have not had influence on the circular in question.

Two schools (including one in a different municipality) actively choose not to implement the physical activity as described in the circular, and they argue and reason why they decided not to do so. Other schools apparently more or less follow the guidelines, but there are still variations as to how they carry the activity out on a day-to-day basis.

Seeing this in context with the hypotheses of variations of implementation based on professional

influence, there is most definitely empirical evidence to support the existence of such variations. The fact that two schools choose not to implement the circular as is, indicates that professional reasoning may outweigh centrally developed requirements. By using their professional opinions and reasoning, the schools justify doing it "their own way" despite top-down obligations. Similarly, the professionals at each of the schools have all understood and implemented the circular in different ways. Even though some of them may be adhering to the circular and its guidelines, this again demonstrates the influence of the operating core at each school. They are all provided with the same guidelines, and end up with very different outcomes, if any change at all. I argue that this must, at least partly, be attributed to differences in operating cores. The guidelines are the same for every school, management for the five schools participating in this study is identical, and I presume that resources are distributed equally as well. This leaves us with an important variance between schools, namely the operating core. There are obviously other variances as well, but in light of my understanding of Mintzbergs theories of professional organisations, I argue that the operating core is central in influencing whether or not the circular has been implemented as is.

Consequently, the responses from the participants in regards to physical activity, support the hypothesis suggesting that differences do exist regarding the extent to which the Kunnskapsløft has produced change in schools. This fits nicely with the theory selected for this paper, as the influence of the operating core in professional organisations may sometimes trump even legislation, as is the case with two schools. Their arguments for making their choices are seemingly valid and well thought through, but the variance between the top-down obligation and the behaviour of the operating core still exists. This is possibly due to the fact that the decisions and outlook of implementation are made in the administrative fiat, without the professionals having much influence by neither professional judgement or by collective choice. Accordingly, the ideas are not personally and professionally supported in the view of individual professionals and the operating core, meaning they are less likely to be prioritised by them.

Nevertheless it should be noted that the majority of the schools have indeed implemented the suggestion from the government as intended although by different measures. The differences of implementation and the reason such differences occur, will be further explored in the next section in which the different understandings and interpretations of the Kunnskapsløft as influenced by different operating cores will be addressed.

5.2.4. Hypothesis 2

Different schools understand and use the Kunnskapsløft differently, as their understandings and implementation of the reform are dependent on existing working strategies of the operating core

The principal at one school addressed this hypothesis directly, by pointing out that different schools do indeed perceive and use the Kunnskapsløft differently, as a consequence of the reform being very general and allowing for much local freedom. According to the principal in question this freedom and variations that follow such freedom, impede the possibility of creating a unified and equal school system. In contrast to the Kunnskapsløft, one principal provided an example of the school systems in Sweden and Finland, in which the reforms and subject syllabuses are more concrete, less comprehensive, and easier to work with. As such, the subject syllabuses are so detailed and concrete they can be used actively in the classroom as actual tools in teaching. This ensures more equality according to the principal describing the concept, as plans are developed in more detail centrally. A principal from a different school similarly said that teachers at their school have requested a more defined and detailed curriculum, similar to models used in Australia and New Zealand. According to the principal, the teachers have requested this because they feel that the schools should be less different from each other than they are today.

5.2.4.1.   Comments and link to theory

One principal points out that the general nature and freedom of the Kunnskapsløft prevents the unified and equal school system. Accordingly, it is evident by variations that different schools understand and use the reform differently. I assume for these purposes that the operating core of professionals are who interpret the Kunnskapsløft and define how to use it, presuming that the the systems the schools exist within are otherwise the same.

The fact that other principals also say that they themselves as well as teachers have wished for more concrete syllabuses with less room for local freedom to reduce differences, further supports and extends the notion of different understandings and implementations of the Kunnskapsløft across the municipalities.

This information supports my assumption that the operating core at each school affects how the

Kunnskapsløft is implemented and perceived, and that this in turn influences how the Kunnskapsløft comes to life in the behaviour of the professionals.

However, the comments that the participants made about wishing for reforms to be more concrete and detailed, contradict the previous conclusions of professionals wanting and needing to work independently with the possibility of using their professional knowledge, opinions, and standardised skills. Detailed reforms would likely reduce the local freedom of the professionals, and thereby become more similar to previous reforms that they themselves claimed to be skeptic of. However, I do not know the content of the reforms that the participants are referring to in other countries, and the methodology and pigeonholes may not be largely addressed by them, thereby still allowing for the professional skills. Alternatively it is possible that the professionals are fond of the idea of having clearer guidelines to work by and of a unified school system, without really considering the implications it may have for their own work. This would be an interesting topic to explore, but nevertheless beyond the scope of this paper.

Nonetheless I will, based on the responses of the participants, suggest the preliminary conclusion that differences do exist between schools in regards to how the Kunnskapsløft is understood and implemented. I further suggest that the professionals who use the reform, the operating core, are responsible for the interpretations and implementations of the reform. The influence of the operating core in using the reform will be further supported in the following section in which the initial implementation of the Kunnskapsløft is addressed. I choose to present the topic of initial implementation because it represents a given point in time in which the schools were given a strategy, and expected to do something about it. Accordingly, it is an interesting point in time in terms of exploring similarities and differences. Following the initial implementation topic, I will present results that fall under the headings of prioritised focus areas, individual variations, and similarities between schools.

5.2.4.2. Initial implementation

When I asked some of the participants about the initial implementation of the Kunnskapsløft in 2006, variations between schools became evident. At one school the principal suggested that the teachers develop "goal-sheets", in which they develop local, detailed plans to use for each grade or age group. The teachers at the school agreed to this suggestion, and were assigned to groups by

subjects that they were particularly knowledgable about and interested in. The groups of teachers then developed the sheets for each subject, made them available to all colleagues at the school, and have used those sheets actively in their planning and teaching since. According to the principal who worked at this school at the time, the project was demanding and time-consuming, but absolutely worth the time. The project ensured equality in teaching, and the teachers made the sheets "their own" because they had participated in the development of them. Accordingly, they were committed to using them actively.

Another school has focused largely on competency courses related to themes of the Kunnskapsløft, and trusted that knowledge would facilitate implementation. Local subject syllabuses have also been developed at the school, but not in extensive detail, so teachers still have freedom within the syllabuses. The Kunnskapsløft is still used actively during student-free days, which are dedicated to teachers´planning of the semester. This is when teachers develop yearly and half-yearly plans of their classroom teaching. Though the rough plans are developed on behalf of the whole school, individual teachers in individual classes largely develop their own syllabuses each year.

At another school teachers similarly work individually or in teams with the syllabuses each year, and according to a teacher at the school, the work is not very well coordinated, as it requires much work each year in finding out what the children have learned the previous year, what they need to learn during the upcoming year, etc. This is particularly an issue because the teachers often follow their classes through the grades, and therefore can not use the same plans they have used the previous years. According to the teacher at the school in question, it would be easier to have ready made locally developed plans for each age group, for all teachers to use. One teacher who has worked in more than one municipality after the introduction of the Kunnskapsløft, explained that the previous municipality (s)he worked in established a group of professionals at the municipality level, who developed detailed curriculum on behalf of all schools in the municipality. Accordingly, each school taught the same topics at the same stage of the education, and differences between schools were reduced. The teacher suggested that this was more efficient in terms of economy as well, as it saved each school from doing the same work locally.

The last school in the study did not according to the participants develop very detailed and shared local subject syllabuses at first, but they did do this work in 2007, as management at the school

dedicated time to create the system based on their evaluations as time passed and they assessed the need to do so. At this time the teachers were grouped in teams by subjects of interest and knowledge, and developed a shared system and syllabuses. Before 2007 there was not a shared system as such.

In summary, one school developed local goal-sheets, which the principal suggested and the professionals agreed with and participated in the development of. Another school focused on competency and training, and frameworks for local syllabuses were to some extent developed early, but the individual teachers still have much influence on the plans as they are not very detailed. At a third school, individual teachers or teams of teachers largely develop local plans each year, whereas a teacher said that a municipality other than the studied one, centrally developed detailed plans for everyone to work with. Lastly, at one school, detailed local plans were not initially developed, but management dedicated time and resources to do so at a later stage. I do not have information about the fifth school, as the principal that I interviewed from the school worked somewhere else at the time of implementation.

5.2.4.3.   <u>Comments and link to theory</u>

For the record, in this context as well as the previous one, I view the principal as well as part of the operating core who have been introduced to a reform by the strategic apex, the Kunnskapsdepartement.

As demonstrated by the results above, different schools chose to use different methods of initial implementation when first presented with the Kunnskapsløft. Some used very detailed and shared approaches, whereas others did not organise coordinated efforts of implementation, other than simply trusting the professionals to ensure implementation in their respective classes and daily work. Some schools also assumed that training and knowledge among professionals in regards to the Kunnskapsløft would facilitate implementation, and some chose to develop a shared framework but to leave the detailed planning to individual professionals and their teams.

Again, the expectation that different schools likely use and implement reforms differently is supported. The schools chose quite different methods of how to initially "deal with" the new guidelines that were presented to them. Assuming, once again, that resources, management, formal

guidelines etc are equal within the municipality, I find it likely that the operating core of professionals and probably the principals in particular, are who have decided and influenced how the Kunnskapsløft should be received and implemented. Furthermore, the "goal-sheets" and local syllabuses that have been developed, are developed by teams of professionals, namely the operating core. Taking this into consideration, the influence of the operating core on the differences between schools is further supported.

In addition to differences existing between schools, they probably exist within schools as well, as different teachers use their discretion and judgement while individually or in teams developing local plans, even though they may work by shared pigeonholes and standardised skills. Such variances are however based on my expectations rather than empirical evidence, as I have not tested the outcomes or compared the actual subject syllabuses as much as I have investigated what processes have come to life during implementation. Nevertheless, I believe I can safely conclude that differences do exist between schools in regards to how the Kunnskapsløft was initially implemented, and that the operating core played a large part in determining implementation.

Bringing these results to the context of Mintzberg´s theories, the operating core carries more or less complete influence on the content of the subject syllabuses at each of the schools. However, the coordination mechanisms vary as some schools trust the standardised skills and professional judgement on their own, whereas others facilitate coordination by creating arenas for interaction between professionals regarding the reform as provided by the Kunnskapsdepartement. As such, these processes may be viewed as processes of collective choice, in which professionals as well as the administrative fiat are given the opportunity to exert influence. Either way however, differences between schools necessarily appear as the reform is implemented and interpreted by each of the schools, rather than the mentioned processes being carried out at a municipality level, or higher, of the hierarchy. Differences therefore surface in both methods of implementation, and content of the local plans, as influenced by the operating core. Accordingly, the responses from participants in regards to initial implementation, support the hypothesis of differences between schools as determined by the operating cores.

Before I move on to present and discuss prioritised focus areas in relation to this same hypothesis, I will spend a couple of paragraphs just sharing two additional observations that I made in regards to

initial implementation, and how the observations can be linked to the themes of this paper. One of the observations relates to competency, and the other to a delay of the development of local subject syllabuses.

One principal mentioned competency courses as facilitators of implementation of reforms. This is a useful strategy in consideration of Mintzberg´s theory. Education is the basis for the skills and pigeonholes that professionals use in their daily work, and therefore also likely influential on their behaviour. Furthermore, the question of efficiency versus proficiency is exemplified in the results above, as a common interpretation of implementation by the municipality is suggested as the preferred choice for some. This resembles strategies that would be used by machine organisations in which a technostructure develops procedures of a "best way-approach" for all workers to use. In contrast, by proficiency, collective choice and professional judgement likely promote quality, and and at the same time accommodate for the complex nature of professional organisations. This may indeed be less effective and it may also reduce equality between schools. However, according to Mintzberg, proficiency is essential in professional organisations, and detailed plans that the professionals have not been part of developing by collective choice, will probably not be useful for the organisation.

Another interesting observation that can be made from the results of the participants´thoughts on initial implementation, is the fact that at one of the schools´ detailed plans were not developed until the reform had been active for a while. The participants did not speak of the reason for initiating the later change of method in any detail, but we can only assume that the influence of professional judgement only was not sufficient, and that other coordinating mechanisms than standardised skills were found necessary based the experience made by the school. Accordingly, collective choice was used more actively, in addition to professional judgement alone.

Next, the chosen focus areas of the various schools will be explored, and comparisons made in terms of potential differences between schools as influenced by the operating cores. The focus areas are derived from what the participants spent much time talking about when presented with my selected parameters of the Kunnskapsløft.

5.2.4.4.   Prioritised focus areas

Also demonstrating how differently the requirements of one reform can be met by different schools, are the choices of prioritised focus areas at the various schools. Participants reported that one school meets the requirements of the chosen parameters of the Kunnskapsløft by using the MILL (Multi Intelligence Learning-strategies, Learning-styles) system, and particularly focusing on learning strategies. Another school reportedly uses mentoring of individual pupils as well as what they call "books of planning" in which they, together with the students, define which goals should be focused on for individual pupils. Participants at a third school argued that they use detailed and conscious plan-work for individual students with various needs, and that they also limit the amount of meetings and systems of rapport to management to a minimum, in order to give the professionals as much time as possible to work on their actual teaching plans, methods, knowledge, etc. The same school has in addition recently introduced a core timeframe in which all teachers are required to work at their workplace rather than home-office, in order to encourage a culture for sharing of competence and knowledge between professionals. Furthermore, the school focuses on teaching stations in which pupils move around to stations of group work which facilitate different kinds of learning by different methodologies. This concept has much in common with MILL according to a principal.

Another principal spoke much of the importance of what (s)he called reflective management, and how management in cooperation with teachers need to ask questions that encourage teachers to actively take the Kunnskapsløft into consideration in their daily work-life. At the same school a concept called "respekt" (respect), a school development program, was focused upon by the principal during the interview. Respekt is a concept actively used as a tool to incorporate many of the relevant factors of the chosen parameters (Senter for atferdsforskning, 2010). The last principal focused on weekly sessions at their school which are dedicated to topics such as using the Kunnskapsløft, and any other informations and themes that may be relevant at the time. The principal at the school suggested that the sessions can be used to remind teachers of the elements of the Kunnskapsløft, to plan for how to gain and share more competence on the topics, to share experiences, and so forth.

5.2.4.5.   Comments and link to theory
Principals at every one of the schools presented several arguments as to how their chosen strategies, concepts, and methods accommodate for individual needs and learning how to learn. Some

arguments assumed that higher competence and knowledge provide more tools or strategies to work with to reach the goals of the Kunnskapsløft, as exemplified by the need for professional training. Some principals suggested frequent reminders and assigned time are necessary to keep focus on the Kunnskapsløft. Others suggested organised systems for accommodation of the parameters are needed, such as MILL, "books of planning", respekt, etc, in order to ensure a common viewpoint for all professionals and a system that requires constant focus from professionals.

Accordingly it is evident that once again, the various schools receive and use the Kunnskapsløft differently. Some of the measures that are taken to adhere to the reform specifically have to do with how the teachers work with the pupils in terms of systems of methodology such as MILL, respekt, books of planning etc, while other measures are more directed at factors that are more closely linked to the professionals and their opportunities for proficiency. Relevant measures mentioned by the participants that may stimulate proficiency, are competence, available time for professional development, culture for sharing knowledge, sessions for discussions between professionals, and reflective management. These same measures allow for and stimulate the use of extended professional judgement and collective choice among individual teachers, as it puts proficiency in the high-seat, valuing professional competence, skills, and cooperation. The systems of methodology do not value proficiency in the same way, as they make use of elements of standardised procedures for work. Nevertheless, the very selection of those programs may quite likely be a result of collective choice, and by the operating core, thereby accommodating for proficiency anyhow.

The variations in methods, areas of focus, and interpretations between schools of how the demands of the selected parameters should be met, are expected by the hypothesis as derived from Mintzberg´s theories. Different professionals and operating cores may have similar standardised skills and pigeonholes, but they nevertheless involve individuals with different beliefs, differences in judgement and discretion, and differences in behaviour. Accordingly, the choice of measures to be taken will vary, as the professionals, and often the principal in particular, select methods based on their discretion and judgement. Furthermore, the selected methods will be carried out differently as well, due to variations between the individuals who are using them and their discretion and judgement.

Despite the differences in method, each of the participants argued that the methods are examples of how they meet the goals of the selected parameters of the Kunnskapsløft. This may indeed be true, the professionals and the operating cores may simply come up with great variances in methods of how to validly accommodate for the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft. An alternative explanation may however be that the professionals redefine what they already do and what they would do anyway, to argue that they meet the Kunnskapsløft. This potential explanation will be further addressed when I report results and discussions regarding the next hypothesis of just that, possible redefinitions.

For now nonetheless, based on the substantial variations as demonstrated by the focus areas and how different schools have chosen to understand and implement the Kunnskapsløft, I conclude that the hypothesis is further supported by the responses of the participants in this study. I also claim that this is directly related to the operating core as they, including the principals, interpret the reform and choose what to do with it, and thereby create their own understandings of how the reform influences their daily work.

The conclusions of this section take into account the participants´responses in regards to how the schools as independent units and operating cores, choose to meet the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft. As I have briefly mentioned however, the individual professionals also play an important role in creating their own personal strategies as they perform their daily work. These individual strategies then combine to form the working strategy of the operating core, and therefore also the school. I make these suggestions in light of Mintzberg´s thoughts on emergent strategies, and I will go on to further explore the individual elements to that under the next heading, based on information provided on the topic, by the participants.

5.2.4.6.   Examples of individual variations

One clear example of how the Kunnskapsløft is understood and used differently in different schools, is that of physical activity as described in relation to the first hypothesis of this paper. Every one of the schools have created their own perceptions of how this should be done, and to which degree the reform leads to any actual changes in the working strategy of the schools.

When asked about general physical activity at the schools, other than the mandatory physical

activity circular for the older pupils, variations surfaced once again. At one school, the participants reported that some teachers use the MILL approach (as described previously) to physical activity, in which physical activity should be integrated in actual teaching methods. This is a shared focus throughout the school, for all teachers, due to the focus on the organised concept of MILL. In contrast, at a different school, management said that some individual teachers choose to focus on physical activity by shortening physical education classes and spreading them out, so they do smaller sessions of physical education throughout the week. This idea however is based on the initiative of individual teachers, not on priorities made by the school. Accordingly variations exist between individuals. Participants from three schools further specifically mentioned that there is much variation between teachers as to how and whether physical activity is included in everyday teaching.

Individual differences are evident in the context of accommodating for individual needs as well. At one school, the principal explained that although individual needs of pupils are frequently discussed and attempted accounted for across the whole school, the teachers working with one particular age group focus more on this than do the other teachers. The team of teachers in question have decided to organise pupil work groups across the classes within the age group or grade, with work groups based on the levels of challenges the children need. The systems of developing such groups were according to management based on the teachers presenting a problem to management, management asking questions of how this could be solved, and the teachers concluding with this arrangement as an appropriate solution. Similarly, at the same school, the principal reported that some of the teachers make use of MILL while others do not, and that there are variations as to exactly what individual teachers consider accommodation of individual needs. To some teachers this may require small adjustments in teaching methods, whereas others perceive this form of accommodation as something requiring individual work plans for each pupil, and large methodological changes.

5.2.4.7.   Comments and link to theory

The responses in regards to general physical activity and the accommodation of individual needs, indicate that the individual professionals do indeed work by their personal working strategies as well as the ones that are shared by the operating core. This is indicated by the fact that although some schools discuss and agree to certain methods of work in regards to the parameters, others leave the professionals to choose their own personal methods of reaching the goals specified in the

selected parameters of the Kunnskapsløft, such as distributed physical activity sessions, and methods of meeting the children´s needs in teaching, among others.

Confirming this interpretation, several participants actually said that they have observed differences between individual professionals in the use of the reform, and that their understandings of what is actually asked for by the reform vary. This demonstrates how different teachers as well as different groups of teachers in schools, more or less consciously create their own working strategies, even though they work under the same formulated requirements and guidelines.

The differences in individual working strategies will in turn influence the strategies of the operating core as a group, together with the requirements of the Kunnskapsdepartement as formulated by the reform. Accordingly, the actual behaviour of the people in professional organisations are influenced by individual professionals, the professionals as a group, and planned strategies as formulated by the Kunnskapsepartement. These complex processes of influences naturally results in different behaviours and strategies both within and between organisations. This can be directly linked to the hypothesis of differences existing between organisations as influenced by the operating core, meaning the expectations based on Mintzberg´s theories of professional organisations are again supported. Professional judgement is central together with collective choice, in which the professionals have their own personal strategies which they bring to the collective choice arena. In collective choice, the administrative fiat or the Kunnskapsdepartement meet with the professionals through the formulations of reforms and requirements, and result in outcomes that are majorly affected by the influence of professionals in their own and as a group. Accordingly, differences between schools occur, even though the reform is the same for all schools, as influenced by the operating core with its individual professionals.

However, as much as the empirical evidence of this paper support that differences between schools exist in regards to implementation of the Kunnskapsløft, similarities also surfaced during the interviews. I will present a couple of examples of similarities under the next heading, and discuss this in context with my hypotheses and Mintzberg´s theories.

5.2.4.8.   Similarities between schools

In contrast to the information presented so far in my empirical evidence, similarities in

implementation between schools also exist within certain topics. In example, participants from every school in the study reported that they make use of team structures, where teachers are organised in teams that cooperate closely with each other. This form of organisational structure and how it is organised at the individual schools will be presented in more detail in the following section regarding management styles.

In addition to the team structures, participants from every school, principals in particular, spoke of courses and formal training as important tools that help the schools meet the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft. The participants agreed that knowledge promotes higher quality teaching and confidence, and thereby increases the chances of reaching the demands of the Kunnskapsløft. This particularly goes for the requirements that are formed in the learning how to learn parameters, but also for others. On a similar note, most of the participating schools have assigned responsibility of various projects to teachers who receive extra training within their designated areas, and share this knowledge with colleagues.

5.2.4.9.   Comments and link to theory

I find it interesting how each of the schools have chosen to organise the teachers in teams. I do not know much about the background in regards to why this structure was implemented, but after the interviews, I am under the impression that this type of organisation has been used for quite a while, even since before the Kunnskapsløft was developed and introduced. Accordingly, I will not argue that the team structure is a result of how the different schools understand and use the Kunnskapsløft similarly. Nevertheless, the interpretation of this form of structure as being useful to the implementation of the Kunnskapsløft, is shared between all of the schools, suggesting they interpret the facilitation that team structures may provide in similar ways. This suggests small differences in how the different operating cores understand and use the Kunnskapsløft with regards to the use of teams in order to facilitate the implementation of the reform.

I further propose that the use of team structures in professional organisations may be seen in context with Mintzberg´s theory of three layers of decision-making. With the involvement of the professionals in decision-making, comes the stimulation and experience of professional judgement and collective choice. When the professionals are organised in teams that largely have professional independence, they are provided with the ability to use professional judgement and collective

choice, though within the framework of the Kunnskapsløft. Accordingly, they may be more likely to commit to decisions that are made.

On a similar note, the high focus on competency, training, and knowledge, emphasises the standardisation of skills as an important factor in professional organisations. Pigeonholes and skills are shaped by education and training, and may become evident in decision making, particularly in collective choice. This is also supportive of the theories of Røvik in which he suggests that external development arenas largely influence professionals and the decisions they make in daily life. Accordingly, knowledge and academic arguments and research seem to be important keys to creating changes in professional organisations. This is likely also true for reforms. The more professionals know about the reform and the background for why it came about, the more likely they seem to be to committing to its implementation.

In summary then, although the use of team structures, courses and formal training seem to be a shared philosophy of all the schools in this study as opposed to the expectations formulated in the hypothesis, the measures are still in accordance with Mintzberg´s theoretical viewpoints. Though one would expect differences in implementation due to the influence of the operating core, the implementation of formal competency measures and organisational structure actually allow for and create arenas supportive of the influence of professionals, which is one of the key factors in the theories of Mintzberg and Røvik.

With regards to why the different schools chose similar forms of implementation, I can not offer an appropriate explanation that relates to Mintzberg and his theories. The reasons may not even relate to the topics discussed in this paper, and the implementation of the measures in question may be attributed to reasons of a completely different nature. Alternatively, the principals may have discussed and agreed on these measures in municipality meetings. They may have engaged in collective choice processes as represented by the principals acting as the operating core, and the reform as representative of the administrative fiat, and concluded with the mentioned measures as a best-way approach. Some may have come across academic reasoning and arguments as to why the chosen measures are preferred, or completely different reasons may be responsible. Lastly, it is possible that the skills of the professionals at the different schools were standardised to such a degree by education and skills, they all naturally chose the same measures with regards to structure

and knowledge development.

I can only speculate with regards to the reasons similarities were reported by the participants in relation to some elements of implementation. For the purposes of this paper however, I will simply conclude by the suggestion that although differences between schools do exist as influenced by different operating cores, similarities exist as well, for reasons that are not well known.

Although interesting points have surfaced so far in this paper in regards to how the Kunnskapsløft in the perception of the participants is understood and implemented in various schools, I can not, based on this study, conclude as to when the different implementations have been carried out and why. Accordingly, I can not suggest that all the measures mentioned by the participants are directly related to the Kunnskapsløft, they may just be measures that have been or would have been taken anyway, and that the participants link to the Kunnskapsløft in hindsight. This is a very relevant topic regarding which I will present some information from the participants, and link to theory.

5.2.5. Hypothesis 3

Some schools and individual professionals may attempt to redefine what they already do in ways that are compliant with the Kunnskapsløft, without actually changing much

Several comments were made by participants, which I interpret to be related to this hypothesis. I have categorised the comments as related to the existing culture at one school, different focus areas at different schools, interesting remarks, and the time aspect of the introduction of the Kunnskapsløft versus the implementation of the measures as described by the participants. This is also how I will present the comments below, before linking them to theory.

5.2.5.1.   The Kunnskapsløft in relation to existing culture

One principal visited this subject when (s)he said that one of the reasons why their school liked and welcomed the Kunnskapsløft at introduction, was that it coincided with the culture, humanistic views, and identity that already existed at the school. To the particular school, the Kunnskapsløft was a system for organising and formulating what they already did, and a useful tool that they could evaluate their current work against. The reform simply offered them a new work-structure of doing what they were already good at. Accordingly, instead of focusing on introducing many new ways of

working, the principal at the particular school simply chose to put heavy focus on what the teachers already did and what they already knew, and put this in context with the Kunnskapsløft. The teacher representative from the same school expressed several times that this was a positive experience for the group of professionals, as it made the Kunnskapsløft seem more approachable and realistic to work by. The principal also expressed that they felt this way of approaching the reform was successful, and the approach made it easier to work with areas of improvement as well.

5.2.5.2.   <u>Comments and link to theory</u>

The comments that the participants at this particular school made support the expectation of redefinition and little change, because they suggest part of the reason the reform was appropriate for them was the positive match between existing culture and guidelines. I understand from this that the participants imply the implementation may not have been as successful if its guidelines were in more contrast with the culture and values at the school. In fact, I propose the suggestion that the school appreciated the Kunnskapsløft largely because they did not have to change much, and because they could redefine their current work to comply with it, meaning little change occurred. The work that they did not do in accordance with the Kunnskapsløft received less focus, though some actual changes were probably made as well. The fact that the school focused so much on what they already did and on holding on to that, also suggests that they may have tried to redefine their work to agree with the Kunnskapsløft, though I do not have a way of knowing how extensive the redefinition was.

As discussed in relation to attitudes towards the Kunnskapsløft, the agreement between professional knowledge and new reforms, is likely helpful to implementation. As also mentioned previously, there may indeed be similarities between general pigeonholes and the Kunnskapsløft as the general section of values etc was similar in L97, suggesting that the ideas have gradually been developed through professional training, education etc, together with other methods as well. Accordingly, the changes may not have been major in the Kunnskapsløft as opposed to L97. Nevertheless, a reform is not developed so people can do what they have always done. As suggested by the word itself, i propose that reforms should cause reformation and change, not just adjustment. Judging by the example described above, not much reformation has occurred. Accordingly, it seems likely that a redefinition of what the school would have done anyway has occurred. The professionals thereby use their proficiency and expertise to argue what they already do so it fits with the framework of the

Another interesting example in which comments from participants made me reflect on possible redefinitions, was related to two different focus areas of the parameters of the Kunnskapsløft at two different schools, with little regard to the other.

5.2.5.3.   Differences in focus

When asked about the two parameters of learning how to learn and the accommodation of individual needs, the principal at one school replied that they focus on learning strategies and MILL, and by doing that, they naturally accommodate for individual needs. Another principal on the other hand, claimed the opposite. At his/her school, they particularly assign attention to the accommodation of individual needs and the mentoring of pupils, arguing that learning strategies are automatically accommodated for when individual needs are met. When asked how the focus areas came to life, the principals did not particularly focus on them being a direct result of the Kunnskapsløft. Rather, they were results of the experiences that teachers and principals had of needing some kind of system, based on the needs of the pupils. Both schools thereby implemented programs which they later adjusted by in example adding the two L´s to MILL which at first only held the Multi-Intelligence approach, and by removing complex individual plans and adding other more general tools such as mentoring, different general plans, etc.

5.2.5.4.   Comments and link to theory

The contrasts in focus areas as mentioned by the participants, despite the fact that the schools have the exact same reform to work by, are interesting. Even more interesting is the fact that the principals mention learning strategies and accommodation of individual needs when asked about what they do to reach the goals of the Kunnskapsløft, however when speaking of how and why the measures came about, the Kunnskapsløft is barely mentioned. This again might suggest that the schools may work in ways that are in accordance with their professional judgement and perceptions of needs of the students, which they would have done anyway due to proficiency, and then just redefine their ways so as to be compliant with the Kunnskapsløft.

Both schools in question argue that the parameter that they do not work directly towards is accommodated for by the parameter that they do focus upon. This may very well be true as the

parameters are indeed intertwined by nature and not mutually exclusive, but it is nevertheless an interesting observation with regards to the hypothesis of schools doing what they already do and just redefining it to comply with the Kunnskapsløft. Similarly, the participants attach the reasons for the measures that have been taken to the needs of pupils and to teachers rather than to the reform. In addition, they adjusted and removed some methods, once again, based on experiences and professional judgements rather than on the demands of the Kunnskapsløft. These observations may not mean that the schools do not work by the Kunnskapsløft. However I believe they do indicate that when the professionals make decisions and argue them, the majority of arguments that they use relate to the needs of the pupils combined with the knowledge the professionals have of those needs, rather than to the Kunnskapsløft. At least this is true for the interviews of this study.

Nevertheless, when asked about how they meet the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft, the participants did present seemingly valid arguments as to how those goals are reached. This indicates that even though the daily decisions seem to be based on the professionals´discretion with regards to pupils and their needs, the professionals also manage to see their decisions and actions in context with the Kunnskapsløft. This may suggest a redefinition of established behaviour. Alternatively, one may argue that the professionals actively use the Kunnskapsløft when making decisions although they did not point this out very clearly during the interviews of this study. Furthermore, several of the participants in this study were principals. The teachers are who use the Kunnskapsløft most actively in daily life, and who may therefore be more conscious of the use of it. More teacher participants would therefore potentially paint a somewhat different picture of the use and the awareness of using the Kunnskapsløft. Another alternative explanation is that the match between the standardised skills of the professionals and the Kunnskapsløft is so strong there is not much difference between the two, suggesting the professionals follow the guidelines of the reform simply by using their professional skills and knowledge.

Despite the alternative and possible explanations of why the different schools choose different areas of focus, in the context of this paper and the presented theory, I choose to see the results in light of Mintzberg´s theories of professionals as independent, largely in control over their own work, knowledgeable, and unlikely to simply jump at any change as presented by the strategic apex or the administrative fiat. Accordingly the operating core nor the individual professionals are likely to have suddenly changed their behaviour. Furthermore, because large changes are unlikely to occur in

professional organisations due to the stability of the pigeonholes, I find it likely that redefinitions occur, in which the professionals use their proficiency to create room for themselves to work by their own strategies which they have developed through experience, education, interactions in collective choice, etc. I argue that the differences in focus between the two schools in this study are an example of just that – redefinitions of what the schools would have done anyway, to match the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft. This argument will be further illustrated under the next heading of an interesting remark as presented by a principal.

5.2.5.5.   Interesting remark

One principal said that their school is "not known for always jumping to all the new things", but they "research and obey by requirements". At the particular school, the main focus is on doing what they already do that actually works, and incorporating what needs to be incorporated. The principal described their school as "development-oriented but conservative". Teachers experience constant pressure and demands, and not everything can be done. Accordingly, choices and priorities need to me made.

5.2.5.6.   Comments and link to theory

Although it does not suggest that the school chose not to implement the Kunnskapsløft, the above comment can be perceived as supporting the reasoning behind the expectation of professionals redefining what they already do to meet formal requirements. The principal may be perceived as suggesting that the operating core at the school in question prefer to avoid forced-upon changes, and that they adhere to minimum requirements simply because they are just that – requirements. Regardless, they have their own strategy of doing what they already do and what they believe works (the strategy of the operating core), and then incorporate the Kunnskapsløft into that rather than change the school to comply with the reform.

This idea can be easily unified with Minzberg´s theories, as the professionals will always use their proficiency as their main guide of behaviour, and strategy emerges bottom-up, not top-down. However legal requirements can not be ignored, and then a redefinition seems the most reasonable way of being a professional and still not being in conflict with legislation and formal expectations.

A third factor of the Kunnskapsløft which suggests redefinition of working strategy to comply with

the Kunnskapsløft, is the time aspect of implementation.

5.2.5.7.   The time-line

The Kunnskapsløft was introduced in 2006. The schools obviously existed before 2006 and did many good things already. Nevertheless, the Kunnskapsdepartement decided that a reform was necessary for Norwegian primary schools, and formulated the content of this. As suggested earlier, the word reformation and the fact that the department decided in favour of prioritising the large project introducing a new reform involves, suggests that major changes in the schools were expected and planned for.

However, many of the things that participants mentioned as concepts and changes to accommodate for requirements of the Kunnskapsløft, were not introduced parallel to the implementation of the reform. In example, "respekt" was introduced at one school in 2005 as a result of teachers bringing to management that they needed a more common ground for treating pupils in the school yard etc. MILL at one school was not a direct result of the Kunnskapsløft either. Rather, it was a consequence of the teachers and management wanting to do something different to help the pupils learn in the best possible way.

Unfortunately I have not had the opportunity to revisit this topic and ask the participants when all the various actions were taken and systems set in motion as compared to the time of implementation of the Kunnskapsløft. The relevance of the time-line only became evident for me at the end of my project while analysing the data. Nevertheless, although they were not asked directly about the time aspect, the participants did not appear to attach importance to the time of implementation with regards to the methods they use to reach the goals of the Kunnskapsløft. The only elements that were directly connected to the Kunnskapsløft time-wise, were those of the initial development of goal-sheets and subject syllabuses.

5.2.5.8.   Comments and link to theory

The topic of the time-line has been briefly visited earlier in the paper. Unfortunately I have not succeeded in obtaining exact time-lines for when various methods, concepts, ideas etc were implemented, but my understanding is that several of them were implemented before the Kunnskapsløft, some were introduced at the time of presenting the Kunnskapsløft, and some came

about after the reform was introduced. Accordingly, one can not automatically assume that they were all a result of the Kunnskapsløft. It is likely that several of the methods etc were just redefined to agree with the reform as they conveniently matched the reform, or were made to match the it. This is a speculation which is very difficult to verify or deny as it is difficult to know when concepts started and ended, why they came about, what motivated them, etc. The reflection is however, in my opinion, important and relevant, and would be an interesting topic for a future study.

Now moving on from the hypotheses of redefinitions, differences between schools etc, as formulated in the theory chapter, I will now spend a little time exploring how management styles in schools link to Mintzberg´s theories and to the topics of this paper. As I analysed the data, management styles caught my interest although I had not formulated specific hypotheses in regards to the theme, simply because the management styles could be so neatly linked to the theory selected for this paper.

5.2.6. Management styles in the local strategic apex

The first element of management styles that I found relevant to the themes of this paper, relates how the schools are organised in terms of personnel. Every one of the participating schools make use of team structures, with teachers organised in teams based on which age group of pupils they work with. Those teams are, according to the participants, essentially formed by the local strategic apex (the principal), though the professionals are given the opportunity to make requests in various contexts and forms.

The principals touched on the subject of this team structure while discussing several different aspects of the Kunnskapsløft. In example, one principal suggested that the effects of colleagues guiding each other professionally, helps them keep each other "on their toes" with regards to the Kunnskapsløft and its content. Additionally, the structure practically ensures that the requirements are adhered to because teachers sometimes share teaching commitments in the same classes, and thereby two people rather than one will be able to ensure that, in example, all children have their needs met, as specified by the Kunnskaspsløft. Team work further facilitates what some of the principals called a culture of sharing, in which teachers who have received training or who are particularly knowledgeable about one area, can share his or her knowledge with the rest of the group. Similarly, weekly team meetings provide opportunities for discussion and development,

maybe regarding individual children and their needs, useful tools and teaching methods, etc. Lastly, but nonetheless important, three of the principals said they are very conscious of how they build the teams. They use criteria related to professional training, subjects, interests, and personalities when building teams. Accordingly they, among other things, ensure that each team has members who are knowledgeable of the Kunnskapsløft, relevant topics, etc. Additionally, they have the opportunity to balance advocates for the Kunnskapsløft and other things that management consider important, with people who are likely to resist the reform, etc. When the teams are distributed, most of the principals leave it up to the teachers to assign tasks, subjects and roles to each other, within the teams.

Another aspect of management styles which can be associated with the themes of this paper, is the fact that several principals said they make active use of what they call "people of resource". People of resource are teachers who are particularly knowledgeable of narrow topics, and who can function as resources to their colleagues. People of resource may be skillful of topics such as mathematics, evaluation, Norwegian, MILL, etc. One principal explained during the interview that not only are these teachers useful for their knowledge, but it is also strategically important for principals to use them to introduce new concepts that are originally intended top-down, in order to "soften" the introduction of the concept.

Similarly, management at one school has established an advisory team of three teachers who manage the teams at the school, facilitate groups of discussions, and hold roles as communicators between the principals and the teachers.

5.2.6.1.   Comments and link to theory

As discussed earlier in this paper, the three layers of decision making theory indicates the importance of involving the professionals in decision making and in the shaping of the working strategy in the schools. The involvement of the operating core largely increases the chance of successfully implemented strategies from an apex point of view.

It occurred to me during the interviews that this way of thinking is largely evident in how the principals choose to manage their operating core locally, and how they introduce concepts that they need or want implemented in their workplaces.

I have previously visited and commented on the fact that the schools use team structures in their organisation, and how this relates to professionalism and the three layers of decision making. This becomes even clearer when considering the information about how and why principals choose to use the structure or organisation that they use. By allowing for the interaction between the professionals, opportunities are created for the development and improvement of pigeonholes, collective choice, and discussions regarding professional judgement. The sharing of competence further standardises skills, and the fact that teachers largely work together is in some ways a method of quality control because no individual is left to work on their own behind closed doors.

Principals consciously create teams that are helpful to the goals of the schools and likely also the Kunnskapsløft, and thereby promote its implementation. However, the teachers are given some local freedom as to who does what within the teams. This facilitates their experience of collective choice and professional judgement, as the principals simply create teams that are thought to be helpful to the process, but leave it up to the professionals to make decisions.

With similar goals, having teachers or people of resource introduce new ideas to colleagues, may make the ideas seem more practically useful to the teachers, as the ideas may be viewed as information shared amongst colleagues rather than demands introduced top-down which may spark resistance simply because teachers may experience the ideas as forced upon them. I also associate this form of management with Mintzberg´s three layer model, viewing the people of resource as tools to help simulate or even create an atmosphere of collective choice. Accordingly the management style seems to be in accordance with Mintzberg´s theories of how professionals operate, what influences them, and how they should be managed.

5.2.6.2.   "Taking the temperature"

Three principals mentioned that one of their roles is to make sure the teachers do not have too many demands and expectations at any given time to work by, as this would be an "overload" which is unrealistic to follow through. Accordingly principals need to consider and evaluate the group of professionals, what they are ready for, how much resistance is present, what attitudes the group shows towards various topics etc, before implementing new things. One principal called this consideration "taking the temperature" of the group. (S)he explained this saying by giving some

examples. At a few different instances, decisions had been made at the school in question for something to be implemented. However shortly after trying to implement the ideas, the principal concluded that the professionals were not ready to take on this new concept, and the principal had to make a decision to take a break, remove the new concept, wait for the group to adjust and to prepare, and then plan to re-introduce. Similarly, another principal said that they, at their school, introduced detailed individual plans for children which did not work out as expected. Accordingly (s)he had to make a decision not to follow through with the new concept, and to propose an alternative. The principals who provided these examples said that their cues to make the decisions to pause or remove what they originally wanted to implement, were based on their own observations of the teachers as well as actual feedback from the teachers.

5.2.6.3.   <u>Comments and link to theory</u>

The need to consider the preparedness of the professionals can be argued to demonstrate the influence of the operating core in what can be introduced and implemented, and when. The principals on more than one occasion had to take a step back and relieve the pressure on the professionals, as they were not receptive of new concepts and requirements. This indicates that the operating core in schools do indeed influence the extent to and how reforms are implemented. The reconsideration of the principals was based on observations of and feedback from the professionals, and this became essential to whether plans were followed through or not, or at least when they were implemented. I therefore consider these episodes exemplary of the influence that Mintzberg proposes that the operating core has on the actual behaviour and working strategy in professional organisations, and the degree to which ideas can be introduced top-down. The above examples relate to the local strategic apex, but I find it likely that the same processes are in play when the implementations come from further up the hierarchy which is the case with the Kunnskapsløft. I therefore conclude that the operating core of schools largely influence what happen to top-down ideas in professional organisations.

While on the same topic of management styles, the principals also provided examples of management styles that are more likely to succeed in light of Mintzberg´s theories, even though they may originate in the strategic apex or administrative fiat. I will present this style under the next heading – professional reasoning.

5.2.6.4.   Professional reasoning

An example provided by a principal during one of the interviews triggered my interest, because of how (s)he claims that (s)he communicates with the professionals about necessary decisions or implementations that may spark resistance with the professionals.

The principal in question, a while back, had to share some difficult information with his/her staff regarding cutbacks and priorities of human resources. When doing this, (s)he made sure that (s)he had scientific research to support his/her priorities. (S)he also involved the municipality director in communicating the decisions to the professionals. Afterwards, the principal arranged follow-up sessions in which the professionals were given the opportunity to ask questions, where the principal reminded them of the arguments, and in some way legitimised the decision by research and the involvement of the director who also likely carries legitimacy, respect in the group, and who is perceived to be knowledgeable. The principal at the school reported during the interview that not all the professionals were happy with the decisions (s)he made as they involved changes to their work and additional challenges. However, the same principal suggested the teachers understood why it needed to be done, and thereby accepted it.

5.2.6.5.   Comments and link to theory

By referring to academic research, the principal appealed to the professionals´ competence and knowledge, or proficiency if you will, rather than forcing decisions upon them. (S)he took the time and effort to prepare a thorough presentation of arguments that would agree with and be supported by the professionals´academic skills and intellect, and their values and professional judgement. The involvement of the director was furthermore an action that likely legitimised the decisions, because of the view the professionals likely have of her as knowledgable.

This is in line with Mintzberg´s theories of how professionals operate, as academic and intellectual reasoning is more likely to create change and to be accepted with the professionals than the use of top-down force. The notion is supported by the fact that the principal said the professionals were not necessarily happy with the decisions on behalf of themselves and their own personal interests, but they accepted the intellectual and professional argument behind them, and complied with the decisions of the principal. In contrast, if the principal had not appealed to the proficiency in the professionals, much more resistance would likely have been generated, in light of Mintzberg´s

theories. Although this particular example does not relate directly to the Kunnskapsløft, it is an interesting observation of Mintzberg´s theory of professional behaviour and characteristics in action.

5.3.   GENERAL DISCUSSION – PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Before I move on to summarising the results that I have presented and commented on in the previous section, and see them in context with the theoretical framework, I will draw some preliminary conclusions;

With regards to the research question

"to what degree, and how, do the professionals in the operating core of primary schools influence what happens to the Kunnskapsløft (the strategic plan) when introduced to the working strategy in schools (the patterns of action)?",

i propose the following, based on the results and reflections of this study;

The operating core and the individual professionals in primary schools do indeed influence several different aspects of what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to individual schools.

Looking back at the three hypotheses, i propose to have found evidence supporting that variations do exist amongst schools and individual professionals as to whether the Kunnskapsløft has produced actual changes in the working strategy in professional organisations. I similarly suggest that the interviews with the participants at various schools provide data to indicate that there are differences between schools in terms of the understanding, interpretation, and use of the Kunnskapsløft, and that such differences derive from different operating cores in each of the organisations. Lastly, I also claim to have found evidence to support the hypothesis that some schools and professionals attempt to redefine what they already do in ways that are compliant with the Kunnskapsløft, without actually changing much.

I will now spend some time summarising the results before attempting to place them in a wider context and discuss their implications as well as limitations.

The results and discussions of this paper suggest that the participants are generally positive of the Kunnskapsløft, but less positive towards the general concept of reforms. Furthermore, the participants expressed a particular liking towards the local freedom the Kunnskapsløft provides, and

the values, culture, knowledge, and beliefs that the reform is built upon.

I have throughout the paper proposed that the nature of professionals and the forces of proficiency that come into play, are agreeable with the local freedom of the Kunnskapsløft. I have further argued that the same forces are partly the reason why the participants expressed that they are skeptical of reforms in general, as reforms are likely expected to reduce local freedom. This skepticism may also be related to the participants worrying that the requirements of reforms may compete with their own professional values and skills, and prevent them from performing quality work as defined by their professional skills and pigeonholes.

Professionals prefer to exert high levels of control, independence, and discretion on their work, and they likely expect that top-down interventions will limit their influence on their own work. Accordingly they are skeptical of such interventions, but the Kunnskapsløft seems to be able to accommodate for some of this influence, which maybe at least partly explains the apparent acceptance of this particular reform. Nevertheless, it is puzzling that the participants assigned little attention to the purpose of reforms during interviews.

Taking further the observations in regards to the distinction the participants made of the Kunnskapsløft versus reforms in general, the exploration of the Kunnskapsløft versus L97 was an interesting example to be discussed in this paper. The L97 reform interferes with the professionals´methodology, while the Kunnskapsløft is more concerned with goals. Values, culture, knowledge of education and perceptions of children are reportedly similar between the two reforms. The participants largely expressed a preference of the Kunnskapsløft over the older reform. I interpret this preference, in light of Mintzberg´s theories, to be a consequence of the methodology and L97 interfering with the core of professionalism, namely pigeonholes, while goals do not interfere with the force of proficiency to such a degree. Additionally, the core values of L97 may have gradually been introduced by education and professional training, and thereby prepared professionals for the Kunnskapsløft.

Pigeonholes, according to Mintzberg, are developed in professional education and by collective choice, meaning the interference of the administrative fiat without the influence of the professionals is inappropriate. In the Kunnskapsløft however, the interpretations of the reform are to some extent carried out by professional judgement and collective choice, and thereby facilitating the proficiency aspect of the work that is carried out in schools. In contrast, by developing methodological

procedures for work, the L97 reform makes use of forces of efficiency and machine organisations, in which the technostructure interferes with work. This is not likely successful in complex organisations in which professionals are required to use discretion and judgement in their daily work.

Although the incorporation of local freedom and the general nature of the Kunnskapsløft to some degree prevent us from easily identifying whether some of the schools may have neglected to implement elements of the Kunnskapsløft, one particular example was particularly useful for these purposes. The Utdanningsdirektorat has developed a circular describing implementation of physical activity for years 5 – 7, and the framework for this concept is described in some detail in the mentioned circular. According to the participants of this study, the schools have all implemented the circular differently, and some have chosen not to act in compliance with the specific requirements, a stand point they have consciously chosen, and argued professionally. Assuming the principal is part of the operating core in this context it is likely that the operating core is the major influence to determine whether and how elements of the Kunnskapsløft are implemented. This is evident both in the apparent differences between schools (assuming other major influencing factors are alike such as the reform itself, management, resources etc), and in the fact that some schools have rejected the specific requirements of the circular. Furthermore, the professionals use their professional knowledge when arguing how and whether implementation has occurred, which further confirms the importance of the skills and knowledge that professionals bring to the organisation. Although I would be more comfortable having more than one example to base my conclusions on, I do propose that the working strategies in relation to the physical activity circular, demonstrate a supportive argument to confirm the first hypothesis and the existence of the influence of the operating core on planned strategies in professional organisations. As much as I can not, based on this study, suggest the operating core always carry this level of influence, the mentioned example at least suggests the existence of the phenomena, acting as our "black swan" among all the white ones (as discussed in the methodology chapter).

In regards to the second hypothesis of differences existing between schools as influenced by the operating cores, participants suggested that differences do indeed exist, and that the schools are affected by this. Participants further suggested that they would wish for more similarities and concrete local plans. I have provided some discussion in regards to this as the existence of differences support the hypothesis, but the wish for more detailed plans contradicts the idea of

professionals wanting local freedom in order to be able to use their proficiency, discretion, and professional judgement in their daily work. I have provided some thoughts in-text of why this may be.

Also related to the second hypothesis, I found evidence in the information provided by the participants to suggest the initial implementation of the Kunnskapsløft varied largely between schools. Some used in example detailed local plans, rough plans, local plans developed after the Kunnskapsløft had been active for some time, and some chose to leave much of the local plan-work up to individual professionals and teams of professionals year by year, without standardised plans or much central coordination by the local strategic apex. At one school, much focus was assigned to competency development as a tool to implement the Kunnskapsløft into the standardised skills of the professionals. Another participant shared information about a previous workplace in which local plans of the Kunnskapsløft were developed at a municipality level, and thereby identical for each school.

The differences in implementation strategies support the expectation of the operating core carrying much influence on what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when it meets the individual school. Firstly, the operating cores are who decide whether to develop shared local plans by collective choice processes, or simply develop them individually as they need them, using their professional judgement. Secondly, whether developed in teams or individually, shared or not, the professionals are who actually develop the plans at each and every one of the schools except one that one of the participants worked at previously where the plans were developed centrally. The influence of the operating core therefore seems major in relation to what happens to the Kunnskapsløft at the schools. This is also evident in how differently the schools have chosen to treat the reform, thereby supporting the hypothesis.

In terms of general implementation as of today, and focus areas as measures to ensure the use of the chosen parameters of the Kunnskapsløft, the participants explained that some of them use predetermined organised methodological systems of how to work with pupils, while others focus on proficiency or enhancing levels of competence, reminders of the goals, and professional reflection in the operating cores. The measures related to proficiency are likely useful in the professional organisations, but the methodological measures seem to resemble forces of efficiency and a technostructure wanting to standardise procedures. Judging by Mintzberg´s theories, this is not likely a successful way of working as it interrupts the opportunity for the operating core to use their

professional discretion and judgement. However, the very selection of the programs may be made by collective choice, enhancing the chances of success somewhat due to probable commitment from individual professionals, agreement in values and pigeonholes, etc. In conclusion however, differences do indeed exist in what the focus areas of the different schools are, although each of the professionals argue that their ways can be directly linked to the requirements of the Kunnskapsløft. Accordingly they claim that the means differ but the goals are the same. The operating core (principals and teachers) are who interpret and use the guidelines of the Kunnskapsløft, and who thereby choose how to attempt to meet its requirements. This demonstrates the influence of the operating core, as predicted by Mintzberg.

Accordingly, the results of the study of this paper, support the expectation of the operating core influencing planned strategies, and this leading to differences in implementations between schools. However differences exist at an individual level as well, as individual professionals have their own personal working strategies in addition to the ones of the operating core. This is only to be expected due to the use of professional judgement and discretion in the work of professionals. Evidence of professionals having their own personal strategies was provided by the examples of physical activity in schools in addition to the circular discussed previously, and by how teachers at one school choose different ways of accommodating for pupils and their individual needs. In addition, the participants themselves suggested they all work by somewhat different and personal strategies, as well as interpretations of the Kunnskapsløft. These personal strategies are nevertheless only personal to some extent as they are still based on standardised skills. At the next level, the personal strategies of the individuals could say to be combined to form the operating core of the organisations. Accordingly, differences exist at all levels.

The study of this paper shows that similarities also exist between schools, particularly in the focus on competency and the organisational team structures which each of the schools use. Several participants associated these factors with the Kunnskapsløft, and used them as examples of how they meet the requirements of the reform. This is interesting because it may indicate that the different operating cores interpret the Kunnskapsløft the same when choosing this structure and focus. Nevertheless, I have no information to suggest that these particular focus areas were established in 2006 when the Kunnskapsløft was introduced. On the contrary, they likely existed before this time. Nonetheless does the association that the participants make at the different schools between the reform and the mentioned measures, suggest that they interpret the function of the

measures similarly. Moreover, the competency focus and team structures would be favoured in the theoretical viewpoint of Mintzberg, seeing as competence further standardises professional skills and may shape them towards the Kunnskapsløft and its ideas, and the team structure also allows for competency development in addition to accommodating for each of the three layers of decision making. The professionals have their own professional judgement, the Kunnskapsdepartement acts as the administrative fiat by its written reform, and the negotiation between the two occur in collective choice, namely in the teams.

In conclusion, with regards to the second hypothesis of differences in implementation of the Kunnskapsløft between schools as influenced by the operating core, results of this study indicated that differences do exist, both in initial and current implementation and behaviour, methodology, and areas of focus. Furthermore, the results show that professionals interpret and use the Kunnskapsløft differently both individually and as a group, at an operating core level. The influence of the professionals is clear, as much of the interpretation actually occurs at the professional judgement and collective choice level, in teams and individually, and different understandings of the same reform between schools are evident, even though management, access to resources etc, are assumed to be similar between schools.

The third hypothesis, addressing possible redefinitions of what the schools do or would have done anyway to comply with the Kunnskapsløft, was also supported by information as provided by the participants. At one school, the participants said they focused on things they already did that complied with the Kunnskapsløft upon implementation. Accordingly, they only performed minor changes, arguing that a lot of what they already did could be viewed in context with the reform. It may very well be the case that this is true and that the school in question did not have to perform many changes in order to meet the requirements of the new reform. Nevertheless, the pronounced focus on what they already know indicates a redefinition, together with the fact that the professionals according to Mintzberg much prefer to work by their own strategies and professional knowledge. They would probably, with their expertise, be quite capable of redefining what they already do in ways that more or less satisfy the guidelines of the Kunnskapsdepartement, in order to be left to do what they know best, based on their professional evaluations of different situations rather than on forced upon methods.

Similarly, as shown in the reporting of the results, two different schools chose to focus on only one of the parameters that were selected for this paper, and they each chose different ones. Participants

from both schools argued that the focus on one would accommodate the other, which may very well be true as they are not mutually exclusive. However it is still worth noting that they so actively chose to focus on something and to use their professional knowledge to argue why the other is simply accounted for by what they already do. This may be the case, but it may also be a case of professionals using their proficiency to create space for themselves to do what they, as professionals, believe is the most appropriate focus in the interest of the pupils. This is however a possible explanation, not a definite one, as I do not have basis in my data to make such a suggestion (se other possible explanations in the above section). However in light of Mintzberg´s theory, it is most definitely possible that the data indicate a professional redefinition of existing behaviour, to agree with the Kunnskapsløft. The comments made by one principal of their school being "development-oriented but conservative" also supports redefinition, as (s)he describes a reluctance to "jump" to new things when many of the things that are already done in the school are functional. The school adheres to requirements, but avoids extensive change. Logically, I expect that this may lead to redefinitions whenever possible in the interest of preserving what works.

Although the time-line is not entirely clear in regards to when the different changes, interventions, or programs were introduced, there is little evidence in the information provided by the participants to suggest a major reformation in behaviour occurred at the time of introduction of the Kunnskapsløft. Seeing as I expect some of the programs etc that the participants used as examples of how they meet the Kunnskapsløft were already introduced before 2006, and that they were selected based on professional opinions in the operating core to suggest changes were necessary due to the needs of the pupils, a redefinition is likely to have occurred.

Accordingly I conclude, in light of Mintzberg´s theory, that redefinition likely occurs/occurred in schools when introduced to the Kunnskapsløft, based on professionals´focus on what they already do to comply with the Kunnskapsløft, on contrasting focus areas, on views on development, and on the time aspect of the reform and the introduction of measures to help meet the reform.

In addition to the three hypotheses being supported, the study illustrates that management styles locally at each school were similar between schools. In particular, team structures and the conscious constitution of them, cultures of sharing knowledge, arenas for discussions, and the use of "people of resource" that are particularly knowledgeable of certain topics, allow for the use of all three layers of the decision making model developed by Mintzberg. The structure and management styles value the operating core and their professional opinions, and create arenas and opportunity for

professionals to use their professional judgement as well as collective choice in their daily work. This touches on the core of professional organisations, as it promotes proficiency, and maintains the decision making processes that are relevant to professional organisations. The same goes for an example provided by two principals in which they have started the introduction of new ideas into the organisations, but have had to evaluate and change or remove the initial plan as a result of how the operating core responded to the implementations. This demonstrates the influence of the operating core, and the readiness and openness that is required from them for a top-down implementation to be successful. Similarly, one principal explained how (s)he actively used professional, intellectual reasoning and academic research to argue necessary changes, a strategy which appeals to the professionalism in the operating core, and therefore may also alter their standardised skills or pigeonholes. Accordingly, I suggest that proficiency prevented the professionals from blocking the implementation, although they personally were not in favour of it. This strategy of implementation, in my opinion, demonstrates a managerial understanding of how professional organisations work, and a methods which appeals to professionals in a way that is difficult to go against. Accordingly, the mentioned examples of management styles further support the idea of schools being professional organisations with strong and dominant operating cores that largely influence what happens to top-down strategies.

In summary then, the answer to the research question is that professionals in the operating core of primary schools do influence what happens to the Kunnskapsløft (strategic plan) when introduced to the working strategy in schools (the operating core). It is difficult to answer the question of to what degree this influence occurs, but I dare to suggest the influence is pretty major. I base this suggestion on the fact that this study has produced examples of how the operating core have contributed to top-down implementation not being implemented in some cases or at least having been adjusted. I further base it on the fact that participants speak of very different actions and methods for understanding and reaching the goals of the Kunnskapsløft, and that several examples provided by participants suggest redefinition of existing behaviour to comply with the Kunnskapsløft. Additionally, attitudes to the Kunnskapsløft versus reforms in general and management styles also point towards and support the presence of professional mechanisms as described by Mintzberg.

Having now provided a summary of the results of my study and how those results link to theory, I will for the remainder of this paper spend some more time discussing primary schools in relation to

the theory and my original questions for this paper. I will then move on to present the study in a wider context in terms of representativeness as well as how the study can be used to further understand and manage professional organisations. At the very end I will formulate a conclusion that incorporates the findings draw some main conclusions.

5.3.1. Comments on choice of theory

I presumed at the beginning of this paper that schools belong to Mintzberg´s configuration of a professional organisation, due to the standardisation of skills, the professionals´independence and control over own work, the narrowly defined tasks they work with, forces of proficiency, the small strategic apex, and the use of pigeonholes.

Throughout the paper, I have found that primary schools have fit nicely into this configuration, and that each of the characteristics of professional organisations have been evident. I further found that the characteristics of the professional organisations provided useful viewpoints from which to describe processes that play themselves out in the organisations as reported by the participants.

The three layers of decision making in professional organisations have also, in my opinion, been evident and useful in studying what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to primary schools. When I viewed and presented the Kunnskapsdepartement with its branches as the strategic apex and the schools with its principals and the operating core, the layers became clear, and processes as predicted and derived from Mintzberg´s theories became evident. Furthermore, at a more local level, management strategies that agree with professional organisations were used by the principals who know and work with the professionals.

Professionals use their professional judgement on a daily basis when making decisions as to which pigeonholes to use, how to use plans, the development of plans, and generally how to behave and perform their work. In addition, professionals participate in collective choice arenas such as teams, plan groups etc, and play a central role in interpreting and using the information and requirement which is presented by the administrative fiat. The administrative fiat may not participate personally in the collective choice arenas, but the written reform provided by them is still interpreted and developed by the operating core, resulting in a form of collective choice anyway. I will dedicate the following section to exactly what functions those top-down reforms presumably have in professional organisations.

5.3.2. The use of top-down reforms in professional organisations

The Kunnskapsdepartement provide reforms that resemble strategic plans, top-down, by the administrative fiat. As shown in this study, the reform does not seem to be simply accepted by the professionals, and it does not seem to necessarily be implemented exactly as planned and similarly by different schools, but it still somehow allows for some of the processes in professional organisations to play themselves out. Nevertheless, in viewing reforms as something that should cause reformation, I argue that this study shows evidence to suggest reforms in general are not likely successful in primary schools, not even the Kunnskapsløft. Though this particular reform may be accepted for what it is, there is little evidence to suggest it has actually served its purpose of reformation. Rather, the changes that have occurred seem to have derived from professional development and skills in combination with evaluations of the needs of the pupils. Furthermore, when they have felt that current methods have not been sufficient, the operating cores themselves have initiated changes. Consequently, I propose that changes that may have occurred are a result of professional expertise and bottom-up knowledge and developments rather than on top-down reforms. This naturally also causes differences between schools, due to different operating cores in different schools.

The top-down reforms resemble standardised procedures or work that are more helpful in machine organisations than in professional ones, or they resemble entrepreneurial organisations in which direct supervision is more helpful. As pointed out in the theory chapter of this paper, professional organisations are too complex for standardised work, outputs, or direct supervision to be appropriate. With such standardised measures, proficiency, discretion and judgement is reduced, and the professionals are unable to choose appropriate pigeonholes for the needs of pupils. In professional organisations, the skills of professionals are what actually guide professionals´ behaviour, meaning they are influenced by several different people and even external arenas such as the development arenas as defined by Røvik. This influence can not be controlled by procedures, direct supervision, or any other controlling mechanisms. And if the professionals´ behaviour is controlled by such mechanisms by force, their behaviour is likely inappropriate for the needs of the individual pupils. This is of course, unless someone in an unlikely event, are actually able to develop procedures for how to use discretion and judgement for any given situation.

In short, I claim to have found evidence in this study to suggest that the Norwegian government attempts to use traditional strategic plans based on the idea of the rational human being, the

assumption that planning precedes implementation of strategies, the idea that the future can be predicted, and the idea that people in organisations can simply be told to work in accordance with top-down plans, and that telling them to do so will make the plans happen. I further claim to have shown examples of how strategies also emerge bottom-up, of a considerable influence of the operating core, and of professionals not being guided by top-down ideas as much as they are by their professional skills.

As a response to the question I proposed in the introduction of this paper of whether top-down reforms are appropriate in Norwegian schools, I suggest that they are not very useful at least if you see them as something that should promote large reformations. Granted, they may promote equality and coordination to some extent, and they may even provide useful descriptions to be used in the education of teachers, courses to be provided, formulated thoughts for everyone to be aware of, etc. Nevertheless, I doubt the reforms have much direct influence on professionals´actual behaviour. However, I do believe the Kunnskapsløft serves an important purpose in that it formulates concrete goals for everyone to work towards. This likely ensures quality and equality, and the professionals themselves report that they use them and believe them to be useful in their daily work. But maybe they should be called just that, goals, rather than a reform, as a reform at least to me personally, triggers expectations of something more than the function the Kunnskapsløft seems to have, as based on the results of this study.

I propose that the Kunnskapsløft is a formulated system of goals to be met and values etc related to how to work with and view young pupils. This is agreeable with the nature of professional organisations, and the Kunnskapsløft serves its purpose if goals, values etc are the expectations attached to it. Nevertheless are professional skills and pigeonholes what actually influence professional behaviour as well as the three layers of decision making, and reforms are unlikely to change that. If a new reform was to be formulated for Norwegian schools, I believe it should contain goals that would unify what the schools work towards (as an extension of the Opplæringslov), and a rough framework of the amount of hours spent at school etc. Any changes to be made should probably be initiated by professional training, education, research, and knowledge, in order to enrich existing pigeonholes and to introduce new ones, and to encourage professionals to reflect and develop with regards to how, when, and why they use the different pigeonholes. The idea would then be that the training of the professionals would provide them with a range of different possible actions, pigeonholes, methods etc, and that their proficiency should guide them in making

the right choices for the pupils their work with in the context they find themselves in. Furthermore, for professional organisations to continuously develop and become better, the general and the local strategic apex should ensure that they use management styles that allow for professionals to be just that – professionals – and to work by layers of decision making etc.

As a matter of fact, the term reform should possibly be removed all together in Norwegian schools, as several professionals at least in this study, expressed negative associations in regards to the term. Furthermore, much time and resources are spent trying to develop reforms, finding "best way approaches", implementing them, monitoring their implementation afterwards, evaluating them, etc. Based on this study I propose that focus should be on formulating and working towards a shared set of detailed goals, and creating arenas for professionals to develop, to exchange useful experiences, to familiarise themselves with and help develop the goals, and to expand their professional knowledge and skills. If the Kunnskapsdepartement identifies areas of improvement, they should ideally provide training, education, academic research, development arenas and courses to present the professionals with their point of view, and appeal to their proficiency which is what actually guides their behaviour. When the professionals are convinced of the arguments and are provided with necessary training in terms of a range of pigeonholes of how to reach formulated goals, they can ideally be trusted to choose appropriate measures to be taken, and ensure that the goals are met. Provided with arenas of professional judgement and collective choice, professionals will also likely influence each other with their skills and arguments, and strategies will be developed both individually and for the operating cores.

5.3.3. Implications for how to manage professional organisations

Although this paper has been dedicated to addressing the Kunnskapsløft as a specific reform in primary schools in a specific municipality, I dare attempt to make some suggestions of how to manage professional organisations in general when faced with top-down strategies. I make such suggestions based on Mintzberg´s ideas that his theories are applicable for professional organisations not because of their particular industry, but because of the large influence of education and standardised skills and knowledge. This trait is characteristic of industries such as hospitals and universities as well as schools, where groups of highly educated people work together. Nevertheless should it be noted that my implications for professional organisations in general are ambitious, and should be perceived as reflections and ideas rather than facts. All i can really make suggestions about based on this study, are the five schools that I have actually studied, and even those

suggestions may not be accurate and representative of anything more than the expressed views of particular participants.

Considering the strong influence of he operating core in professional organisations, it may seem difficult to promote change at all. One could simply say that the Opplæringslov is the ultimate goal for schools to work towards, and trust the individual professionals to find their own methods to reach those goals, based on their skills. However, patients, users, pupils, customers etc have rights and expectations of how they should be met by professional organisations, and certain standards and similarities seem necessary in order to ensure minimum equality and quality for people using the service. Furthermore, the government or management have obligations to ensure and control quality of service, and need measures to do so. In addition, as suggested by Mintzberg, configurations in organisations provide stability, identity and order over time, while the various pulls and forces of other configurations ensure flexibility and adaptability when change is needed. Accordingly, if professionals were to simply us their existing pigeonholes, they would not likely develop, learn from each other, expand their ideas, etc. For such development to occur in professional organisations, decision-making arenas must be facilitated.

When working with professionals, it is essential that the use of all three layers of decision making is facilitated. Only by the involvement of professional judgement and collective choice, can the administrative fiat successfully promote actual changes in professional organisations. Furthermore, based on examples as provided by Mintzberg´s theory as well as results of this study, management in professional organisations will likely find it helpful to make use of as much "academic management" as possible, by referring to research and appealing to the proficiency of the professionals when trying to make suggestions or implementations. This kind of appeal is likely useful, assuming that the professional knowledge and skills are what actually influence professional behaviour, and the adjustment of that same knowledge and skill is accordingly the key to changing behaviour.

Additionally, although the mechanisms in professional organisations need to be carefully considered when working with them, forces and pulls from other configurations can also be used to promote change. For example, professionals may be involved in developing some basic or "rough" procedures in order to promote equality and quality, and thereby perform as their own technostructure. In doing so, collective choice processes are involved, increasing chances of commitment to the procedures, and the professionals may still be able to make room for some

professional discretion and judgement. Alternatively, the strategic apex may introduce ideas top-down in a similar manner to direct supervision, but still allow for the collective choice processes to shape those ideas which is much the case with the Kunnskapsløft. These are only a few examples of how different forces may be used to assist in developing professional organisations while still maintaining the core of professionalism. Other forces, namely mutual adjustment, ideology and politics can also be used for those same purposes. Getting into details of how this influence may occur is beyond the scope of this article, but the forces may nevertheless be very useful.

Either way, I propose that a balance between the professional configuration and other forces are necessary for an organisation to be healthy. If a professional organisation is set in its ways, using the standardised skills that everyone have without development, the organisation is unlikely to survive as the society changes, research and development increases human knowledge, need of users change, etc. In order for dynamic professional judgement and collective choice processes to occur and promote change and development, individuals need to introduce ideas, professionals need to be challenged, professionals need to coordinate and cooperate, experiences should be shared and discussed, and adjustments need to be made. This can only occur if management or other people in the organisation introduce ideas, or professionals turn to external arenas for inputs other than what they already know and are familiar with.

Accordingly, when management in professional organisations are wanting to promote change, external development arenas, professional training, education etc, are key arenas for influencing the input that the professionals get, which in turn influences their behaviour. We saw examples of this in this study, where professionals attended courses that informed of the reasoning behind and extended knowledge of, the Kunnskapsløft. Based on Mintzberg´s theories, this kind of knowledge is likely key to implementing strategies or reforms, as the appeal, again, is made to the skills of professionals.

I believe that trust is also important in managing professional organisations. The professionals are trained to use a large set of pigeonholes, and they are given the freedom to make decisions within the framework of the knowledge their standardised skills have provided them. Accordingly it makes sense to give the professionals freedom to make judgements within that framework, and trusting that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to do so. If this is not sufficient, it is likely that the professionals need further knowledge and training to improve and change behaviour, rather than top-down restrictions. However, the use of and trust in professional skills assumes that the

individual professional has pure intentions of doing what is best for the pupils, client, patients, etc, and that their motivation is to perform as good a job as possible, in the best interest of the organisation and the users of the service. This may not always be the case, and if so, other measures may have to be taken by management, that are more controlling, such as direct supervision etc. Additionally, this is something that management should probably be aware of when employing people. Although professionals likely possess the same or at least similar skills, their attitude and intentions may be essential to their work performance.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In regards to my research question, i conclude that the operating core and the individual professionals in primary schools do indeed influence several different aspects of what happens to the Kunnskapsløft when introduced to schools. Variations do exist amongst schools and individual professionals as to whether the Kunnskapsløft has produced actual changes in the working strategy in professional organisations, and there are differences between schools in terms of the understanding, interpretation, and use of the Kunnskapsløft, and that such differences derive from different operating cores in each of the organisations. Lastly, some schools and professionals do attempt to redefine what they already do in ways that are compliant with the Kunnskapsløft, without actually changing much.

Additionally, management styles, attitudes and perceptions in regards to the Kunnskapsløft and to other reforms, also comply with the characteristics that Mintzberg proposes that professional organisations have. In many ways, professionals are already managed in accordance with Mintzberg´s ideas, by allowing for professional judgement, collective choice, and mindful ways of introducing top-down ideas. Furthermore, the Kunnskapsløft is formulated in ways that are reasonably agreeable with characteristics and processes of the professional organisations, suggesting that an understanding of professional organisations already exist to some extent, at least locally.

In the paper I have concluded that top-down reforms represent the strategic apex or the technostructure of organisations, which is inappropriate for professional organisations. As shown by the evaluations of the hypotheses, this likely leads to differences, redefinitions, and resistance. At the same time however, the Kunnskapsløft is somehow accepted by the participants. This does not

necessarily mean it is serving its purpose of reforming schools, but it may serve different purposes in that it provides useful goals etc for teachers to work by. The complexity of professional organisations nevertheless prevents the possibility of developing procedures or rules to work by. Rather, proficiency should be valued, training provided, arenas created for collective choice, and detailed goals should be developed for a shared vision. With sufficient training and knowledge (pigeonholes), as well as the right intentions, professionals may be able to perform their work and choose appropriate measures by judgement and discretion, and develop further by collective choice as well as inspirations and suggestions provided by the strategic apex. However they need to be able to make decisions, to choose the appropriate methodology or measure from their available and hopefully rich repertoire.

In an attempt to summarise what influences are in play when the working strategy in professional organisations is developed, I have created a model in which I try to visualise the different effects. Although the strategic apex and the operating core are presented as equal influences, next to each other in the model, the column under collective choice that defines influences that determine whether or not a plan evolves into a working strategy, only provides points that are concerned with the operating core and professionals. Accordingly, the top-down plans will, in my suggestion, be stopped or at least altered or redefined at this point, before reaching the next level of becoming part of the actual behavioural changes and working strategy in schools. This illustrates a major influence of the operating core, and the small likelihood of the strategic apex being able to successfully introduce strategies without the professionals being involved. See model on the next page.

STRATEGIC APEX	OPERATING CORE
Reforms/strategies Top-down plans	Professional judgement/discretion Standardised skills Experience Pigeonholes Intentions

⬇   ⬇

COLLECTIVE CHOICE

The reform/planned strategy (or the operating core) presents themes to collective choice arenas

The reform/strategy may result in:

- *Changed patterns of action as formulated by the reform*
- *Changed patterns of action as interpreted by operating cores, not necessarily as formulated*
- *No change*
- *Redefinitions of existing behaviour to comply with the reform*

Whether reforms are implemented or not depends on:

- *Compatibility with existing working strategy, pigeonholes, values etc*
- *To what degree the reform/strategic apex succeeds in appealing to professional knowledge/proficiency*
- *To what degree the professionals have been given local freedom/been involved in formulations by the three layers of decision making*
- *To what degree the reform concerns and challenges pigeonholes/proficiency or not*

⬇

ACTUAL STRATEGY

Patterns of action/behaviour

May or may not be influenced by the strategic apex, but is always influenced by the operating core

May be quite different from original formulations of reforms

In concluding this paper, I will finally provide some thoughts on future studies and limitations of this one. In addition, some suggestions of interesting questions to address have been provided throughout the paper while discussing relevant topics.

As mentioned several times already, this was an explorative study that provides my interpretations of the participants interpretations of a phenomenon and processed, as coloured by my theoretical viewpoints and areas of interest. Therefore it is important for a potential future study to attempt to test some of the suggestions I have made, whether they are valid, whether they exist only at certain schools or in certain municipalities, whether the phenomenons exist in other professional organisations and industries, whether they may exist in other organisations than professionals as well although this is not expected based on my interpretations of Mintzberg´s theory, potential differences in private and public organisations, differences between the operating core and the strategic apex in the perceptions of the topics, etc. As you can see, there is a wide range of possible angles to look at this. In addition, it would be interesting to explore what happens in professional organisations that do not have formulated planned strategies, and to evaluate the consequences of such an approach. Lastly, I have presumed in this paper that the intentions of the professionals are concerned with performing a good job, in the best interest of the organisation and the pupils. Though I have made the presumption here, this may be something worth further investigating and assessing the validity of.

7. REFLECTIVE COMMENTS

The process of writing this paper has been challenging, fun, frustrating, interesting, exciting, and more than anything – I have learned a lot from it. What I find somewhat surprising is that as much as I have learned a lot about the topics I have been writing about, I think the main thing I really take away from this is the process itself of choosing a project, carrying it out, and evaluating it. Another skill that I had to search for and develop in myself is persistence and focus over time, as this is the first time I have spent so much time on one project.

I had difficulties trying to find a topic to write about, a good research question, and narrowing the topic down to something that was manageable. I was interested in just about everything, and did not realise at first how much I would actually go into depth of the topic I chose and therefore how specific and narrow it had to be. Accordingly, at the beginning of the process, I did not enjoy being a master student as much as I did later. However, as soon as I had chosen a topic and started investigating that, I became really excited and even more so when I realised how positive everyone were about what I was doing. In particular, the participants showed an interest that really motivated me. Although I found the methodology, the collecting of the data, the analysis and the discussion challenging, these were most definitely the parts I enjoyed the most. And for a potential next time I am writing some sort of paper, I will make sure to keep in mind how narrow and specific the topic needs to be, and to base my initial choice of topic on just one or two interesting theories that I can use as a starting point. I believe this will ease the process for me, as I need to keep in mind that I can not investigate all the things I would like to look into, simply because time and resources would not allow me to.

I chose to do a qualitative study, a choice I do not regret. This allowed me to really explore my thoughts, perceptions and understandings. It further challenged me to be brave enough to make suggestions and assumptions that were interpretative but still based on the data at hand. This was and is a challenging task and a difficult balance to achieve, of interpreting while still not providing understandings that are not based on reality. I really enjoyed this task, as much as it was a very demanding one.

I am originally used to not using "I" in academic papers and assignments, and I have always written very neutral and not value laden papers. As much as it was difficult for me to adjust to giving

myself an actual voice and opinions in this paper, it was an interesting experience that forced me to be even more aware of how I interpret various things and what I actually base those interpretations on. At the same time this way of writing somehow made me feel like I was doing a less "scientific" job, but after a while I realised more than ever the fact that research in general but qualitative studies in particular are never fully scientific anyway, and the importance of being aware of that when performing analyses and interpretations. Because I used the "I" form in this paper, I believe I really developed my own understanding of why this is so important.

With regards to interviews I realised after conducting them that I forgot to provide the participants with the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. This should obviously have been done, and is something I would correct if I was to do it again. Furthermore, as pointed out in the methods section, I regret not interviewing two more teachers, something I would do differently come another occasion.

Looking back at the process and what I have learned during it, I also believe I should have been more aware of circulars such as the one regarding physical activity. The benefit of circulars are that they are more specific and easier to measure. It would be interesting to look into a couple more, to find out if the same differences between schools would appear regardless of the theme of the circular. This would possibly either challenge or validate my conclusions which would either way be interesting. I also suspect it would be interesting to use schools from different municipalities as well. The teacher that recently worked at a different school in a different municipality provided some insights that were very helpful to my study, and additional participants with different backgrounds would possibly increase my insights even further.

All in all I have had a very good experience of writing this paper. For that I owe thanks to Otto Ottesen who have patiently seem me through the different stages and frustrations I have been going through, and pulled me back into focus. Thank you!

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EPOST SENDT TIL ALLE REKTORER

Hei!

Mitt navn er Kjersti Birkeland.

Jeg er for tiden i ferd med å skrive avsluttende oppgave i forbindelse med **masterstudiet i endringsledelse ved UIS**, og ber om din hjelp.

Oppgaven omhandler strategi og ledelse i organisasjoner med profesjonelle/høyt utdannede mennesker. Jeg har valgt å fokusere på skole som eksempel på en slik organisasjon.

Som et ledd i oppgaven skal jeg gjennomføre intervjuer hvor jeg stiller spørsmål rundt i hvilken grad mennesker i organisasjonene påvirker om, og hvordan, kunnskapsløftet som eksempel på en strategi blir implementert og tolket. I denne forbindelse vil jeg **intervjue rektor og en lærer ved ca 5-6 ulike skoler**. Intervjuene forventes å ta max 1 time hver. Målet med oppgaven er ikke egentlig å vurdere om kunnskapsløftet er implementert eller ei. Reformen brukes snarere som eksempel for å **identifisere ledelsesprosesser i organisasjoner med høyt utdannede mennesker.**

Navn til deltakende mennesker og skoler vil selvsagt ikke publiseres i oppgaven. Deltakerne vil i tillegg få tilbud om en kopi av oppgaven når den ferdigstilles.

Jeg håper og tror at resultatene og drøftingene i oppgaven vil kunne være nyttige for skolene. Dette for å skape bevisstgjøring rundt ledelse av profesjonelle og selvstendige mennesker i et byråkratisk system som søker å kvalitetssikre, kontrollere, og standardisere undervisningstilbudet i norske skoler.

Ettersom dette er en oppgave som skal skrives i løpet av ett semester, er det viktig for meg å få gjennomført intervjuene så snart som mulig.

Jeg jobber som SFO leder ved Sørbø skole, men har fleksible rammer i forhold til tidspunkt for intervjuer. Det kreves ikke inngående kunnskap om temaet som skal drøftes. De som intervjues vil bli presentert for et par temaer innenfor kunnkapsløftet og vil deretter bli bedt om å beskrive hvordan de opplever dette gjennomført på sin arbeidsplass, og hvilke mennesker som har påvirket prosesser rundt gjennomføring.

Det er en fordel om de som intervjues har jobbet i skole siden før 2006, men dette er ikke et krav.

Jeg håper på positiv tilbakemelding, og er veldig takknemlig for alle som vil delta i undersøkelsen! Jeg kan kontaktes på epost eller tlf 41281215.

Mvh

Kjersti Birkeland

INTERVJUGUIDE

Navn, kjønn, skole, stilling, hvor lenge jobbet på arbeidsplassen, hvor lenge vært lærer

Tema:

I hvilken grad påvirker personalgruppen i skoler hvorvidt og hvordan kunnskapsløftet er implementert?

Vi skiller mellom planlagt og faktisk strategi, altså mellom formulerte planer og faktisk atferd.

Vi skiller også mellom personalgruppen og ledelsen i denne sammenheng.

◆   Hvor inngående kunnskap vil du si at du har om innholdet i kunnskapsløftet?

◆   Hva er din generelle holdning til kunnskapsløftet?

◆   Presentasjon av parametre, samt stikkord

–   Har denne formuleringen ført til noe i vår skole?

–   Hva har den eventuelt ført til/hvordan er den ivaretatt?

–   Hvor stor innflytelse har personalgruppen hatt på det som har skjedd/ikke skjedd?

Å lære elevene å lære

<u>Fra læringsplakaten:</u>

"stimulere elevenes lærelyst, utholdenhet og nysgjerrighet"

"stimulere elevene til å utvikle egne læringsstrategier og evne til kritisk tenkning"

<u>Fra kapitlet "prinsipper for opplæringen" i kunnskapsløftet</u> (Oppl.l.§ 1-2 og læreplanens generelle del)

"Motiverte elever har lyst til å lære, er utholdende og nysgjerrige og viser evne til å arbeide målrettet. Erfaringer med å **mestre** *styrker utholdenheten i medgang og motgang.* **Fysisk akivitet** *fremmer god helse og kan bidra til større motivasjon for læring.* **Faglig trygge, engasjerte og inspirerende lærere** *og instruktører, bruk av* **varierte, tilpassede arbeidsmåter** *og muligheter for* **aktiv medvirkning**, *kan bidra til lærelyst og til en positiv og realistisk oppfatning av egne talenter og muligheter.*

Opplæringen skal oppmuntre elevene ved blant annet å klargjøre målene for dem og legge til rette for varierte og målrettede aktiviteter. Elevene skal få, men også selv kunne velge oppgaver, som både utfordrer og gir mulighet til utforskning, alene eller sammen med andre. **Vurdering og veiledning** *skal bidra til å styrke deres motivasjon for videre læring.*

Læringsstrategier er framgangsmåter elevene bruker for å organisere sin egen læring. Dette er strategier for å **planlegge, gjennomføre og vurdere eget arbeid** *for å nå nasjonalt fastsatte kompetansemål. Det innebærer også refleksjon over nyervervet kunnskap og anvendelse av den i nye situasjoner. Gode læringsstrategier fremmer elevenes motivasjon for læring og evne til å løse vanskelige oppgaver også i videre utdanning, arbeid eller fritid.*

Opplæringen skal bidra til at elevene er seg **bevisst hva de har lært og hva de må lære** *for å nå målene. Hvilke læringsstrategier elevene bruker for individuell læring og læring sammen med andre, vil avhenge av deres forutsetninger og den aktuelle læringssituasjonen. Opplæringen skal gi elevene kunnskap om betydningen av egen innsats og om* **bevisst bruk og utvikling av læringsstrategier"**

Tilpasning til individuelle behov og dermed integrering av alle elever

<u>Fra læringsplakaten:</u>

"Gi alle elever like muligheter til å utvikle sine evner og talenter individuelt og i samarbeid med andre"

"Fremme tilpasset opplæring og varierte arbeidsmåter"

<u>Fra kapitlet "prinsipper for opplæringen" i kunnskapsløftet</u> (Oppl.l. § 1-2 og kap 5, og læreplanverkets generelle del)

"Tilpasset opplæring innenfor fellesskapet er grunnleggende elementer i fellesskolen. Opplæringen skal legges til rette slik at elevene skal kunne bidra til fellesskapet og også kunne oppleve gleden ved å mestre og nå sine mål.

*Alle elever skal i arbeider med fagene få møte **utfordringer** de kan **strekke seg** mot, og som de kan **mestre** på **egen hånd eller sammen** med andre. Det gjelder også elever med **særlige vansker eller særlige evner og talenter** på ulike områder. Når elever arbeider sammen med voksne og med hverandre, kan mangfoldet av evner og talenter bidra til å styrke både fellesskapets og den enkeltes læring og utvikling.*

*I opplæringen skal **mangfoldet i elevens bakgrunn, forutsetninger, interesser og talenter møtes med et mangfold av utfordringer**. Uavhengig av kjønn, alder, sosial, geografisk, kulturell eller språklig bakgrunn skal alle elever ha like gode muligheter til å utvikle seg gjennom arbeidet med fagene i et inkluderende arbeidmiljø. Tilpasset opplæring for den enkelte elev kjennetegnes ved **variasjon i bruk av lærestoff, arbeidsmøter, læremidler** samt **variasjon i organisering av og intensitet i opplæringen**. Elevene har ulike utgangspunkt, bruker ulike læringsstrategier og har ulik progresjon i forhold til nasjonalt fastsatte kompetansemål.*

Bestemmelsene om spesialundervisning kommer til anvendelse når det er behov for en mer omfattende tilpasning enn den som kan gis innenfor den ordinære opplæringen".