

# UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS

A case study of two Norwegian schools

by

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## PREFACE

This is a field report, containing a description and analysis of two upper secondary school organisations in Norway. The intention of the study is to provide background material for a co-operation effort organised by the educational authorities in Norway and Latvia, and involving five schools in each country.

The research work in Norway has been undertaken by two members of the staff of two departments of Agder University College. The work was financed by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, and the project manager has been the Director of Education in Kristiansand, Bjørn Monstad.

We would like to thank the principals and the employees of the two schools for receiving us cordially and being willing to answer our questions and help us find the kind of information we wanted. It is our hope that the report may be of some use not only in relation to the co-operation with the Latvian schools, but also in the efforts to develop further the organisation in each school.

In the process the manuscript was sent to the schools, the county and the Regional Director of Education. They all gave us very useful feedback, and we are grateful for the help they gave us.

We have been informed by some of the readers of the manuscript that the first couple of chapters are dull and boring, and we pass on this opinion as a kind of warning. If you are just interested in school organisation or the two schools that we have visited, you should go straight to chapter 3 and onwards. The two introductory chapters present the project and the premises for it, as well as some basic theoretical perspectives, and as such they provide a background for our study. In our view this is an integral part of the whole, but, as mentioned above, it may not be very entertaining.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CDE	- County Director of Education
CEO	- County Executive Officer
CV	- Curriculum vitae
FSS	- Flekkefjord Upper secondary School
HES	- Health, Environment and Safety
HoD	- Head of Department
ICT	- Information and Communication Technology
IT	- Information Technology
KUF	- The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs
LIS	- (Ledelse i skolen), Management in school.
LEVIS	- (Ledelse i videregående skoler), Management in upper secondary schools.
LUIS	- (Lederutvikling i skolen), Management development in school.
MBO	- Management by Objectives
ME	- The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs
MOLIS	- (Miljø og ledelse i skolen), Environment and management in school.
MSS	- Mandal Upper secondary School
NOU	- Norges offentlige utredninger (Government White Papers)
PC	- Personal Computer
P&O	- (Section of) Personnel and Organisation
RDE	- Regional Director of Education



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **1.1. Background and intention of the study**

This report represents an attempt to describe and analyse the organisations of two upper secondary schools in the county of Vest-Agder in Norway. The study has been carried out by two researchers at Agder University College in Kristiansand, belonging to the two departments of Education and of Economics and Social Science. The project has been coordinated and financed by the Director of Education in Kristiansand, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, (hereafter ME or Ministry).

The study of the two schools is part of a larger project of co-operation between the authorities of Latvia and Norway, and one of the basic ideas is to establish connections between upper secondary schools in the two countries for mutual benefit and development. In both countries small research projects were to be initiated, in order to have some systematic presentation of the practices and experiences of school management as a basis for the co-operation. This report, then, is the outcome of the Norwegian research contribution to the project.

Initially, a study of altogether five schools was planned, but the resources were not sufficient for this, neither as regards money nor time, and the research was limited to two institutions. The County Director of Education selected the schools of Mandal and Flekkefjord, and obtained acceptance from the two principals, who had discussed the matter with their staff. In May 2000 we as researchers were asked to carry out the study and deliver a report by the end of the year, so that it might be presented at a conference in January 2001.

Parallel to our study a more or less corresponding one was to be conducted in Latvia by a team of researchers and officials there. At the outset we had an intention of keeping in contact with our Latvian counterparts, but this co-operation did not materialise, probably for several reasons. We did, however, meet with our Latvian colleagues in Kristiansand at the start of the project, so that each team to some extent was informed about the approach of the other. The main differences between the

projects are that the Latvians are in contact with five schools; that they are involving the schools quite directly in carrying out the project; and that their projects represent attempts at initiating processes of change. More concretely, there has been a certain focus on management and/or leadership in this study, and this means that there may be some differences between the two research projects.

Our colleagues probably have been more concerned with modern management techniques, and more specifically with two models or concepts: "Team management" and "Total Quality Management", which they have taken an interest in as something that might be introduced into school management. As to us, in the Norwegian team, we have been more reluctant to consider "solutions" in general, and we do not see our role as including proposals or recommendations of specific models. The Norwegian project is a more traditional, descriptive study of how a school organisation may be perceived and what the experiences of the staff and the students are with this organisation. Which forms or types of organisations the staff in the schools, or their superiors, at some later stage choose to introduce, is something that we do not consider an issue for us.

Our basic intention is to describe the organisations of the two schools quite broadly, and to provide a picture of how they are structured and function. In principle "all" aspects of the organisation are included, as indicated by the sketch for the design of the study, (see appendix 1). Such a description is of value in itself, as it may represent a basis for discussions of school organisations, their qualities and the experiences obtained with them. And this is our second intention, to try to sum up and discuss the experiences that the various parties claim. These will of course not be quite consistent with each other, and we are aiming at presenting the diversities and to say something about how they may be interpreted. More generally, we have the intention of trying to understand the organisations, such as we have seen them, on the basis of their history, of their present situation and the challenges for which they are designed.

This is not an *evaluation* of the schools, although the distinctions between "research" and "evaluation" are quite vague. But we are *not* trying to decide whether the schools are "efficient" or not; we are *not* trying to establish whether they are managed well and utilising their resources optimally or in accordance with "modern" principles or not; and we are *not* trying to compare the two schools and say which of them is "best". Our main task is to present the two schools so that the readers will be able to understand how they are functioning and to some extent also be able to discuss their design and organisational arrangements.

To the Norwegian readers of this report we would like to say that we have our Latvian readers in mind when presenting the Norwegian system of education and also the two schools. Many things that may be very well known by our countrymen, need to be specified in some detail to accommodate our colleagues in Latvia.

We have said that this is not an evaluation, but we would also like to say that the element of "research" is not very prevalent. The stipulated volume of work was small, as the budget allowed for five weeks of work for each of us, and even though we have exceeded these limits quite extensively, the study is exploratory rather than in-depth. Partly, our background necessitated this, as one of us is very familiar with "schools", but not so much with "organisation", while it is the other way round for the other, being a specialist in "organisation", but not so conversant with school organisations. This of course made for more preparatory work than would otherwise have been required, and we also deliberately chose a rather time consuming approach, so as to be able to discuss across professional borderlines. So our work has been hampered by such "inefficiencies", but we believe that there are not only difficulties, but also benefits to be reaped through our interdisciplinary co-operation.

There was the understanding at the outset that this work was not meant to go very deep. We have been expected to carry out a descriptive study with an *element of research*, and our interpretation of this has been, firstly, that we have attempted not only to describe the two schools, but also to *understand* (some aspects of) how they are functioning. Secondly, we have applied certain *theoretical perspectives* as a basis for our observations and conclusions. And, thirdly, we consider our study as "research" in the sense that we try to be *systematic* and *explicit* as to qualities of the information collected and the basis for our conclusions. To us, "research" primarily is an activity of discovery that imposes constraints upon the performer as to what information to use and some modesty as to the certainty of the propositions and conclusions put forward.

## **1.2. The study, the work done and limitations**

Our study has been designed as qualitative in the sense that we wanted to describe and understand two distinct schools, and we have not been much concerned with the possibilities of generalisations of our findings. However, even though two cases are a small sample, there are reasons to believe that what is characteristic of them, is of considerable interest more generally. This is especially true of schools in the Norwegian context, which do not, at least up to recently, allow for very much individual development. This does not mean that all schools are the same, but that differences mainly have to do with size and the types of studies offered.

There are, however, reasons to be apprehensive as to how typical these two schools are, since the County Director of Education (CDE) handpicked them. We have been informed that there were several reasons for choosing these two schools, primarily connected to their size and location, and that they are comprehensive, but one may also quite safely assume that the CDE did not select those institutions that she was least satisfied with. So, one limitation of our study is that it probably presents two schools which are rated above average in the county.

Our main approach has been interviews, and appendix 2 lists our interviewees. They include primarily the management of the two schools, but also a few other staff members, representatives of unions for various categories of staff, and the students. In addition we have interviewed staff at the county administration, primarily at the County Director of Education.

From the two schools we have been provided with a number of documents concerning the physical layouts and structures, the staff, the organisational structures and systems, and the accounts and budgets. The contents of these documents have been useful in their own right, but also as checks on the information collected in the interviews.

We have not attempted to obtain more objective measures as to attitudes, work moral, etc, neither in the form of surveys nor through analysis of statistical material that to a certain extent was available. Instead, we have relied upon the information, the opinions and the judgements expressed by our interviewees. This is in many ways a weakness, but there are some aspects of this approach that counteracts the otherwise subjective element. We have received a great amount of information, and this has to some extent been processed. By this we mean that in typing out the interviews and in writing out the report we have tried to integrate, reconcile and hold up against each other the many pieces of information that we have been able to assemble.

Thereby much of the data has been checked, for if anyone had said something which was not true or correct, the chances were great that it would be contradicted or supplemented by what others have said. And so we would have to look into the matter once more, which we of course have done in many instances. Secondly, in trying to understand what our informants have told us, we had to probe further, and thus develop more questions to the same or to some other respondent. And, thirdly, when information is to be written into one report, there is a need to integrate and make consistent, and this again leads to a process of sifting and sorting, hopefully with the result that many weaknesses are discovered and corrected.

This does not mean that the report is true in every aspect, which it most certainly is not, partly because we did not have the capacity to process the information as thoroughly as we would have liked to. But it is not just a matter of being truthful, which is a problematic concept in the social sciences in any case, but of providing a picture which is *useful*. We believe that if this report has qualities, it would of course firstly be that the description of the two schools is true to and consistent with the information that we have been given, but in addition that it points out certain topics as important and interesting.

This final report was sent as a draft to all the interviewees for scrutiny, not only to obtain corrections as to how we had presented the information we had collected. We also asked more generally for advice and comments. We do hope that our informants will find something of interest in this report, and that it not only may be used as a basis for co-operation and discussions with representatives of other schools. We also hope that the staff of each school will find it rewarding to discuss between themselves what has been said about their own organisation. Sometimes it is a good idea to have someone from the outside present his or her version of what goes on, and hopefully this report may be useful in this sense.

It is important to bear in mind one limitation of this report. It is strictly about school organisations and management, not for instance about pedagogy, the learning environment, the social relations, the school as a community, etc; neither is it about Norwegian educational policy. All of such matters are of course of relevance and are touched upon in the report, but only to the extent that it will help us say something about what is in focus - the organisation.

### **1.3. The content of the report**

There are five chapters after this first one. In chapter two we present a little theory, mainly to show that a school organisation may be perceived in many ways. An organisation is not something "given" that just needs description; one has to choose which concepts to apply and which aspects of what we normally call reality to concentrate upon.

Then in chapter three we give some background material, mostly to accommodate our Latvian readers. They cannot be expected to know the Norwegian educational system, and this system is very important in order to understand the functioning of the given school. This of course also applies to Norwegian readers, who are not always familiar with the administrative and political structures in their own country. Not only the

institutional background is presented, but also some information about the upper secondary school system, both as regards content and administrative regulations.

In chapter four we present the two schools, and this of course is a main chapter. It is meant to provide a comprehensive picture of how each school is organised and managed, as a matter of interest in itself, and there is little analysis or discussion here.

The two last chapters represent the discussions and attempts at understanding the situation of the two schools. In chapter 5 we have selected a number of aspects of the organisations that we consider to be of interest, in order to go a little deeper into them and to suggest ways of understanding why things are as described. A number of topics are treated, and the selection of them is in itself a matter of interest. We could say that we do two things at the same time. Firstly, we have selected these topics because we deem them to be important, and these choices need some foundations, which we provide, but which of course are open to debate. Secondly, we discuss certain topics to explore them and their importance for the schools. We also compare the two schools, not in order to rank them, but so that the characteristics of each of them may be understood on the basis of the conditions under which they operate.

Chapter six is quite short and represents an attempt at discussing our study in its context. We also try to say something about our experience with studying school organisations, and a basic conclusion is that there is a need to pose questions as to how and why the schools are organised in the given way. An organisation is often something that is taken for granted, and this attitude is perhaps more prevalent in schools than in other types of organisations. There is a corresponding need to raise questions and propose topics to be discussed internally. In this sense there is a need for research on school organisations, to contribute to keep the field "open". This is not an indirect way of saying that school organisations are static and that there is no change. On the contrary, rather continuous reorganisations are taking place, but the educational system is perhaps self-sufficient in a way, and it may be a good idea to have people with experience from other professions and types of organisations come and present views from the outside.



## 2. A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. The school as an organisation

The study will be focused on the *school organisation*, with a certain emphasis on the roles and working methods of the management. "Organisation" should be perceived as an encompassing concept, and we are aiming at providing a rather broad picture of how the school organisations are structured and function. Perhaps the study can best be described by saying something about what it *does not* include.

We are *not* going to study the techno-economic system or the details of the work processes related to these aspects, other than to provide an adequate background for our main topics, and the same goes for the administrative routines or procedures. Nor are we trying to describe the pedagogical activity as such; that is to say how the pedagogical thinking and principles are transformed into practical action, and we shall *not* study the school as a society where the students and the teachers spend a considerable part of the days together. Our main aim is to describe and try to understand how the given school functions as *a work organisation*, primarily as regards its core activity: That a number of teachers work together to develop and maintain a learning environment for the students, under a local management team and in interaction with a number of external actors.

An important question, then, is how to find the dimensions of this type of organisation and through them to focus on the important relationships and processes that are decisive for a well functioning organisation.

Basically, we have concentrated on a set of "clusters" of topics, as given in appendix 1, within which we have sought to develop our questions. These clusters are, firstly, *the school* with its structures and history; secondly, *the external relations* between the school and its environment; thirdly, the *formal structures and systems* of the organisations; fourthly, the *management systems and structures*; and, lastly, the *work environment*. These are pragmatic, wide and somewhat overlapping areas, but they were useful for defining variables and developing questions.

A more analytical approach is, however, to ask "what is a school organisation"? There is, of course, no single or simple answer to this question, but we may say that it is important to pose questions and try to find possible answers, since each answer will bring forward or imply certain ways of understanding the school. We have outlined four perspectives as a set of answers, which are presented in the next section. To us they represent a set of theoretical positions that may be of value when studying school organisations, and they will all be applied to some extent in the later chapters. But first we shall say something about what it is to study an organisation and why it is of value.

In a sense, one could take the attitude that in a work situation everything depends on the individuals, and that what goes on in an organisation is that a number of people interact and co-operate, and that what is important is to make these individuals function well in relation to each other. The task of the administrator would be to select good people, see to it that they have the necessary qualifications and place them within a rational framework of physical and formal structures. Such an approach, which we might call rational and psychological, might come a long way, especially if we added some knowledge about what affects behaviour.

Of course, there would, in this approach, be elements of "organisation", in that we would have to develop structures that were efficient, in the sense that they would provide rational work situations, lines of authority and communication, etc. But still the attention would be limited to that of the organisation as a framework for individuals and as a rational tool that the administrator constructs and takes into use.

When we study an organisation, there are several *additional aspects* that we need to take into consideration, and that make the study of such systems both more exciting and complex. Firstly, there is the understanding of behaviour as *collective* rather than individual. This does not mean that people are not specific persons with their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, but that an individual is a social being, and much of what a given person does, is understandable primarily as an expression of the society and the social systems that he or she belongs to. Individuality may be considered as quite limited variation within socially given forms.

In more practical terms this means that what takes place in an organisation, is socially determined behaviour more than expressions of individuality, and that we may understand it better if we look upon it in this perspective. For instance, a poorly functioning manager is not necessarily a person who is incompetent, and who may be replaced with success if someone better is found. Sometimes the reason for the

problem might be the "situation", meaning the demands, the expectations, the organisational limitations, the role of the union, etc.

And this is basic to the study of organisations; to understand behaviour as results of the conditions under which people work. This does not mean that we disregard the importance - and responsibility - of the individual, but that there are two ways of understanding: on the level of the individual and on a collective level. This last one is neither better nor more correct, but it includes *other parameters and processes*, and therefore broadens the understanding. On the collective level there are groups, for instance work groups; there are collectives, for instance unions and professional associations; and there is the organisation itself. And this is another aspect of the study, to see the organisation as something that we need to understand and that has an impact in its own right. "Organisation matters" in more ways than just as a tool of the administrator or as a rational set of rules and ordering of positions and departments.

This means several things; organisations have their *identity* and represent something that a manager cannot disregard. The organisation is more than the people that are there at a given moment. It has its history and its ways of doing things; some way of behaving is "right" and another may be "wrong". People do what the organisation "prescribes", and when a new person arrives, he or she must find out how this given organisation functions. This is not as mystical as it may sound, but represents both social inertia, and processes of identity, interpretation and belonging that characterise human affairs. We are all bearers of tradition, of understanding, of beliefs and interpretations, and these we pass on to others. In an organisation many things are shared, and it may be quite difficult to change them, even for those in power.

And then there is the social and psychological belonging and identity. People develop relations to others, to their work, to their organisation, and this constitutes structures that prevail over time, give the organisation its identity and confer identity and relations on the individuals.

Our task, then, when we study an organisation, is not just to find out about its physical and formal processes and structures, but also to try to understand its "content". What are its norms, values and beliefs; how are things understood and interpreted; which types of behaviour are expected, accepted, prohibited or recommended.

For each type of organisation there is a choice of theoretical basis for understanding or for selecting dimensions to concentrate upon. We believe that the four perspectives

sketched in the following section may capture important elements of what constitutes a school organisation.

## 2.2. Possible perspectives

Our first perspective is that of the *bureaucratic system*, with its hierarchy and departmentalisation; its rules and regulations; the emphasis on calculation and on specialisation. A bureaucracy may be considered as a "human machine", in that it represents an apparatus set up to perform certain tasks as efficiently as possible, and without being dependent upon the given persons that are in the various positions. They are expected to function impersonally, and to do what is demanded by the regulations and rules, which are formulated by those in control. This also means that the bureaucratic perspective includes *power relations*. A bureaucratic system allows the authorities to enforce their policy; the organisation is a means of exerting power. In this connection it is worth remembering that the educational system is controlled by central government through the Ministry (of Education). The power they wield over the schools is, amongst other things, used to maintain a unitary system, meaning that the curriculum and the functioning of the schools are to be identical across regions.

Also the teachers unions have contributed to bureaucratisation by their insistence upon equality, predictability and impersonality. The teachers demand or prefer that they be treated equally, and that differentiation, for instance as regards salaries, should only be based on objective criteria like experience and formal education<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, we may view the school as a *system of professionals*; the teachers perceive themselves as autonomous and independent people of competence, who should be allowed to function quite freely on the basis of their qualifications and integrity. Within the professional perspective there should be little direct interference with the work of the teachers, as long as they accept the framework given by the imposed curriculum and the rules of the organisation, given that these are not in conflict with the professional ethic or norms of behaviour.

A third possible perspective is that of the *loosely coupled or anarchic system*, which means that the various units of the school are seen as functioning rather independent of each other. This even applies to the teachers, who may choose to work individually without much connection to others. Thus they may apply different and individual modes of operation - within some limits. The organisation may, in this perspective, be

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<sup>1</sup> Later we shall see that there is a change going on as regards salaries and negotiations, but up to now the system has been quite "objective".

perceived as different systems at the same time. For instance, one may look upon the school as a management system or as a system of classrooms and teaching. The two views do not necessarily contradict each other, but they show us two different pictures of the same organisation. Similarly, we may concentrate upon the organisation as a system that uses a set of resources for delivering teaching services, or as a society of teaching, learning and human development and growth. The basic idea is that at the same time we can see the organisation as different things, and that these differences are indications that the organisation is perhaps not integrated; processes are allowed to flow separately, not incorporated in the organisation as such.

A last perspective is to see the school as an *institutional system*, where organisational models and modes of functioning are chosen on the basis of expectations and norms, rather than by way of rational analysis or experience with how well a given structure really functions. This is not in conflict with an emphasis on organisational evaluations, which is quite popular with the authorities and within the system of education. A practice of evaluation is not necessarily a serious attempt at producing a thorough evaluation of for instance a school; it is also, and sometimes solely, a way of complying with a set of expectations. In the institutional perspective evaluation is an activity that "belongs" in a modern administration, to which the system of education belongs, and it is a part of an "appropriate way" of managing and controlling. So evaluation is sometimes a rather symbolic activity; the important thing is that it has taken place, and not so much what has otherwise been achieved<sup>2</sup>.

More generally, in the schools of today, the norm of "modern management", and, for that matter, TQM, is on its way to become not only accepted, but part of the standard for "good management". And in the institutional perspective, the important thing is not whether TQM is "better", but whether it is "right"; something that is expected of a "professional manager".

### **2.3. School management - current issues**

The primary intention of this report is description, as stated above, but still there is to be an element of analysis and research. It has, however, been beyond our available resources to start out with a survey of the existing literature, and to go through the

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that this is not meant as an observation of the practice in Vest-Agder county, but represents an illustration of the institutional perspective.

research that has been carried out and which could have provided us with perspectives and experiences as a background for reflections on our own findings. Largely, we have confined ourselves to search for some of the most obviously relevant books and articles, in order to include some conclusions and observations from others.

One of our references is a quite recent publication on school management in the Nordic countries (Moos et al. 2000), which contains research on this topic in five countries. The book even includes a summary in English, and one of the basic observations is that the role of the principal is changing towards that of a professional manager. In addition it contains an overview of how school management is perceived presently in the Nordic countries. In our opinion this overview is of great relevance to the present report, and we provide a short summary of it, in the sense that we list the trends or development of school management in later years, as perceived by the authors of this book (Moos et al. 2000). We limit ourselves to the discussions of management within upper secondary education, and the idea is to present developments or trends in school organisation according to this book, as a background for our presentation of the two schools.

A fundamental change, as seen by the authors, is the *decentralisation* within the educational system, and this concerns the relations between the Ministry and the regions or counties, but also between the county authorities and the principals of the schools. This change is, however, not wholly consistent, as there also is a tendency to increase the central control in some areas, notably over the curriculum and the main elements of the content of the education (læreplanene).

To some extent this development may be interpreted within a wider change in the system of governance in the Scandinavian countries, which has been influenced by "modern management thinking", and more specifically by what is called "New Public Management". This "philosophy", for instance as presented by Klausen (et al. 1998), may be characterised as "businesslike", emphasising local autonomy, result orientation, local budgeting and economic accountability, demands for increased efficiency and the use of means as "contracting out" or "outsourcing", and more generally a perception of the given institution as an enterprise with a professional management.

The local autonomy has had as one of its consequences an increase in the burdens on the principal. This has been tried counteracted by *reorganisation*, and in Vest-Agder a new structure is established, in some of the upper secondary schools, with *departments*, whose heads now constitute a *management team* together with the

principal. One aspect of this change is that management and leadership has become a topic, and there is an increased emphasis on management training and also on local organisational development<sup>3</sup>.

Decentralisation does not mean that each school is left entirely to itself to develop according to local preferences, and central authorities still want to have some control over what is happening, only that their control is not detailed as before. In practice this means that there is an emphasis on *school evaluation* and *development*. In the spirit of decentralisation this is left to the schools themselves to carry out, but reports on what is done and obtained, is demanded by the counties and even by the Ministry.

The introduction of "professional management" seems to be accompanied quite uniformly in the Scandinavian schools by a feeling that *pedagogical leadership* is suffering. The principal and his or her management team seem to concentrate on other aspects of management, and do not find as much time as deemed necessary to care for what takes place in the class rooms or to cater for the professional development of the teachers. On the other hand, this problem seems to have lead to an increased awareness of this aspect of management, so that there is a discussion of what is meant by this concept – "pedagogical leadership"<sup>4</sup>.

Another topic, which may be interpreted as coming into focus through the emphasis on management, is school culture. Traditionally, it is claimed, schools are characterised by great autonomy on the part of the teachers, and there are two sides to this. Firstly, that teachers are allowed to carry out their work in the classrooms in a manner that they themselves find appropriate, and others are not expected to interfere. Secondly, that teachers have had a tendency to function individually, not as members of a team or an organisation. Both of these traits of the culture are somewhat in conflict with the trend towards "management". A principal, who is expected to function as a professional manager of his or her school, is dependent upon a certain involvement by the teachers in the organisation as such.

This again is connected with the last trend that we want to emphasise here, namely the changing role of the teacher. There is a tendency to develop new ways of teaching,

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<sup>3</sup> The County Director of Education has been instrumental in carrying out both management training and organisational development in the upper secondary schools in Vest-Agder.

<sup>4</sup> Again let us emphasise that this is a general statement concerning upper secondary schools, not only in Norway, but in Scandinavia. To what extent it applies to our two schools, is something that we shall return to later in the report.

mostly in the direction of reducing the amount of time the teacher spends in the classroom lecturing the students. The change may take several forms, for instance having the students involve themselves more in project work. More generally, the schools try to activate the students and make them take more personal responsibility for their own learning.

A fundamental observation as regards school organisation is that this is a field of continuous change, manifesting itself in many reorganisations and other types of changes, as we shall return to in later chapters.



## 3. THE NORWEGIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

### 3.1. Introduction

In the late eighties a number of White papers on public education in Norway were presented. They were preparatory to the planning of four large reforms, all of them implemented after having been passed by the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament, in the nineties. These were the Reform 1994 for upper secondary education; Reform 1997 for primary and lower secondary schools; restructuring of national schools for students with special needs or difficulties; and the university college reform in 1994. As a background for our work and this report, the three first reforms mentioned here are of relevance. The most important one is that of the upper secondary school, Reform 94.

Together with the reforms reorganisation was also introduced: a new act for local authorities and, somewhat later, a new act concerning primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. We think it is important to see the reforms and the other changes together, to see in what way the reforms in education are connected to other changes and developments. The changes in the schools are part of a much wider development towards what in the 1980s was termed "The new state" (Haug 1997). More recently it would be appropriate to speak about reorganisations in the educational sector as part of "New Public Management" (Klausen & Ståhlberg 1998).

In Norway, there are national curricula on all school levels with a strong impact on the content and form of the education allowed or required. In the 1990s we also got new guidelines as to the evaluation of schools. In some documents the national control aspect is emphasised, while in others it is tuned down. In addition the Ministry (ME) opened up for and encouraged experiments in schools, even in ways that deviate from the national curricula.

### 3.2. Basics of Norwegian educational policy

The basic policy of Norwegian education today, in the primary and lower secondary school and in upper secondary education, is equality and the same possibility for all

children and youth in the country. This is to be interpreted to mean the same possibility for all, without regard to gender, race, family situation, social status and learning capability. In the schools boys and girls participate together in classes and groups. Teaching is differentiated as far as possible. The students are only in special cases organised in groups according to their learning capabilities.

In the Education Act the first part of the aim of the education is formulated as follows:

*The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, in agreement and co-operation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society.*

*The object of upper secondary education is to develop the skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society, and assist the pupils and apprentices in their personal development. Upper secondary education shall contribute to increased awareness and understanding of fundamental Christian and humanist values, our national cultural heritage, democratic ideals and scientific thought and method. (KUF, 1999, Chapter 1, section 1-2.)*

In Norway we have a national curriculum, and for primary and lower secondary education this is described on three levels. The upper level describes *values and aims*; on the next level there are descriptions of *framework and ways of working*. The last level describes the *content of the different subjects*. For upper secondary education the presentation of the national curriculum has two levels. The upper levels are the same as in primary and lower secondary school and on the last level the subjects are described.

The upper level in the national curriculum is the same for both primary and lower secondary education and for upper secondary education. Here the values and aims of the school are described by referring to seven aspects of the human being, and the first six are:

- \* The spiritual human being
- \* The creative human being
- \* The working human being
- \* The liberally-educated human being

- \* The social human being
- \* The environmentally aware human being

These six aspects of the human being meet and merge in the last and seventh aspect:

- \* The integrated human being

In the last part of the national curriculum this is formulated:

*The ultimate aim of education is to inspire individuals to realise their potential in ways that serve the common good; to nurture humanness in a society in development. (Core curriculum, 1997:40)*

### **3.3. Main reforms**

Reform 97 in primary and lower secondary schools in Norway took effect in the autumn of 1997. This reform meant among other things compulsory education for all children in Norway from the year in which they become six. According to the reform the national curriculum is a governmental requirement, and guidelines and instructions are also given for various activities among pupils and students.

The upper secondary school was extended and given a new national curriculum and structure in the seventies. In 1974 it was also decided that all new schools were to be comprehensive and include both general and vocational studies. The secondary schools were extended even further in the eighties, and the number of students increased from 140,000 in 1980 to more than 200,000 in 1990 (Tønnessen 1995:125). After the act of 1974, students with handicaps or disadvantages obtained full rights of entry to upper secondary schools and in 1987 students in these categories were given preference.

During this development it became evident that the upper secondary school had problems. The intentions were not satisfied. A new White paper on upper secondary education (NOU 1991:4) was presented, and the government followed this up with a proposal to the Storting in 1994, where a large majority passed it. The most important points in this reform were:

- \* All young people between 16 and 19 years have a legal right to three years of upper secondary education.
- \* Ports of entry, foundation courses, were reduced from 100 to 13. The largest reduction was made in the number of vocational courses. After Reform 94 three

courses correspond to the more traditional gymnasium, while ten are more vocational (Briseid 1995).

- \* After three years in upper secondary education students get either a skilled worker certificate or a diploma giving general access to higher education. (Some studies in higher education can have more specific requirements.)
- \* Young people who do not apply for upper secondary education or drop out of school, shall be contacted and offered alternative courses or a combination of formal education and work. Each county is required to provide this service.

### **3.4. The structure of education and schools in Norway<sup>5</sup>**

#### *The general picture*

In 1999/00, there were about 3270 primary and secondary schools in Norway. Between 450,000 and 500,000 students attend these schools. The responsibility for the running and administration of these schools rests with the local authorities. Both the size of the schools and of the local authorities vary a lot, from 110 local authorities with less than 300 students to 10,000 or more in the five largest local authorities (for the year 1998/99).

In 1999/00, 169,000 students were registered in upper secondary schools in Norway. This is 4000 less than the year before, and has to be seen in connection with the decrease in this age group in the population. In 94/95 there was about 600 upper secondary schools in Norway, and in 98/99 only 51 of these schools had private owners. It means that the counties, which are responsible for management and development of them, own nearly all the upper secondary schools.

In each county there is a local representative of ME, a National Education Office with the Regional Director of Education (RDE), and he in fact is responsible for this research study of ours<sup>6</sup>. These offices act as links between the Ministry and the local government education sector, and their main tasks are:

- Promotion of co-ordination between educational sectors and levels
- Reporting, evaluation, and following up results
- Supervision and control
- Management training and refresher courses

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<sup>5</sup> The figures in this chapter is based on Statistics Norway.

<sup>6</sup> The RDE was established a few years ago, but was really the result of a reorganisation. Formerly, each county had a "Director of schools" (Skoleledirektør), whose responsibility mainly was connected with the primary and lower secondary schools, while the new RDE has a wider role.

- Centrally managed research and development
- Information and advice
- Work on legal issues, including interpretation of and advice on laws and rules, and appeal cases, (<http://odin.dep.no/kufinfoe.html#education>).

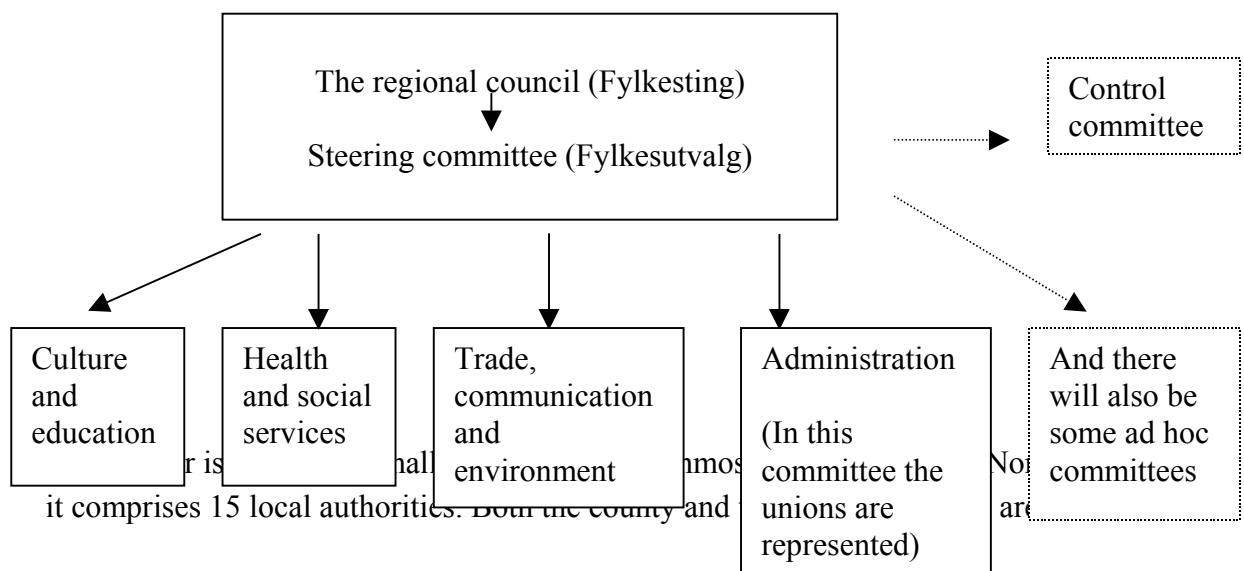
Our study is not meant to concentrate on the subtleties of the governance structure within the educational sector, so let us just observe that the RDE is concerned with all institutions of education, from primary schools to colleges and universities, including upper secondary schools. This might seem to imply an overlapping of interests and authority between the RDE and the County Director of Education (CDE), but the RDE has no authority over the local institutions and in a certain sense operates on a national level. And the upper secondary schools, which we are concerned with in this study, has no direct contact with the RDE, only with the CDE, since they are run by the county.

Recently (2000) The Norwegian Board of Education has been established. This Board has five sections: Administration; Technical operations and information; Content and evaluation; Competence development and teaching aids; Documentation and analysis. The Norwegian Board of Education gets its money from the ME, but it has considerable freedom and its own board. The main area of priority is primary and lower and upper secondary schools, (<http://www.ls.no/index.asp>).

### *The administrative and political structures*

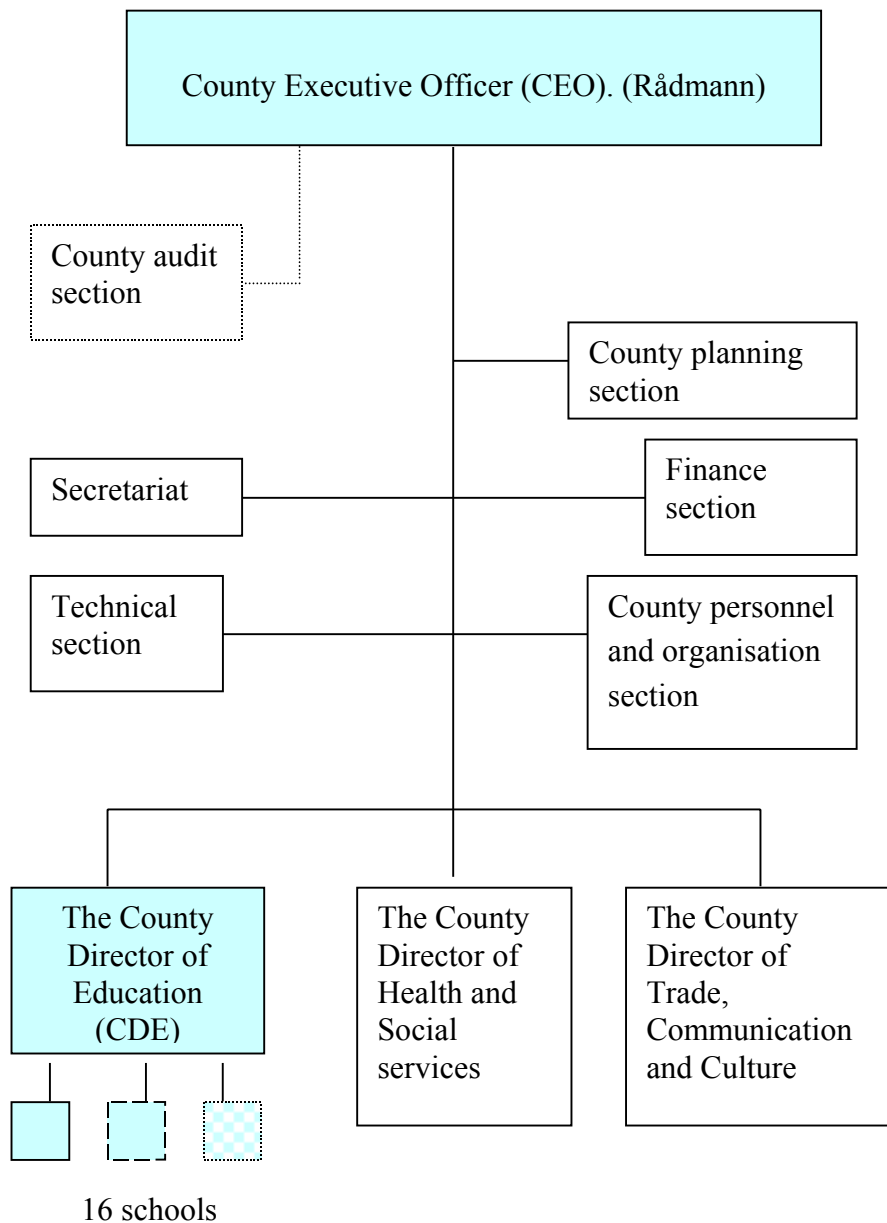
While the local authorities manage primary and lower secondary schools in Norway, the upper secondary schools are part of the regional government, the counties, which are the formal owners and operators of these schools. Our two schools belong to Vest-Agder County.

*Chart 1. Political superstructure in the county of Vest-Agder*



democratically by a council, directly elected by the people in the county or in the municipality. The regional council in Vest-Agder has four standing committees (hovedutvalg), made up of elected representatives: Health and social services; Culture and education; Administration; and Trade, communication and environment.

*Chart 2. The administration in the county of Vest-Agder*



Each regional council has an administration to carry out its decisions and run the activities for which the council is responsible. In this way the leadership of a council

has two parts, a political and an administrative one. The administration in the county of Vest-Agder can be shown simplified as in the chart above.

The County Executive Officer (CEO) reports to the regional council, the steering committee or one of the standing committees. In our connection, the important committee is the Committee for Culture and Education, where the decisions on upper secondary schools are taken, or, as the case may be, sent on with recommendations or proposals to the council or its steering committee.

In the county administration there is a regional education authority, The County Director of Education (CDE). She is formally the superior of all the principals of the altogether 16 secondary schools in the county, and her staff is part of the county administration. The CDE does not present her cases in the council directly, but through her superior, the CEO.

In the county administration there are also specialist sections with sector responsibilities in relation to the schools, primarily in the fields of construction and maintenance of buildings and of personnel and organisation.

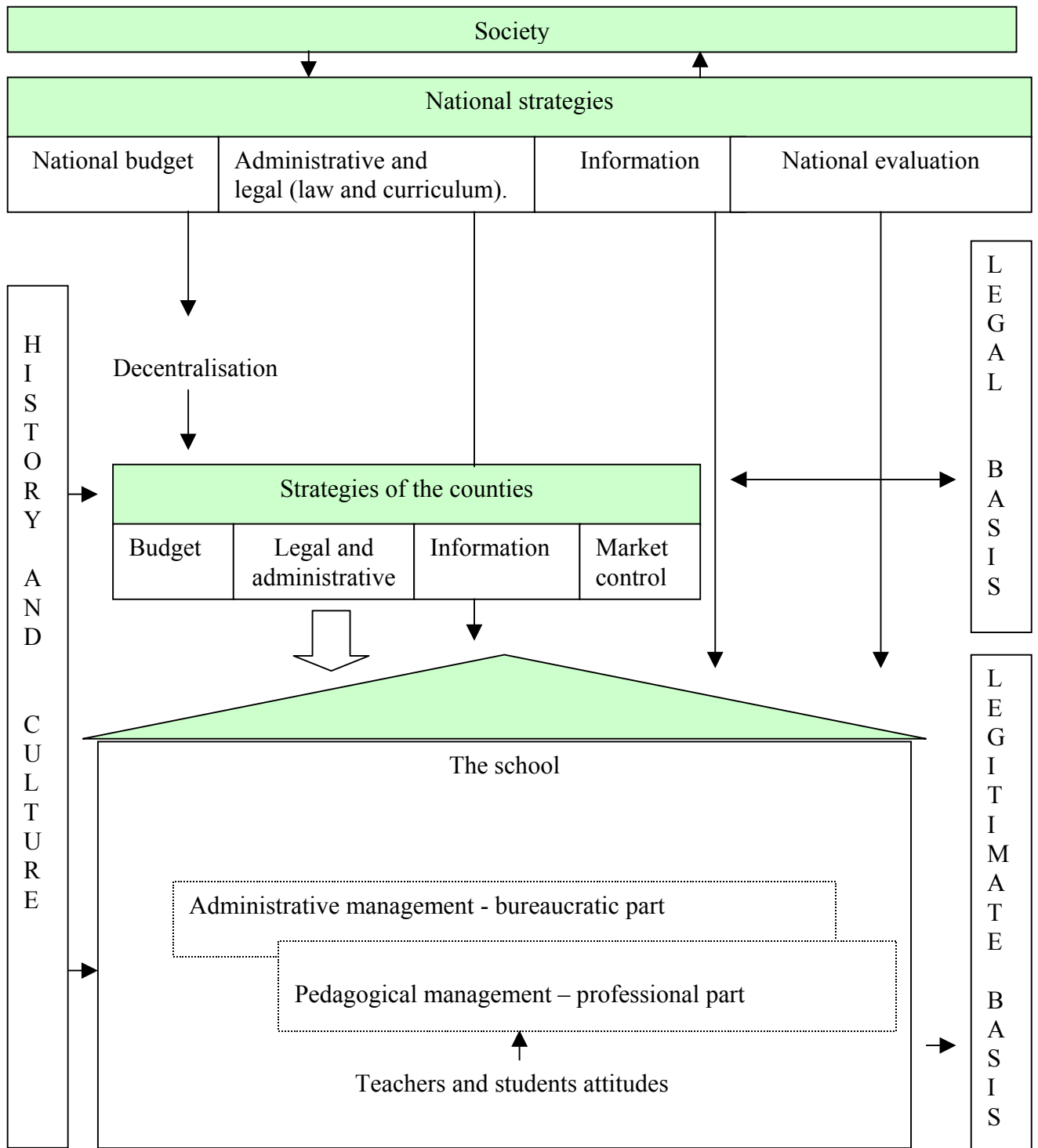
At the CDE, as well as the CEO, there is an administration with staff specialists who have competencies within the different subject matters to be planned and decided upon, like buildings, law, personnel, and there are units taking care of the day-to-day operations, like accountancy and salary sections. The important thing is, however, not just the structures, but also the relations, and more specifically the degree of autonomy on the part of the schools, and there are two aspects of this: the formal picture and the realities of the processes and relations. We will return in more detail to this in section 4.7.

There are also other significant actors. The Storting, on the basis of proposals by the Ministry, draws up the fundamental policy of education, and it is accompanied by grants for each county. These grants are to a little extent earmarked, and in the final analysis the budgets for the upper secondary schools in Vest-Agder are the responsibility of the county council, which has to decide on the priority of education in relation to health, public transport, etc.

Government policy, together with the county budget, represents the framework within which the CDE has to operate. In reality much of the activity in the schools is decided, more or less indirectly, by central decisions. Many of these decisions, such as salaries and teachers' working time agreements, are based on negotiations and agreements

between the national unions and the ME. Important substance matters are heavily influenced or determined by ME. They have a bearing on the policies and have consequences for budgetary decisions.

*Chart 3. Connection between the different governing bodies and schools in the council.*



The chart above is a revised and simplified version of a chart by Møller (1997:141),



and represents an attempt to show the connection between the different governing bodies and schools in the council.

A number of institutions are part of the national educational system in Norway, and as such they have a certain, but not always clear, relation of authority to the Ministry or the county. The lack of clarity is to some extent a consequence of reorganisations that have taken place, and more generally of a historical heritage and tradition.

The relevant aspect of this in our connection is that educational institutions are regarded as national, even if regional and local authorities operate them. Central control is not only legitimate, but considered as necessary and important, in order to ensure a national standard and the implementation of a national policy of education. As an expression of local autonomy the counties are meant to represent a democratic element, which is manifested in the administration being controlled by an elected council. Operating upper secondary schools is an important part of county affairs, although it takes place within a framework under the control of the central government.

If we compare the education field and the health and social field in the county, the ME traditionally governs the educational more directly than the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs governs the health services. Some of the substance matters that are heavily influenced or determined by ME are presented below.

*Reforms.* As stated above, a number of reforms have been imposed on the educational sector and most notably for the counties, the R 94.

*Studies and curricula.* R 94 had far-reaching consequences for the structure of studies and represents an illustration of the educational system being national. Still, there is some leeway for local adjustments, for instance exemplified by one of our schools having a study in shipbuilding, which reflects the fact that there are shipyards in the region. But then, even for locally chosen studies, the curricula are centrally determined.

*Students.* As mentioned before, the law of education states that every youth up to the age of 19 has a right to education, and it is the responsibility of the county to provide it. This means that it is not up to the county to decide the volume of education on the upper secondary level, and it is not allowed to set aside categories of "difficult" young people, like refugees, minorities, handicapped or social misfits. Even for those who

explicitly do not want or are unable to cope with a school situation, the county will have to find some other kind of training, for instance providing a youth with a position as an apprentice, or simply a working assistant.

*Structure.* For other changes the roles of the various authorities are less clear, and the so-called "new structure"<sup>7</sup> in Vest-Agder may be an example. Probably the local CDE had much to say in this matter, but on the other hand there is no doubt that ME was informed and perhaps had suggested that this was something they would look upon with approval<sup>8</sup>.

*The budget.* The final budget for each school is set up locally, in co-operation between the CDE and the school itself. The basis for the budget formally is the regional priorities of how to spend the general grants from central government and money collected from general and regional taxes, but there are also the more specific grants from ME. However, these grants are just of marginal importance compared to the budget as a whole, and the main influence of the ME is that of laying down the basic principles that follows from the political decisions in the Storting.

*Courses.* Whether a study may be undertaken in a given school is dependent upon the local demand among the students, and schools have to decide on their study and course structure on the basis of centrally given norms as to the number of students per class. Classes with very few students will be expensive for the school, and these costs will not be refunded. A course is not funded on the basis of the number of teachers required, but on the type of study and the number of students. This is formally a matter for the regional authorities to decide, but the budgetary premises are laid down by the Ministry and in the last resort the Storting.

*Teachers.* National laws and agreements give many aspects of recruitment, conditions of employment, participation and the like. More specifically, it is not up to the county to introduce the use of salary differentials as a stimulus for the teachers, and the principal has very little power to decide upon the salaries of his or her employees. Also, for the basic condition of employment, there are guidelines to be followed, for instance as regards the rights of the teachers to retain his or her position even in cases of reduced activity in the given school.

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<sup>7</sup> Organising the schools in departments with a middle management, see section 4.2.

<sup>8</sup> An indication that the CDE was influential in this matter, is that the "new organisation" has been introduced more systematically in Vest-Agder than in the neighbouring county of Aust-Agder.

*Organisation.* As for the above, some aspects of the organisations is given by law or there are explicit policies in ME as to what is acceptable or not. For instance, there is now a "management board" (driftsråd), while there previously was a "school council" (skoleutvalg), and the distinction is not easily grasped. Likewise, institutions of co-determination are imposed upon the students and the employees.

The general picture is that the ME is a very central institution for upper secondary education and the single school. There is, however, no direct relation, as all communication is supposed to go through the CDE.

### **3.5. Teachers**

#### *Teacher education*

Teachers in Norway have from three to six/seven years of study at a university or university college. The pre-school teachers have at least three years and the teachers in primary and lower secondary schools are obliged to have a four-year education. In upper secondary schools it is most common to have a vocational education or a higher university degree, which means six to seven years of studies altogether. To obtain permanent employment as a teacher, these groups must have, as part of their education, one year of full time pedagogic and practical teacher training. This is given both in the universities and the university colleges.

In Norway teachers have different types and levels of education, depending on the type of school and the subject. One peculiarity is that different teacher educations give possibilities for appointment in different schools. The chart below is from the national curriculum for teacher education and gives a picture of the different school levels that the different teacher educations give access to.

#### *Teacher salaries*

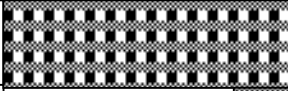


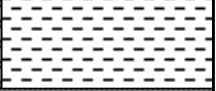
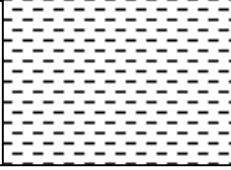
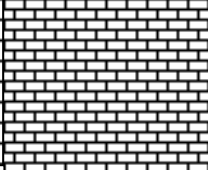
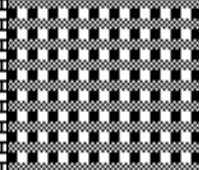
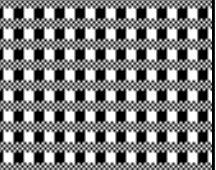
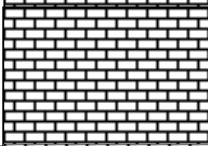
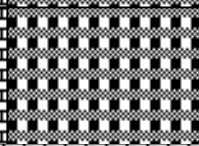
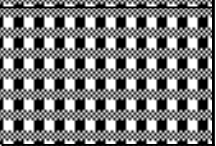
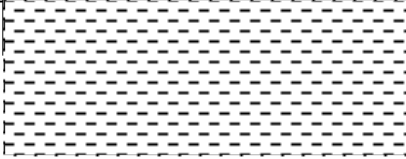
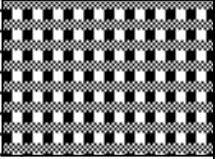
In 1999 a full time teacher in Norwegian schools had an average monthly income of 22,800 Norwegian crowns (NOK), ( app. 2,000 US\$ ). The full time teachers in upper secondary school had an average monthly income of 24,300 NOK. Teachers having a higher university degree or corresponding competence (lektor) had an average monthly income of 25,500 NOK. Those having the lower university degree or corresponding competence had an average monthly income of 21,800 NOK.

A head of an upper secondary school has, on the average, a monthly income of 30,400 NOK. These salaries, however, depend upon seniority and the size of the school. the different teacher educations give access to.

*The teachers: age and gender*

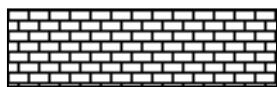
The average age has gradually increased at all school levels. In upper secondary school in Norway the average age in 1998 was 46,3 years. The percentage over 50 years was 38,2. The average age in 1992 was 44,1 and the percentage over 50 years was 27,7.

*Chart 4. Relationship between different teacher educations and access to employment at different school levels.*

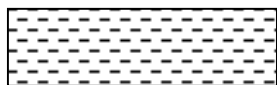
	Kindergarten / Pre - school	Primary and lower secondary education			Upper sec. education
	0-5 year	6-10 year	10-13 year	13-16	16-18 (19) year
Pre-school teacher					
General teachers					
Teachers in art and practical subjects	Such as sport or housekeeping				
Teachers in Theoretical subjects					
Vocational teachers	Such as electrician or cook				



The main area this teacher education is intended for.



Appointment possible if the teacher has certain subjects or a certain education



The appointment limited to some subjects

According to figures from The National Bureau of Statistics there were altogether 29,288 teachers in upper secondary school in Norway in 1998, 57.43% men and 42.6% women.

### *Teacher unions*

In each school there are several unions. All unions are national and have both regional and national administrations. Teachers unions have a strong position. The formal basis of this position is the national collective bargaining agreements. An important aspect of these agreements is that they require the principals to consult the unions on a number of important issues. All decisions reached in each single school are thus based on agreements that have been negotiated on a national level. A close co-operation between the principals and the union representatives is required, in order to develop leadership and the working environment etc. The principals have to consult the local union representative concerning cases related to, among other things, budgets, building projects, action plans, personnel planning, investments and training (KUF, 2000).

Consensus is always the goal, but if it is not achieved, the principal decides. The local union representatives have, however, a right to have their opinions recorded.

### *Officially acknowledged general challenges and problems*

One year after Reform 94 was implemented the ME tried to sum up the experiences so far. In 1995, 98% of the 16 year olds applied for an upper secondary education, and 65% of them were admitted to the study of their first choice. In addition, the number of students who choose the vocational courses has been increasing, and the latest figures we have show that there was an increase from 42% in 1994 to 46% in 1995. The students can choose between two main groups of foundation courses, which are listed below.

#### *1. Foundation courses that are required as qualifications for admission to a university:*

- \* General and business studies
- \* Music, dance and drama
- \* Sports and physical education

The upper secondary education leads to full qualifications, either university admission or vocational qualifications as the case may be.

*2. Foundation courses that give vocational qualifications:*

- Health and social studies
- Arts, crafts and design studies
- Agriculture, fishing and forestry
- Hotel and food-processing trades
- Building and construction trades
- Technical building trades
- Electrical trades
- Engineering and mechanical trades
- Chemical and processing trades
- Woodworking trades
- Sales and services
- Media and communication

Even though there has been a substantial reduction in the number of vocational courses, the ME says in their summary that these courses are a more important part of the upper secondary school than before. The ME was satisfied with the co-operation between the counties in Norway and business enterprises, and also with the work done so far to increase the options for the vocational training of the students. Still, the ME states that it is a challenge to increase the possibility for more vocational training in more varied workplaces (Andersen 1999).

In order to ensure that Reform 94 did achieve its objectives, an ongoing evaluation of the Reform took place during a five-year follow-up period and ME intends to use the results to improve upon the weaknesses of the Reform. To simplify a little, we would like to point out two main results of the evaluation. Firstly, compared to the past, in the opinion of the ME, the upper secondary schools now have a better structure, and an increased number of students now complete their education. Secondly, and this gives the challenges and problems, the Ministry points out that there is a need for an examination of the syllabuses or contents in many subjects; a better adaptation to the individual needs of each student; more contribution and participation by the students in the planning as well as the regular work in the classroom; and that the teachers (in more theoretical subjects) should function more as mentors than before, (emphasising the new teacher role).

Our impression is that the upper secondary schools in Vest-Agder have tried to follow this up, among other things by attempting to increase the level of competence of the teachers; by introducing a new organisation in the management of the schools; by trying to use IT in more subjects; by participating in a national project to differentiate

teaching in regular classes, and, as part of this, emphasising "learning" rather than "teaching" (Differensieringsprosjektet). To what extent these remedies will lead to the intended results remains, of course, to be seen.

### **3.6. Developments of the administration of secondary schools**

Moos (et al. 2000) have tried to capture the essence of the way the Norwegian educational system in general has been governed by identifying three different phases. They concentrate on the epoch after the first period of reconstruction after World War II, that is to say after 1960, and the views they present mirrors to a great extent the development within the Norwegian society at large.

*1964-1971: Central and hierarchical governance on the basis of expert advice and with an emphasis on planning.*

*1972-1987: Corporativism, institutional democracy and decentralisation.*

This means that teachers and their unions and associations were more directly involved in developing the policies and the structures of the educational systems. Also, there was an emphasis on the rights of the teachers as employees as well as the students to have their say on the operation of the institution in which they worked/studied.

*1988-1991: Modernisation, management thinking and an emphasis on efficiency.*

A key concept here is the New Public Management, which introduces management thinking into the public sector. This also means that economic models and concerns become more important in educational institutions.

If we concentrate more directly on upper secondary schools, we may say that in the first couple of decades after the Second World War they were largely autonomous institutions, with a principal responsible for the administration and development of the school. He - female principals were rare - was a *primus inter pares* among the teachers and was relying on personal authority in his role as a head of the school. He most probably would *not* see himself as a "manager". The principal usually was a person of high academic standing, and his main task was to see to it that the school functioned as an economic-administrative system. There was little direct leadership of the teachers, who were also university graduates. They functioned autonomously on the basis of unquestionable professional competence, and their status in the community was high.

In the 1960s and onwards, when secondary education was offered to a large proportion of young people, the number of schools increased and the central control over the educational system was more direct and detailed. Increasingly there was a demand for greater professionalism with the principals as managers, who had to respond to the demands from the teachers for a more formal internal democracy in the institutions. Management training was offered to the principals, and in the 1980s the principal was expected to further organisational development and execute pedagogical management or leadership. His or her role as a manager of personnel was emphasised.

Later, with decentralisation, the schools were increasingly seen as independent institutions, and the principal was expected to utilise the economic resources efficiently and to function as a "modern manager". External relations were to be taken care of to ensure the development of the school, and they were not just relations to the state bureaucracy, but also to politicians and business and local communities. With an increasing number of courses and studies, especially with comprehensive schools<sup>9</sup>, the institutions were becoming quite complex systems, and, consequently, a small local administration was established in the larger schools, and in Vest-Agder a structure of departments and middle managers was developed, (see section 4.2).

The present situation is characterised by a search for organisational structures and modes of operation that enable the schools to operate in a market, both as regards students and teachers, and the principals and even the middle managers are expected to function as professional managers. School evaluation and organisation development are sought to be an integral part of the functioning of the schools.

### *Training of principals in Norway*

There is a connection between the tasks of the principal and his or her work on the one hand and the ideas on school development held by the authorities on the other. This connection is reflected in the training provided for principals. In 1984 the authorities decided that school development should be decentralised and carried out mainly in each school (St.meld nr 79, 1983/84). In this connection the national unit for school development (Forsøksrådet) was closed down. This meant new and different tasks and demands for the principal as a school leader.

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<sup>9</sup> We use the term "comprehensive school" for upper secondary schools that offer general, academic courses, leading to university admission, as well as vocational courses aimed at an apprenticeship. Before 1974 schools offered one or the other, (see section 3.3).



Over the years there have been several leader-training programmes for principals. The programme "Environment and leadership in the school" (Miljø og ledelse i skolen, MOLIS) emphasised communication skills and problem solving and was strongly humanistic in nature. At the end of the eighties ME started two new programmes for school leadership, one for primary and lower secondary school (Ledelse i skolen, LIS) and one for upper secondary school (Ledelse i videregående skole, LEVIS). This programme also was strongly humanistic in nature, but in addition it contained specific methods for school development and leadership. In both programmes the ideology was management by objectives (MBO) and relatively large freedom for each school as such. The programmes had a secretariat in the ME.

In 1992 the ME ended LIS and LEVIS, the secretariat was closed and plans for a new programme was made: "Management training in schools" (Lederutvikling i skolen, LUIS). The ME developed a plan for the programme, but it was to be implemented by the local authorities in co-operation with universities and university colleges in each region. The National Educational Office in each county and the CDE were expected to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme. This programme was later extended with "School management in 2000" (Skoleledelse i år 2000). In the preface to this programme the Minister emphasised:

*"The reforms in primary, lower and upper secondary schools demand independent and responsible school leaders. It is thus necessary to work to strengthen management on all levels of the school system"*, (our translation, Reidar Sandal , KUF 1997:1)

Objectives and contents in the programme reflect that both the Minister of education and the ME emphasise the responsibility of the principal for pedagogical leadership. Principals have the responsibility to create positive development opportunities for pedagogical processes, "learning and growth", in the schools. Further, the programme emphasises that the principals are responsible for organising and managing the work with planning and evaluating. The principal also is to function as a mentor for the teachers when they carry out development work.



## 4. THE TWO SCHOOLS AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS

### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the main purpose is to describe our two schools. The emphasis is on the organisations, but many aspects are of interest as a background, such as history, physical structures and external relations. The descriptions thus will be quite broad and encompassing. In the next chapter the descriptions provided here will be used as a basis for analysis of the two schools.

Much of the input for this chapter has been given us directly by staff members of the two schools in the form of written documents, drawings, statistics and tables. We are making use of this material to a great extent, but we supplement it with data and information from the interviews, both at the schools and with representatives of the county authorities.

We had a choice between presenting the schools separately or in parallel, and we have chosen a middle course. Some of the basic background and structures will be given for the two schools together, as in many respects they are quite similar, particularly because they belong to the same educational system, and much of their characteristics are determined by the same laws, agreements, regulations and by the same regional and central authority.

After a first description of the institution of upper secondary school and the most important changes that have taken place over the last few years, we give a short description of each school in separate sections, since after all they are distinct entities with their own history; they belong to different communities, and they have their individual characteristics. Then we go on to present a number of tables. They contain information on structures, and we present the material in such a way that the two schools are compared to each other.

In the following sections we treat the two schools simultaneously. As above, this has to do with the fact that there is some common ground to be covered, for instance as

regards their relations to the county. But also in many other respects these two institutions are more to be considered as variations on a given theme rather than as unique organisations that have to be understood separately.

## **4.2. General aspects of upper secondary schools**

### *Processes of change*

As described in chapter 3, upper secondary schools have been through almost continuous processes of change since 1974. First came the merger of the existing small and specialised schools into larger, often comprehensive institutions. For Vest-Agder county and our two schools these processes took place during the 1990s. The county administration held the opinion that both Flekkefjord and Mandal upper secondary schools were too small to allow for efficient operation, and they wanted to do something about it. The two schools are now both comprehensive institutions, as most of the other upper secondary schools in Vest-Agder, although there are still a few which are either vocational or general. Then came Reform 94, which changed the structures of courses and options for the students, with corresponding changes in subjects and subject content for teachers.

During the last couple of years a new organisation structure has been introduced, and schools have been reorganised so that there is now a layer of "middle management". A small number of departments have been established, each with a department head (HoD), and these have among other things relieved the principal of some of his or her duties in relation to the staff. Such a reorganisation was deemed necessary as a consequence of the transfer of tasks and responsibilities from the county to each single institution. An evaluation of this so called "new structure" was to take place after two years, but more informal internal evaluations arranged after the first year, in our two schools, are quite positive.

Previously, departments were strictly related to subjects, containing persons teaching in the same field, for instance science subjects or foreign languages, with one of the teachers being responsible for the work in this department (hovedlærer). A number of so-called *inspectors*, depending on the size of the school, assisted the principal in running the school. They did not have direct subordinates, and all teachers related directly to the principal as to all personnel matters. The position as inspector was of an administrative nature, and it was usually occupied by an experienced teacher and represented also a type of promotion for the individual, with an increase in status and salary.

There are three basic ideas or reasons behind this new structure. Firstly, the HoDs and the principal now constitute a *management team*, which has no formal role, but which has the function of a forum for contact and discussion of the operation and development of the school. One may say that it involves more people in management; the principal is not alone to the same extent as before. Secondly, the HoDs are given a number of tasks and responsibilities in order to relieve the principal and to increase the capacity for administrative and management work in the organisation. This may be regarded as a response to the drive towards delegation of tasks from the county to the institutions, and also as a contribution towards making the schools function more autonomously. Another consequence is that the principals will have more time available for pedagogical leadership.

One of the tasks that has been delegated to the HoDs is that connected with the direct responsibility for individual employees, and here we find the third and perhaps the most important reason for the new structure. Formerly, the principal was the sole person with such a responsibility within the school organisation, and when institutions were merged and became quite large, the CDE and the county found that there was a need for a change.

Although the principles of the new structure were given, the exact number of departments and the percentage of administrative work that was allocated to the heads of them, was allowed to be decided locally, and we shall see that there are some differences between our two schools in this respect.

Another aspect of the changes regards the working conditions of the staff, and a new system for registration and calculation of the workload (ny arbeidstidsavtale) is now being implemented. One of the effects of it is a stricter control and follow-up of how many hours the teachers are supposed to work. In fact, for each teacher a plan for the entire year is to be set up, stipulating the teaching load and other duties for every week. An implication is an increased emphasis on the teachers being present and participating in the school on a collective basis. The teachers are less free to function as autonomous individuals, but are expected to be members of an organisation.

Parallel to all these more or less administrative changes, there is an ongoing attempt at developing a practice in the functioning of teachers as pedagogues. This can be summed up under the heading of "the new teacher role", with the corollary on the part of the student of "responsibility for his or her own learning".

*Local autonomy*

These various processes are taking place in all schools more or less at the same time. One aspect of this is that we as researchers have difficulties in determining whether the observed developments are to be understood on the basis of central or local policies, decisions and preferences. The general picture probably is that the processes of change are consequences of centrally determined policies, but they are, formally or as an intention, to be implemented according to local priorities and to be accommodated to local circumstances. To what extent the result is in fact standardised or mirrors the local context, is not easily decided, and this difficulty has to do with the ambivalence that is part of a system that may be considered slightly schizophrenic. By this we mean that the intention is that it should function in a unitary way on the basis of a national policy of education, but since one of these policies is that each county and school should have a certain local autonomy, the governing structure and processes of the system are somewhat ambiguous. We shall illustrate this ambiguity later.

Important elements of central control, as seen from the schools, concern budgets, the selection of courses offered at the school in a given year and the number of students to be admitted, as the regional authorities determine all these elements. For instance, the students do not apply to a given school, but to the county for admission to an upper secondary institution. In this connection it is worth remembering that every Norwegian youth up to the age of 19 has a right to education. The question is not whether a given individual is to be admitted to upper secondary education, but to which school and to which kind of study he or she will be admitted.

On the basis of the number of classes and students, which the county determines, the budgets are set up in the county administration, and in principle they follow set standards. This means that a set of algorithms has been developed, and when this system is fed with the appropriate data, it generates the sums that the given school is entitled to for personnel, for administrative costs, for maintenance and cleaning, etc. The bottom line of the budget represents the gross sum that the principal has at his or her disposal, and which represents the resources that are available to operate the school in the coming year. How this is done, is in principle up to the staff or the principal, but of course, it is not as simple as that, as we shall see.

Of some importance in our connection is the centralised mode of determining the working conditions of the teachers, including salaries. Not only are salaries given as an outcome of national negotiations, but they are also almost exclusively based on objective criteria. In principle, the salary for a given teacher is independent of

individual or personal characteristics; what counts is the formal education of the teacher, his or her work experience, as well as the subject level at which he or she teaches<sup>10</sup>. If one knows the score for these dimensions, the salary is given. The first attempt at modifying this system has taken place in 2000, and local negotiations have been arranged to supplement the national agreements that were the result of last year's negotiations. Most of the teachers and their unions are opposed to this change; they would prefer to have an "impersonal" system of remuneration.

In our view this centralised and standardised element is quite consistent with the Norwegian system of education, which is public, unitary and centrally governed. There are strong historic trends in this picture, and it is closely connected with the basic ideas of the welfare state. The authorities are expected to provide equal education for all, and this education should ideally be of the same quality and content for everybody. Therefore the attitudes towards private institutions have been quite negative, and local adaptation of curricula, for instance in communities dominated by the Lapp people, also has been viewed with some scepticism. The relevant aspect of this in our connection is that educational institutions are regarded as national, even if regional and local authorities operate them.

### *Internal structure*

Our two schools are unique entities with a certain degree of autonomy, but their main structures are variations on the same basic patterns, and in this subsection we shall present some of these common traits.

Generally speaking the two schools both have quite typical bureaucratic organisations, meaning that there are a number of well-defined rules and regulations, and there are departments and positions with very detailed specifications of tasks and duties. There are a number of procedures for employment, for admission of students; there are a number of permanent meetings with given intervals and participation; there are specified work loads for most employees, and, as stated above, their salaries are decided on an impersonal basis, dependent upon objective criteria like work experience and level of education<sup>11</sup>.

In its external relations the schools are part of the larger state and county bureaucracy of governance, with its regulations and guidelines, its reports and procedures, etc. We are not going into the detailed content of these structures, but it is important to

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<sup>10</sup> Higher salary is paid for teaching more difficult subjects.

<sup>11</sup> As stated before, there is a change going on as regards this practice, and we shall return to it in section 4.6. "Modes of operations in the two schools".

acknowledge that the fundamental characteristics of the organisations, and most probably also of the way of thinking among the staff, is that of bureaucracy.

This is of course not meant as a derogatory comment, only a technical observation. And we may ask why these traits are so pronounced, and what this might mean. This is something that we shall return to later, but let us add that there also are certain aspects of the school organisations that are non-bureaucratic or even in conflict with such a model. Firstly, what goes on in the classes, the teaching and learning processes, cannot be characterised as "bureaucracy", and this is after all the core activity. And in this connection, the teachers are allocated to the classes in a way that is not directly connected to their position. In fact, the teachers may be considered as a pool of professionals from which the various classes are supplied with the competent persons they need. This is definitely not a bureaucratic way of organising, and such a system may be classified as project or matrix organisation. This means that the two school organisations function as manifestations of two quite different types of organisations. This does not in itself represent a problem, but there is a challenge here that perhaps is not perceived or understood in the same way by all members of the institutions.

The new elements of management represent another non-bureaucratic aspect, perhaps as part of the New Public Management in the public sector, which is being introduced by the principals, probably as recommended by the CDE. The main elements are the so-called "Management by Objectives" (MBO, målstyring) and a type of strategic planning (virksomhetsplanlegging). These elements are somewhat in conflict with the traditional bureaucratic way of functioning, giving more leeway both to the organisations as such and each single employee, and reducing the reliance upon rules and procedures and the hierarchical dominance.

Now, if we look more concretely on school organisations, the basic structure is a principal with a small staff as his or her direct subordinates, and then a small number of departments, with a teacher as head of department. The tasks or duties of the HoDs are specified in some detail. The present heads of departments (HoD) may be regarded as replacing the inspectors, and they may be considered as "middle management".

In the former system there were a number of "senior teachers" (hovedlærer), whose function was both related to their own specific subjects and co-ordination in this respect, but they were also expected to provide professional support to the younger teachers, and they had a responsibility for developing the staff as regards their competence in subject matters and as pedagogues. The HoDs are supposed to function with "total responsibility", and therefore also cover these aspects of leadership. To



what extent they in fact succeed, is not quite clear, and in Mandal there are indications that the teachers want to recruit a number of "subject advisors" supplementing the positions of the HoDs. We may draw the conclusion that the HoDs do not as yet manage to fill the needs for all kinds of leadership.

The departments are structured around the HoDs, in the sense that he or she is given a number of people to have direct responsibility for, and in addition the heads are responsible for a number of administrative tasks and staff functions. For instance, one of the heads may be responsible for the co-ordination of planning and for meetings with parents, while another is responsible for exams and the timetables, etc. And then all of them have the function of being a member of the management team and may be given specific tasks by the principal.

The responsibility for the individuals are in a way directed more towards taking care of the *person* than the *organisation*, and the personnel function of the HoD does not mean that he or she is the direct supervisor of the individual teachers. In fact the departments are perhaps not primarily meant to function as *work units*. Those who belong to a given department may or may not have much to do with each other. A major criterion for structuring the departments seems to have been the functionality of having a small number of heads, corresponding to the resources allocated for "administration" in the budget. These resources probably will be most suitably utilised by distributing them on four or five HoDs, as the case might be. And since these heads are members of the same team, it would seem rational to give them more or less the same workload. That some departments became, as a consequence of this, are a little "mixed" as to the type of subjects the department members teach, was probably not considered important, since the HoDs were not meant to be directly responsible for the work done by his or her subordinates, at least not for all of them.

In addition to the regular departments each school also has a unit that provides courses for an external market, both as adult and further education. Some adults who did not complete their secondary education when they were young, are in need of courses to be able to go on to colleges or universities, and some want further education, for instance in computer or information technology. Such courses are also offered to public or private organisations, and the Labour Market Authority is an important customer as part of the efforts to retrain the workforce to changing demands. In this connection an important law on adult education was passed in 1999, with the implication that the demand for continuing, further and adult education is bound to increase, and the upper secondary schools have a role to play to meet this demand.

Apart from the departmentalisation, there are a few other structural elements in the organisation. Basically, there is the course and the class structure, being part of a larger structure of studies, and we have presented the details of this in the table in section 4.3. Then there are a number of people and units that are established for the benefit of the students. There are school counsellors, who can help the student find a combination of courses that is suitable, or who may offer advice if someone is in some difficulty related to study progress as well as personal problems. If a student does not cope, there is some assistance provided through some kind of adapted teaching, and a "drop-out" may be offered some type of training or education other than the school. As said before, a youth has a right to education, and even if the given individual does not demand it, the school is under obligation to try to find something.

There is also a system for providing assisted or adapted teaching. The provision of this kind of assistance is wide, the most extreme being the "special classes of four", as they are called, meant for students who are retarded or seriously handicapped in some way. At the other end is the more trivial provision of extra tuition for those that experience some kind of temporary difficulty in a subject.

All of these structures, classes and courses on the one hand, and support and adapted teaching on the other, are built around the students and the teaching, as opposed to the departments, which are built around management and with a view to cope with the task of operating the school. And this probably is typical for upper secondary school as an organisation: it is more than one organisation, and to capture its complexity there is a need to see it as multi-dimensional. A school is at the same time a management system, a teaching system and a system of social work, and these systems are not necessarily mutually consistent or compatible. We may say that one of the challenges is to operate the "many schools" simultaneously; to manage the organisation while leaving the teaching, learning and caring to the teacher, and to carry on the teaching and fostering of a learning and caring environment without neglecting the management aspects.

### **4.3. Flekkefjord upper secondary school**

#### *A short history*

Flekkefjord Upper Secondary School, hereafter FSS, is a medium sized, comprehensive school that offers both general and vocational studies. The number of students is app. 450, and there is a staff of 89 persons, out of which app. 60 are teachers. Some of these are, however, employed on a part time basis, so that the number of positions is about 50. Its budget for the year 2000 was app. 27 mill NOK, out of which 24 mill or 88% was salaries and pensions.

The school is situated a couple of kilometers outside the centre of the town of Flekkefjord, in a quiet neighbourhood close to the sea, and with a magnificent view of

mountains and water. The town centre has app. 6,000 inhabitants, and it is the administrative centre of Flekkefjord, one of 15 local authorities in Vest-Agder, with a population of 9,000. The distance to the county "capital" of Kristiansand is 120 km.

Four other local authorities in the region are also served by FSS, but young people in these communities may also choose to go, or in fact sometimes have no other choice than to go to other schools within the county, outside the local region, depending on which type of courses or studies they are requesting. In special cases they even may have to go to schools in other counties, if they are opting for specialities that are not offered locally.

Up to 1994 there were two upper secondary schools in Flekkefjord, one vocational, situated at the present location, the other general, somewhat bigger and located in the town centre. A consequence of Reform 1994, (see chapter 3) was that one of the studies in the vocational school was shifted to the general school, and this would in effect mean that there would be a competition for students between the two institutions. But, as mentioned above, there were even other reasons to do something, and it was decided to merge the two schools, and a somewhat difficult period of transition was started.

Not all of the staff of the two schools was in favour of the merger, and especially at the vocational school the attitudes were quite negative, possibly because the teachers there feared to become "junior partners" in the future institution. The principal of this school resigned, and one of the senior teachers (inspektør) replaced him, but the conflicts continued and after some time he also wanted to step down. A solution was found in that the principal of the general school took on this function even for the vocational school, and for a period of about three years he spent half his time at each of the two institutions.

This, of course, was not a very satisfactory situation, but he was offered the position of principal for the future comprehensive school, and he accepted the offer on the condition that the new institution was to be located on the site of the vocational school and that new and functional buildings were to be constructed. This was accomplished over a period of three years, and in 1998 the new comprehensive school was opened.

The negative reactions subsided over time, and today the situation is described as quite calm. However, differences in culture between the staff of the two formerly

independent institutions are still to some extent to be felt, and they are expressions of differences of substance between the two former schools. These differences concern the subjects taught, the mode of teaching, and the educational background of the teachers. Even for the students one may say that they come to the school as two groups with differences of attitudes and interests. This is not specific to FSS, and it may not be a decisive or determining factor in any way, but it most probably is an important aspect of this type of educational institution.

### *The site*

In appendix 3 the site is shown, including the grounds which are not very large, and where there are still facilities to be developed, for instance to allow for sports activities.

On the site there are buildings from the original vocational school, and added to them the new structures that would accommodate the general school and the separate housing unit that contains the "classes of four". Thus there is to be found on the new campus the lines that divided the original institutions, but some of the new constructions promote integration.

Among these is the multi-functional open hall in the main building, which serves as a cantina, an assembly hall, and a meeting place, and it is even used for concerts and other public arrangements. Also a new library was built, together with some other rooms dedicated to special functions, like ICT.

The standard of the school buildings and the facilities are considered to be quite satisfactory, and to an outsider they look well maintained and orderly. For the teachers there is one large and very nice common room, with a fine view of the sea outside, and here there are mail boxes, boards for messages, coffee machines, etc. On the other hand, there are very few offices for the teachers, and in one of them 20 teachers work close to each other. This does not allow for much privacy or for talking with students who are seeking advice or support. As a consequence teachers tend to bring their work with them to their homes instead. This is a tradition in Norway; offices for teachers never has been part of the system.

### *Organisational structure and management*

In appendix 4 the main structure of the organisation at FSS is shown. The number of departments is four, and the percentage of the job as HoD is 70%, which means that all HoDs teach 30% of the time.

Another aspect of the structure at FSS is that it may be considered in the perspective of "integration" of the school, as no department is "pure". Three of them consist of

some general subject teachers and some who teach vocational subjects. And two departments are concerned not only with teaching, but also with some other function in the organisation. For instance in department 3 the HoD is responsible for the janitors in addition to a number of teachers. Thus the structure may be said to bring people together across borders between the two old institutions and between teachers on the one hand and other categories of personnel on the other. Whether this structure came about as a result of the application of an explicit criterion of "integration", is not certain.

#### **4.4. Mandal upper secondary school**

##### *A short history*

Mandal Upper Secondary School, hereafter MSS, is more or less 50% larger than FSS, with a total staff of 140 (120 teachers) and nearly 800 students. The student number is a matter of definition, depending on how one counts those who only take short courses. The number of regular, full time students is 750.

MSS is located about one kilometre from the centre of Mandal, a town and a local authority with app. 13,000 inhabitants. This school also serves other areas than its host municipality. Being so close to Kristiansand, with a population of 70,000 and several secondary schools, Mandal sends some of its youths away to schools in this city and also receives some in return.

MSS is a merger of three schools, one with general studies and two with vocational, and in addition a centre for work and vocational training for adults, (AMO-senter). One of the schools was located in the centre of Mandal, the rest were in the same site as now. Our impression is that the merger was a painful process, and that there were several serious conflicts in connection with it. The first principal for the newly established comprehensive institution demanded some changes of the physical structures, and as these were not fulfilled, he turned in his resignation. The second principal withdrew from the position for reasons of bad health, so that the present principal is the third one after the merger. But it is also our impression that the difficult period now is almost over and that the wounds have healed.

The most difficult part of the merger was related to the vocational centre, which had a special history of some consequence. There was, in connection with the former three upper secondary schools, a state run centre that provided courses for the Labour Market Authority. During the years of high unemployment in Norway this centre was

quite extensively used, and many teachers from secondary schools were employed on a part time basis. Funding was not a problem, and the level of activity was high, albeit somewhat narrow; much of it was concentrated on training welders for the oil and mechanical industries. When the economy recovered and employment figures rose, the centre ran into difficulties. At this time the Labour Market Authorities wanted to rid themselves of these centres all over the country, and the County Authorities were asked if they were willing to accept the full responsibility for them, as they already were acting as employers for the staff of these institutions. Some counties were negative, but the county of Vest-Agder accepted the offer, which included a fund to renovate the building structures and a guarantee for a number of courses to be financed over the first five years.

The outcome of the process was a merger with the newly established comprehensive school, and the former centre was organised as a department alongside the other, more regular ones, with a budget of its own and a head of department. The unit is owned by the school, the HoD is subordinated the principal and its economy is a part of the whole institution.

When the centre was reorganised, a difficult period of transition followed, with conflicts and a few redundancies. From the maximum of 23 employees there are now only three with regular and permanent employment, but the total activity corresponds to a staff of 12-15, and the volume of activity brings an income of NOK 7,5 millions. Over the last few years the field of activity has expanded into new areas, and so has the number of courses and students. In addition to adult education, the centre offers courses and even some consultancy to organisations and businesses, and last year it contributed positively to the economy of MSS. From being a problem in the integration process, it appears that the centre has become a valued part of the school.

Also some other developments are noteworthy in MSS, for instance a new organisation of one class at the first level and a sizeable ICT-project in co-operation with Telenor, the biggest telecommunications company in Norway. This last project represents a co-operation between the general studies and a business enterprise, which is more common for the vocational studies.

### *The site*

The school today consists of a number of older buildings and some new ones. They are spread over quite a large area, see also appendix 5. The merger of MSS took place prior to Reform 94, and most of the buildings are not suited to the new demands of the reform. The principal is very satisfied with the new buildings, but emphasises that the

older buildings are in need of renovation, which has been promised for some time by the authorities. The hope is that some money will be budgeted for this purpose in 2002.

Two improvements have helped the merger process. The school has been provided with a new, very nice multi-purpose building that contains a canteen, a light and airy hall and a modern library. This area functions as a valuable meeting place for all the students. Also there is now a new common room for the teachers at the school, and this is said to have helped integrate the staff from the former separate schools.

### *Organisational structure and management*

Like FSS, MSS has foundation courses which qualify students for admission at a university or give vocational qualifications, as the case may be. MSS has foundation courses in General and Business Studies; Health and Social Studies; Arts, Crafts and Design Studies; Hotel and Food-Processing Trades; Building and Construction Trades; Electrical Trades and Engineering and Mechanical Trades. A speciality for MSS, at a national level, is a class within the Engineering and Mechanical Trade, that qualifies students in Glass-fibre Reinforced Plastics construction.

Appendix 6 shows the main structure of the organisation of MSS. There are five departments and particular for MSS is a central staff led by the vice principal. Two of the departments serve General and Business Studies, two serve Vocational studies and the last one is the centre mentioned above, now called The Resource Centre (Ressursenteret). The principal as well as the vice principal work full time with administrative tasks, while the positions of HoD include 10% of teaching.

### **4.5. The two schools - main dimensions**

It will be seen in table 1 that the schools are very much like each other, among other things as regards the facilities for the teachers. A main impression is that those who teach in more theoretical subjects have the poorest facilities, while the teachers in vocational subjects work in labs and in more spacious buildings, providing more functional work places. Anyway, it seems that the office standard for the teachers is not very good, and apparently this goes for the Norwegian educational system in general.

*Table 1) Economics and buildings*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Total budget	27,164,624	45,576,558
Salaries and pensions	23,922,844	40,954,234
Total area of buildings	7,500 sq.m.	12,868 sp.m.
<i>Specialised rooms:</i>		
Library	one	one
Canteen	one	one
Teachers common room	one	one
Assembly hall	one ( with a canteen)	one ( with a canteen)
PC room	Two rooms, and PCs also placed in class rooms.	PCs in several rooms.
Other labs and workshops	16	26
Number of teacher offices	7	12

*Table 2) Personnel<sup>12</sup>*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Total staff, (approximate number of positions)	80	140
of this teachers (approximate number of positions)	60	90-100
<i>Teachers, educational levels:</i>		
Master or above (lektor)	18	30
(adjunkt m/opprykk)	20	43
Bachelor/Teachers college (4 years)	7	27
Teachers	8	11
Teachers without authorisation	1	3
Therapists, laboratory and library staff	4	4
Administrative personnel	6	5
Personnel in maintenance, catering and cleaning	9	11.5

Table 2 shows us, among other things, that the relative number of categories of staff and the number of students per teacher are much the same in the two institutions.

<sup>12</sup> It has been very difficult to fill in this table 2, and there are at least two important reasons. One is the difficulty of distinguishing between the number of individuals and of positions; the other that classifications of teacher positions is notoriously difficult, even among Norwegians. An attempt at translation increases the problems, and we ask the readers to read the table with caution.



Again, this may be taken as an indication of the schools belonging to the same county and the same system. The individual preferences and priorities of the principal and the staff seemingly do not count very much as regards these matters.

*Table 3) Union membership*

<i>Union</i>	<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Lærerforbundet	40	60
Skolenes landsforbund	0	20 (+10 retired)
Norsk lærerlag	1	1
Norsk skolelederforbund	3	3
Lektorlaget	0	8
NIF	4	0
Kommuneforbundet	12	5

*Table 4) Studies and classes*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Total number of classes	24	45
Classes for students with special needs	3	5
Studies, with the percentage of students registered	1) General and business (62%) 2) Building and construct. (8%) 3) Electrical (7%) 4) Mechanical (10%) 5) Arts, crafts and design (13%)	1) General and business (48%) 2) Building and constr. (6%) 3) Electrical (7%) 4) Mechanical (9%) 5) Arts, crafts, design (12%) 6) Health, social care (12%) 7) Hotel, food-processing(6%)
Regular students boys girls	410 219 (53%) 191 (47%)	764 388 (51%) 373 (49%)
Short courses attendance	no information	466

Table 4 shows us that Mandal offers a greater number of studies, which is to be expected as this school is app. 50% larger than FSS. Mandal also has a larger volume of short courses. This may have to do with size, but perhaps the main factor in this connection is the history, with the centre for vocational training, mentioned above, which was incorporated into MSS, and the school has developed this unit further. Also the percentage of boys and girls is very much the same in the two schools.

The two resource centres, indicated in table 5, are in principle the same in the two institutions, but they have a different background and have developed differently. Above, we have given an account of the Resource Centre at MSS. The analogous centre at Flekkefjord is smaller, among other things because it was started from scratch at the school itself, and did not have the benefit of a history and an established market and a network. The primary activity is adult education, to provide former dropouts and non-starters with an opportunity to complete an upper secondary education. However, a couple of years ago another small centre was established in the area of information technology. This was done in co-operation with the adjoining lower secondary school in Flekkefjord, and the local authority of Flekkefjord contributed a fund of NOK 300,000, which was used to buy a number of PCs. One person at FSS has a half time job at this centre, and in addition several of the teachers are involved in the courses that are offered to private persons and to firms. The total volume of activity at the resource centre is app. NOK 1 million.

*Table 5) Organisation*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Departments	Dep 1) Arts, crafts and design, language and social sciences Dep 2) Science, business, ITC, construction and building. Dep 3) Electrical and mechanical trade studies Dep 4) Specially adapted teaching, gymnastics. (The principal with staff)	Dep AF 1. General studies Dep AF 2. General studies Dep YF 1. Trade studies Dep YF 2. Trade studies Dep Administrative
Market oriented unit	Resource centre for adult and further education.	Resource Centre.

For both centres there is a potential conflict related to the participation of the teachers. They may do the teaching at the centre as part of their regular workload, or they put in some overtime and earn extra money. In this last case their time will be more

expensive, and this is a problem, since the centres are expected to compete in a market.

#### **4.6. Modes of operation of the two schools**

The tables above show that there are some differences between the two schools, but also that they are basically quite similar, which of course is to be expected of two institutions within the same field and under the same authority. In this section we therefore again present our findings under one heading, and now the topic is the way these two organisations function. A little simplified we could say that up to now we have concentrated on the structures of the organisations; and now we want to say something about the processes, the modes of operations. There are a great number of aspects, which could have been presented, and we have tried to give a quite broad picture. One topic is given a section of its own, namely the external relations, which appear at the end of this chapter.

##### *The functions of the departments and their heads*

The HoDs are managers at two levels. Firstly, as members of the management team, being responsible for the operations of the whole institution; secondly, as the head of one department and being the superior of its staff. Each HoD participates in the weekly meeting with the principal, where any matter of importance is presented and discussed. In addition, at both schools lists of tasks or duties for the principal and the HoDs have been developed, stipulating what each of them is responsible for. One such list, taken at random from Mandal, contains the following items:

- Term/exam/preliminary marks (documentation)
- Student admission
- Student changes of class and subjects
- Student records
- Internationalisation
- Co-ordination, distribution of subject hours on classes.

The items in these lists are called "staff functions", meaning that whenever there are questions as to such matters or when something needs to be done in this respect, the given HoD is the one to approach. The principal may call upon this person, and the others know whom to talk to about the given matter.

In addition to this role in the management team, each HoD has his or her own department. As stated above, however, the departments are not primarily "work units", but rather an allocation of people reporting to a HoD. These people have the

given HoD as a superior in a double sense. Firstly, there are department meetings; secondly, each of the employees in the department may go to the head and talk about work or personal matters, and the HoD is expected to have a formal talk at least once a year with every member of the department.

This kind of personnel management has not been part of the tradition in Norwegian schools, at least not in the form of a "middle manager" talking with teachers. Perhaps as an expression of this tradition or culture, we were informed that not everybody liked the idea and not all the teachers or other staff felt like having such talks. Our conclusion is that these talks do take place, although there is some scepticism, and they may become a part of the standard procedures, but that has not happened yet.

A basic characteristic of the departments, as they are organised in schools, is that the members are not very directly dependent upon or connected to each other in their work situation. This does not mean that they do not relate directly to each other or cooperate, but some of them carry out their work as individuals; others work with someone from the department, and then there are some who work with people from other departments. The connection between the department structure and the work is weak, and what connect people in a given department is primarily the head and the meetings that are arranged. These meetings are compulsory, and we may consider them as arenas that are established to allow information to flow and discussions to take place at a level below that of the whole institution.

In addition to the personnel function, both as a provider of information and someone to talk to, each HoD is given a set of duties, and these are specified in much detail in both of the two schools. The degree of detail is greatest in MSS, but in both schools the tasks are divided into two: those that are of a more general nature, related to the whole institution, called "staff functions" (stabsfunksjoner), as mentioned above, and those that are directed at the department, called "line functions" (linjelederfunksjoner). The "line functions" are very many and concern a number of areas. We shall present a summary, based on a set of lists at MSS, in order to illustrate the nature of the job as HoD and as a basis for bringing a few comments on the use of such lists.

- *Related to the staff*: participate in employment processes; introducing new staff; finding substitutes in cases of illness or absence; answering applications for leave of absence; conflict resolution; reports on subject teachers; agreement on working hours.

- *Related to students*: answering applications for leave of absence; exclusions of students; conflict resolution; student excursions and tours; external placement of students; departmental meeting with student body.
- *Related to the teaching*: control of protocols in classrooms and on marks; co-ordination of all-day tests; organising exams; see to it that marks are given according to laws and regulations; the subjects offered; calculation of the number of hours in various subjects compared to national standards; distribution of teaching hours on subjects.
- *Administrative and economic*: follow up the budget for the department; work out the budget for the department; department planning; reports from department; health, environment and safety in the department; student arrangements; external relations; guidance of heads of classes; internationalisation; parent meetings; projects.

As stated above, there are more details in these lists in Mandal compared to Flekkefjord, but we do not see much difference between the two schools as to the general approach. In both places the lists are describing the various positions in the organisation, not just the HoDs, and we may say that they signify a *formalisation*, spelling out in writing what are the responsibilities for the employees, a typically bureaucratic trait in an organisation.

There are many other possible comments on the use of such lists, and we shall return to the matter in the next chapter. Let us here just say that there is an apparent precision and clarity in the degree of details in these lists that perhaps is a little deceptive. The idea is implicitly conveyed that everything is taken care of - but this may not be absolutely true.

On the basis of our interviews we found that the teachers and other employees are of the opinion that the HoDs have a tendency to sit in their offices and concentrate on "administration", probably meaning "office work". Some of the HoDs expressed similar concerns themselves, and there seems to be a widespread opinion that the professional guidance or leadership does not receive sufficient attention. Others mention "pedagogical leadership" as something that needs to be strengthened, whether by the principal or the HoDs. This may be interpreted as an indication of the bureaucratic nature of the organisations, as the system itself is demanding and needs to be catered for, perhaps at the expense of the more personal "leadership" and "presence"; the HoD is in a way captured by the administrative structure.

### *The budgetary process*

One may argue that budgeting is the primary management process in schools, as it provides the basis for financing the activity in the coming year, and it involves all the major partners of the educational system: The departments in the school, the principal and his staff, the CDE and her staff, the county executive director and the county council, and, more in the background, even the Ministry. Somewhat paradoxically, this important process also is quite predictable, as app. 90% of the budget represents salaries, so that the outcome in a way only marginally concerns the size of the available resources of the principal.

The budgeting in each school is closely linked with and dependent upon what takes place in the county, and the overall budgetary process in the county council determines the timing of the process. The central budget is passed in late autumn for the coming calendar year, while the schools are planning for the so-called "school year", starting in August and ending in late June. As a consequence, the total budget for the educational sector must be based on estimates for the coming year as to the number of students and their preferences. Prognoses are built upon the experience with the preceding years and the knowledge about the situation in lower secondary schools in the given region.

The process starts in April-May every year, when the principal of every school tries to decide which studies and how many classes that he or she wants to establish in the autumn of the following year (and the ensuing spring term). On the basis of the information collected from all the schools in Vest-Agder the CDE will propose to the county council a specified number and types of studies, courses and classes distributed to the 16 institutions of upper secondary education. These figures, in their turn, will decide other important parameters, as the number of personnel in the schools is made dependent upon the course structure and the number of students. And then other types of costs are deduced from this again. In this way the CDE is able to generate and propose a total budget for the coming year on the basis of the plans for studies, courses and classes for the county and its schools. Formally, the executive director proposed this budget to the council, but it is the CDE who is doing the preparatory paper work and analysis.

After the council has passed the budget, it is broken down for each school and as such made available to the respective principals for comments. At this time, several months after the first estimates, things may have turned out a little different from what was expected, and some changes may have to be made. It is, therefore, of importance for the school that they scrutinise the budget in order to find inconsistencies between

what have been the premises for it and what has in fact materialised. The principal takes such matters up with the CDE.

Even though the budget represents a large number of sums, each of them calculated for a given item, it is the bottom line that is of interest. The principal formally is free to use the total amount of money as he or she sees fit, and the various items in the budgets are not earmarked for a certain usage; they were just calculated with reference to some specific use. The principal may decide to prioritise differently and promote certain causes, and in principle the only requirement is that the school is operated as agreed, that is to say, in accordance with the stipulated number of classes and students. How this is done, is up to the principal. In practice the situation is not quite as open as this may sound.

One basic limitation concerns the powers of a principal, who is of course bound by laws and regulations. For instance, the salaries of the staff are determined centrally, and this means that if there is no change of personnel, most of the budget is given. And personnel changes are not easily obtained; there are limits in the sense that the staff is protected by laws as well as negotiated terms of employment. However, when preparing the plans for the coming year, the principal may propose changes on the basis of expected activity in the next school year, and then staff members may be told that they are redundant. This does not normally happen, and if such a situation is threatening, there will be discussions with the CDE as well as with the section of Personnel and administration (P&O) in the county administration<sup>13</sup>.

Another type of limit to the discretion of the principal is that the CDE may earmark some money. And what the principal manages to save during the year, cannot be retained automatically. Any surplus for a given year must be reported to the county council, and it is up to the councillors to decide if the schools may keep what they have been able to save for future use. Up till now, the politicians have accepted this. .

In addition to the regular budget there may also come some extra money, both from the CDE and the ME, and such funds normally must be spent in a given way. It may for instance be that the ME finds that there is a need to strengthen the IT-sector in the schools, and the money provided for this, must, quite naturally, be used for this purpose.

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<sup>13</sup> Formerly, most teachers had permanent employment, meaning that they could *not* be laid off, but this is no longer the case for others than a few of those who were employed at the time when such terms were offered.

In any case, however free the principal may be to spend the budget at his or her discretion, the accounts and reports on the activity go to both the CDE and the ME. The principal has quite an autonomous position, but comprehensive reports are demanded by the CDE, and the principal must always be prepared to answer questions about the operations.

Within the given institution the budget is split up for each department, and some money is allocated and put at the disposal of the HoD, but normally these are small sums, mostly having to do with purchases in connection with the teaching. Still, the HoDs have a role to play in economic affairs, as they participate in the budgetary process, being entitled to come up with propositions for items in the budget, and they are responsible for the economic consequences of the operation of the department.

### *Participation of teachers and students*

In Norwegian, and more generally Scandinavian, working life the position of the employees is very strong, and there are two aspects of this. Firstly, the unions traditionally are active not only in negotiations, but are also involved in both operations and the strategic development of the employing organisations, be they private or public. Secondly, the rights of the employees are spelled out in laws and regulations, for instance concerning participation in meetings and boards and in decision processes.

In school organisations there are also the students, who are not covered by the regular laws on employee participation, but they have been given similar rights, and they are organised both locally and nationally.

*Student activity* is organised with respect to two different matters, the one being a separate student activity, the other student participation in school affairs. A student body is run by a board of elected members, who organise various activities, some of them related to politics or culture, but there are also genuinely social events and study tours and excursions. These are often arranged in collaboration with the school. The board of the student body participates more formally with the school, and the main element of this co-operation is the weekly meeting with the principal. Here matters of common interest are discussed. The principal or a teacher also may take up certain topics in the full meeting of the student body, for instance if there have been incidents of mobbing or drug abuse.

Then there are the class representatives, who are elected by the students for each class every year. They represent a liaison between the students and the school. Complaints



are furthered, and issues taken up with the relevant HoD or the head teacher of the class. In matters concerning individual teachers, even the principal may be involved.

The elected representatives of the students participate in regional associations, and on a yearly conference at a national level, arranged by the Student Union. The functions of such organisations are to further the causes of students by promoting issues and interests in relation to the politicians and the Ministry in Oslo.

*The teachers and other employees* participate in the school organisation in two different ways; one as regular staff and the other as members of a union. We have already, in the subsection on departments in this chapter, mentioned the personnel talks of the HoDs, which are meant to represent a way of communication between employees and management, and the department meetings where issues may be discussed. These arrangements have several purposes, but a main one is to allow for employee participation and influence on the operations of the school. There is also a personnel meeting for the whole school, where the principal will take up whatever issues he or she considers important at the time. These meetings are arranged a couple of times a term.

When reform 94 was introduced, a clause was negotiated at the same time in the agreements with the unions to the effect that the teachers are obliged to participate at a collective level at given number of hours per year - more specifically 190 hours. Some of this time is spent on planning and collective preparations at the start of each term, but the rest of this "resource" is meant to be used for teacher co-operation, including personnel meetings and the like. One may say that teachers are not just given the opportunity to co-operate, they are compelled to do so.

Formerly, there was, at every school, a "teachers council" (Lærerråd), discussing matters pertaining to the operations of the school. Now this has been replaced by participation through local union branches at each school. Perhaps this has contributed to a reduction in the level of active participation on the part of the teachers. At least in our two schools, the employees do not seem to be very actively engaged in questions concerning the school as such, and there have been difficulties in making them participate in an organised way in addition to their teaching.

This indication of a certain lacklustre attitude towards the organisation and the school as such may be found also when it comes to union participation. As shown in table 5) the percentage of the employees who are organised, is quite high, but the activity is not on a corresponding level. The meetings, organised by the board of the local union

branch once a month, take place in the so-called "middle-hour", which is a break in the middle of the working day. This is of course convenient, but it also seems to be a necessity in order to have people participate. Meetings after working hours are poorly attended. Interestingly enough, this tendency is most pronounced with teachers, while the other categories of employees apparently are more willing to spend some time in promoting their interests collectively.

The representative of the major union in the schools, which for both our institutions is the Norwegian Association of Teachers (Lærerforbundet), meets with the principal every week, and this meeting is quite formal<sup>14</sup>. There is a written agenda, and the principal writes out the minutes afterwards and has them accepted by the "honourable counterpart". It is the elected head of the board of the local branch of the largest union in a given school who attends these meetings. The board of the union branch meets regularly, among other things to discuss matters to be taken up with the principal. In both schools there are difficulties in recruiting members to these union boards.

As mentioned before, the percentage of the employees who are members is very high, not only in our two schools, but still they do not seem to be very strong or active. One aspect of this paradox is that these nominally strong unions do not seem to have been very successful in catering for the economic interests for their members. The salary level of teachers has been declining relatively to other vocations quite systematically over the years, and the status of the teaching professions is lower than ever. This applies across the board, to primary as well as secondary and higher education.

The question of salaries does not traditionally belong to the level of the school; the system is highly centralised in this respect, wages being negotiated at a national level. There is a change going on now, since local negotiations have been accepted for the first time. However, "local" refers to the county, and there is no direct negotiation in each single school. Also, the amount of money that is to be allocated locally is rather symbolic, in the order of magnitude of one per cent of the salaries.

Other issues of some importance for the unions are that of recruitment and employment. In the recruitment process the union has a formal role to play, and it functions in a way as a watchdog, seeing to it that the procedures are followed, that the applicants are treated fairly and that their rights are respected. For those who are employed, the unions are resorted to in cases of conflict, both as regards salaries and other terms of employment. If agreement with the principal is not achieved, the local union may take the matter up with the county branch or even at a national level. On

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<sup>14</sup> At Mandal USS even the representative of another union, The National Association of the Schools (Skolenes landsforbund), participates in this meeting.

his or her part, the principal may call upon the CDE or the Personnel and organisation officer (P&O officer) in the county administration.

A recurrent issue in our two schools is that of offices for the teachers. Traditionally, in Norwegian schools, teachers had their common room, and that was it. Here there were some desks and a small library, but very poor accommodation as a work place for anything of a more systematic and prolonged nature, and with hardly any privacy.

Over the years there has been a trend towards improvement, and teacher offices now are common. However, the rooms are few, small and crowded, and teachers have to share telephones and PCs. Not surprisingly, teachers are eager to obtain improvements, and they may argue not just out of self-interest, but also with reference to the teaching and the relations to the students. The more there is to be a new teacher role, for instance as regards the use of projects and with the teacher as an advisor, the more there is a need to have a more functional work place and somewhere to sit to listen to and discuss with the students, both on personal matters and with regard to studies.

Apart from the issue of offices, the main attitude of the teachers and other categories of personnel is positive towards the employer, and the level of conflict, as far as we have been able to see, is low. The same goes for the students, who are also mainly positive towards the schools and their management, although they of course would want some changes. One of the issues on which teachers and students alike are critical is, a little paradoxically, the leadership, but rather specifically towards its pedagogical aspects. The students would like to see more development of new modes of teaching, and the teachers feel that the pedagogical management is less developed than that of economy and administration in general. That there is a challenge here, is indirectly acknowledged in an internal memorandum on the school organisation, where the principal states that there has not been sufficient resources allocated to this kind of activity, but this is something that will be changed (Mandal videregående skole 1999:3).

### *Recruitment and work conditions of teachers*

Recruitment to Norwegian schools is not without its problems, but this is not so in our two schools, at least not in the short run. Being schools in small towns they are disadvantaged in the sense that many candidates would not consider these towns as very attractive, but then there is the opposite effect for those teachers that originate from the region. And this is what we can see; more than half of the staff in these two schools were born or raised in the district, and they stay on because, among other things, they feel at home there.

So the main picture is that the personnel situation is good and stable. On the other hand, the average age is close to 50 years, and in the near future many of the seniors will retire. This may lead to some transitional problems, but there is another aspect of it, namely that many of the older teachers graduated after 6-7 years of study with a degree of cand. philol or cand. real, somewhere between a master and a PhD, the so-called "hovedfag". This degree is now less popular with the students at the universities, and it will soon be replaced with the more common and shorter masters degree. This may not be a problem, but there is an apprehension about the change, especially as regards the science subjects. The old degree ensured that the candidates had a deep understanding of mathematics and physics, to a level which the coming "masters" may not be equal to.

Still, the situation in our two schools is not bad, and when positions are advertised, there is a fair amount of applicants. The procedures are quite formal, and there is a role for the HoDs in it. For temporary employment, up to six months, the principal may shortcut the process and employ a given person directly, but otherwise a full procedure is required. All applications are read and discussed in a special "board of employment", consisting of the principal, one of the HoDs and the elected union representative. The HoD whose department is involved, has done some preparatory work, including discussing the matter with those of the staff who will be working with the newcomer. This board takes the decisions on employment, except in the case of the principal, who is employed by the CDE. Often an interview is carried out with a few of the applicants, but not always. The majority of unions are not in favour of this practice, which is rather new in the educational sector.

Criteria for employment of teachers are in principle that the needs of the school should be put first. This means that one should employ the applicant who is generally best qualified only if this person meets the requirements as to the selection of subjects and specific qualities wanted in the organisation, and one should also think about the composition of the staff. For instance, if there is to be a recruitment to a group with a plurality of women, a man might be preferred even if a female applicant is somewhat better qualified. But basically, of course, the main criterion is that the candidate meets the formal requirements as to type and level of education and experience.

The workload for teachers can be quantified quite precisely. Each week the number of teaching hours is to be 16-25, depending upon the subjects. High numbers of hours for those subjects that do not demand much preparation or follow up work, like correction of papers. Gymnastics and arts fall in this category, while Norwegian is at the other end of the scale.

The size of the class also varies with subjects, but mostly between general and vocational classes. General subject classes normally have up to 30 students, while for vocational classes the number is 15. This difference is based on the fact that teaching in the general classes is mostly given in the form of lectures, and the teacher does not address any student in particular, but the class as a collective. In the vocational classes, however, the students are working individually, and the teachers have to spend some time with each of them, and consequently the class must be small. But this is in fact also the case for the science classes in the general studies, where there is a certain amount of laboratory work, and the teaching job is comparable to that of a vocational class. When the two types of schools were separate, this similarity probably was not observed or it was not very relevant, but after the integration of the general and the vocational schools, there may be a problem here, and some general teachers may find that they are entitled to some compensation.

This year a new system for the counting of working hours has been introduced, based on negotiations with the national unions, (ny arbeidstidsavtale). Under this new system a plan is to be set up by the HoD and the principal for the whole year for each teacher, specifying firstly the teaching hours, and, secondly, the use of the 190 hours.

This new agreement is contested, and in the opinion of some of the union representatives we spoke with, there may be conflicts over the issue once the members discover what it is all about. This means that in the eyes of the unions the teachers have not really understood what is in store for them. The major change probably is that now the teachers have to deliver the required number of teaching hours regardless of what happens during the year. Formerly, when an excursion was arranged, some of the teachers had to cancel their classes, simply because the students were not there. Also there was a period at the end of the spring term when the final exams were arranged so that many classes would be cancelled; for some teachers the whole month of May some years was virtually free of teaching. Now, however, these cancelled classes are to be considered as "debts", so that the given teacher will have to compensate by taking on other tasks, either in the form of teaching the same amount of hours or for instance doing pedagogical development work.

For the schools this change may mean that they save money; and for the teachers that they have to teach the actual number of hours that represent their formal work load. In reality this means that compared to the previous system, they will have to do more teaching for the same amount of money. Formerly, when one of them was absent, a colleague would substitute and be paid extra money for that effort. Now, most likely, this substitution represents just a way of reducing the "debt".

From our interviews we had acquired the understanding that the county was planning to save some money in the school budgets due to the new working time agreement. However the Minister of Education, claimed that such savings were not intended. He had sent a letter to all counties, he said, pointing out that "the new working time agreement for teachers has not been intended as an invitation to budget cuts"<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, he reminded the counties that all increases in teachers' salaries already had been compensated by increases in the government allocations to the counties.

### *Recruitment and admission of students*

Both MSS and FSS recruit most of their students from the town they are located in and from the local region around it. As stated above, Mandal sends some of its youths away to the schools in Kristiansand, and receives some back. This depends on which type of courses the students demand. Flekkefjord has a longer distance to Kristiansand, and consequently has less student exchange with the city.

The two schools serve the population in other local authorities in the larger region. For instance, in a "group of four" (see below) at FSS this year, there is a student from another county. At FSS they also admit students from Kvinesdal secondary school for the second year study, because at this school, which is smaller and not very far away, the options on offer to the students are quite few.

The recruitment to different studies varies, and there is for instance poor recruitment to the mechanical trade studies. This is not only a local phenomena, but applies to Norway in general. At FSS they are concerned about this, since the mechanical industry traditionally has been strong in the area and the local companies are in need of skilled workers.

The schools try to market themselves in different ways. Among other things, FSS once a year invites pupils in their last year at the lower secondary schools in the region to a day of "Open school". During this day the students of FSS present the studies the school can offer and the prospects that are connected with them, and they share their experiences with the future students. In the evening different industrial companies visit the school, both to see what is going on in the school and to present themselves as hosts to apprentices. FSS and MSS also participate at a regional educational fair in Kristiansand each year, and they both have their own home page on the Internet and have prepared leaflets describing and marketing the schools and the studies they can offer.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview in Aftenposten, (the largest newspaper in Norway), 10.01.2001, (our translation).

The pupils who leave the lower secondary schools apply for upper secondary education to the CDE. There they consider the capacity and studies offered in all the upper secondary schools in the county on the one hand, and the choices and preferences of the pupils on the other, and on the basis of this information the pupils are allocated places in the various schools. As we have said before, every student is entitled to a placement according to one of his or her top three priorities.

In the upper secondary schools in Vest-Agder there is, as the law requires, a wide range of adapted teaching offered to students with special needs, and we present the main categories below:

- \* For students who need some help for a period, for instance in a subject the student finds particularly difficult, the school may offer additional or intensified tuition. The teachers tell us that it has happened that students do not want to receive such help, and perhaps they feel it embarrassing, but mostly they appreciate the assistance.
- \* For students who are in need of more extensive help, the additional teaching may be organised more permanently.
- \* The schools also have a more differentiated approach for some of the students. Those who are "slow learners" may be allowed to take the basic courses in the first year (grunnkurs) in the course of two years, and special groups of eight students are set up for this alternative mode. This way of differentiation is now, however, being reconsidered by the county, probably in order to obtain "more value for the money". There is a hope, as we understand it, that one may find ways of taking care of these students that are both better and less costly than the current practice.
- \* For students with handicaps and serious learning problems the schools can even organise education in groups of four. This is, of course, a very costly offer, but the rule is that if a school has five or fewer students in need of such an option, the school will receive special funding for such a "group of four".

### *Teaching*

As stated in section 1.2, teaching is not a main topic in our study, which is concentrated on "organisation". Now teaching, pedagogy and learning environment are basic and core activities in schools; this is what schools are about, but since our focus is on organisation, we only briefly touch upon these aspects. We did, however, talk about teaching in the interviews, and we believe that we by this managed to understand more about the organisation, but still the picture we provide here is very

far from being complete, and it does not do justice to the attention this activity receives by the staff.

*Chart 5. The structure of upper secondary education after Reform 94 (ME 1994)*

1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year
		(In school) Advanced Course II - General Subjects - Vocational Courses	
		(In school) Advanced Course II - General subjects Supplement (Supplement to vocational courses at Advanced Course I level)	
(In school) Foundation Course	(In school) Advanced Course		
		(At the Workplace) Training	
		(At the Workplace) Training and productive work	(At the Workplace) Training and productive work.

When basic education in the school is combined with the completion of vocational training at a place of work, the training may last up to four years, being combined with productive work over two years of in-company training. Handicapped students are granted the right to more than three years of education of this kind.

As mentioned before, both Mandal and Flekkefjord give general subjects and vocational courses. In addition they provide an opportunity for adults, aged 20 years or more, to obtain upper secondary education.

The teachers in both schools have a background from either vocational schools or more traditional secondary schools (gymnas). Both schools try to improve co-operation between the teachers from the two traditions and to develop a common culture. For instance, teachers from the former general secondary schools now are more engaged in teaching in the vocational studies than before. We have the impression that there are two problems in this connection. The first is that in the vocational studies the general subjects, such as English or mathematics, have to be more strongly related to the type of trade, like nursing, construction work, etc. This is not always easy for teachers who have a more traditional university degree, and there



is the additional problem that there is a lack of good books on general subjects related to vocational studies.

The other problem has more to do with history and tradition. We were told that in both the schools the teachers increasingly feel that they become part of one culture. Still, some of the old thinking persists, and perhaps teachers from the former general secondary schools feel that their subjects and university degree are "more valuable" or at a "higher level" than the corresponding training of the vocational teachers? These problems are, however, decreasing and seem to be gradually disappearing.

In connection with R 94 the ME prepared material and to some extent gave in-service training to teachers. The purpose was to advise on how the objectives in the new curriculum could be realised, including how classroom practice could be changed. The ME emphasises that students have to do more case studies, to share their experience with each other to a greater extent, and to work more with problem-based learning and with projects.

In both our schools the teachers are trying to increase this kind of active work among the students, and, as we have mentioned before, they try to change the teacher role from that of a more traditional lecturer into something that includes elements of counselling or mentoring.

In Mandal a project is started in one class where the students are given more personal responsibility for their own learning. This means that the teaching is organised quite differently from the rest of the school. The students have periods of 2-3 days with only one subject, for instance mathematics or Norwegian, and then there are less intensive periods for these subjects. Four teachers follow the class throughout the year, and they are supposed to function as a team.

Representatives of the students told us that those who are in this "experimental" class, so far are very satisfied with the project, and they hoped that it could be continued next year and maybe extended to other first year classes. In the longer term they hoped that the school could extend this way of organising the teaching for the classes in the second year. As it is now, the students from the project class will be merged with those from classes with more traditional organisation, and this makes it difficult to carry on with the alternative way of working in the second year.

## 4.7. External relations of the two schools

### *Types of relation*

Previously, we have described the Norwegian system of education, and we shall present it more in detail in this section. Within this system schools are placed in *relations of authority and control*, most directly to the county, but also to other institutions. These are probably the most important external relations of the school, but there are many others, and we have to limit ourselves to just mentioning them.

The teachers, and other employees of the schools, are unionised to a high degree. The elected union representative is by law entitled to play a part in many of the processes of management in the organisation, and they have, of course, a right to be kept informed about all matters of any importance. The same goes, although to a lesser extent, for students and their associations, both at the school and at the level of the county and nationally. These relations mainly are of the type of *co-operation and negotiations*.

The co-operative relation is also found towards the local authorities. In small towns, like the two that we are concerned with in this report, the upper secondary school is an important institution and employer, and the local authority takes an interest in its development, even though they do not have a formal part to play in the operation of the school as such. Co-operation may concern many aspects of the school, from the big issues of location and regulation of the site and the constructions, to the more permanent contact in relation to providing health services, finding placement for trainees or permanent employment for graduates from the school, etc. This kind of co-operation is not only found with the local authority, but also with the business community and local associations of several kinds, like sports clubs, orchestras, etc.

Another aspect of the local relations is that being part of a local community, the school is subject to regulations and control of many types, for instance as regards work environment and health, but also by the police in cases where there are suspicions of drug abuse or other types of delinquent behaviour. We may call these relations of *regulations and inspection*. Local representatives of various institutions have the right to inspect and make demands vis-à-vis the principal. Increasingly, the schools focus on developing co-operation with these authorities.

One last type of relations may be called *professional*, meaning that the staff, primarily the teachers and their superiors, have relations to colleagues in other schools and in national organisations. This is a varied set of relations, from participation in conferences to formal meetings where matters of common interest are discussed and

experiences exchanged. It is a matter of taste whether these relations are called "external", when employees of the school meet with colleagues, but there is an element of influence from the outside in this. For instance, when the principals are "networking" with each other, meeting regularly on the initiative of the CDE, they discuss matters and share experiences, and they take with them home to their own schools ideas that very well may have some effect internally.

### *The county administration in general*

As stated above, the county executive officer (CEO) formally is the superior of the educational administration (CDE), but this is of little consequence for our study of the management of the institutions, since they - or the principals - are formally subordinated to the CDE<sup>16</sup>. However, there are a couple of staff sections that are in direct contact with the schools - personnel and organisation and the technical section.

The technical section and its influence on maintenance and buildings must be understood in the perspective that the county is the owner of the schools, and this does in practice mean the buildings. Also, at the schools there are no positions dedicated to this kind of responsibility or tasks, with the exception of the janitors, who, while competent in many ways, are not professionals as carpenters or constructors. The relations to the school then, are that the county administration is in reality deciding on the issues of major maintenance, repair work and refurbishment. Of course, this applies even more for new constructions and plans for reconstructions. However, there is also a person with professional competence in these matters with the CDE, and the two units co-operate. The management at the school is thus dependent upon the combined forces in the county administration with respect to buildings and constructions, but by both schools this relation is referred to as unproblematic and businesslike. There is no reason, as we perceive it, to question this attitude or the way matters regarding buildings is organised.

The other section of some importance at the central county administration is that of personnel and organisation, and here the relations are a little more complex. There is, of course, at the schools some competence in this area, and personnel and organisational issues are constantly part of the operations. Secondly, at the CDE there are also professionals on these matters, and the relations between the two sections within the county administration are not necessarily clear. Lastly, organisational questions have a tendency to concern or express both strategy and policy, and they relate to individual careers and work situations.

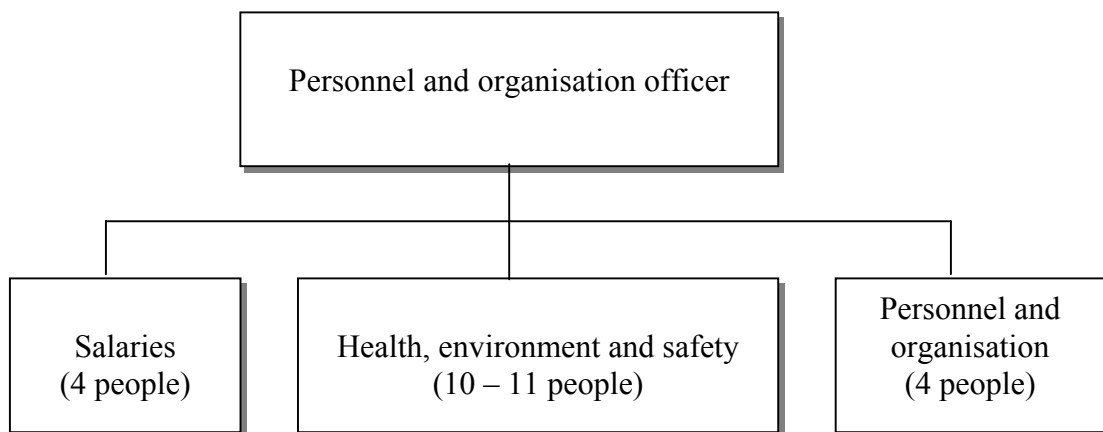
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<sup>16</sup> Formerly, the principals were under the direct authority of the committee for education of culture, a part of the political structure in the county, being one of the standing committees under the full council.

Perhaps as a consequence of this rather complex picture, the section of P&O functions mostly in an advisory and educational respect, in addition to the more routine tasks of keeping the records and paying salaries. There are three units within the section, as depicted below.

Even the salary section, which is mainly operational, has some relations of consultancy and information towards the schools, but more important in our connection are the two other sections. P&O are involved with the schools mainly in the capacity of consultants, for instance in cases of personnel conflicts over employment conditions, or in the capacity of carrying out projects. This autumn the section has been involved in developing criteria for decisions on salary levels for the teachers, and they have been running a project on "employee-based development". Both of these tasks may be understood in the perspective of increased emphasis on efficiency and of the constant change that we have mentioned before. There is a belief, at least in the ME, that salary differentials may contribute to improved standards of teaching. Employee participation in "development" also represents a core ideology within what is called New Public Management, which the authorities in the Norwegian system of education seems to be taking as their credo.

*Chart 6. The section of personnel and organisation in the county administration*



The P&O section does not, however, participate in the restructuring of the school organisations, as this has been the domain of the CDE. This was, according to the P&O officer, an issue that the CDE promoted. We may interpret it as illustration of the roles of the CDE versus the P&O. Restructuring was perhaps more of a policy than a project, in the sense that the authority in question, the CDE, had decided that this was to be implemented. Even though there is to be an evaluation, the process is not perceived as easily reversible. Generally speaking, in organisations some changes

seem to depend more on forceful implementation than on expertise, and this process probably is of that kind.

The section of health, environment and safety (HES) also is mainly advisory, but perhaps with a direct authority as regards the promotion of a healthy environment, and it has carried out a number of surveys to check the standard in the schools. As the county health officer is in charge of the section, it is vested with some degree of autonomy. In Norway, a medical officer normally is not under the authority of the executive officer, as that might open for hierarchical interference with matters related to health and safety. This should be left to the discretion of professionals who are not bound by economic responsibility and administrative loyalties.

The HES section also acts as a problem solver, and may be called upon by a school in cases where internal conflicts are threatening not only efficiency, but also the health of the staff. In one of our schools the section was involved in a conflict a few years ago, and helped the management to overcome a quite serious crisis.

### *The county director of education*

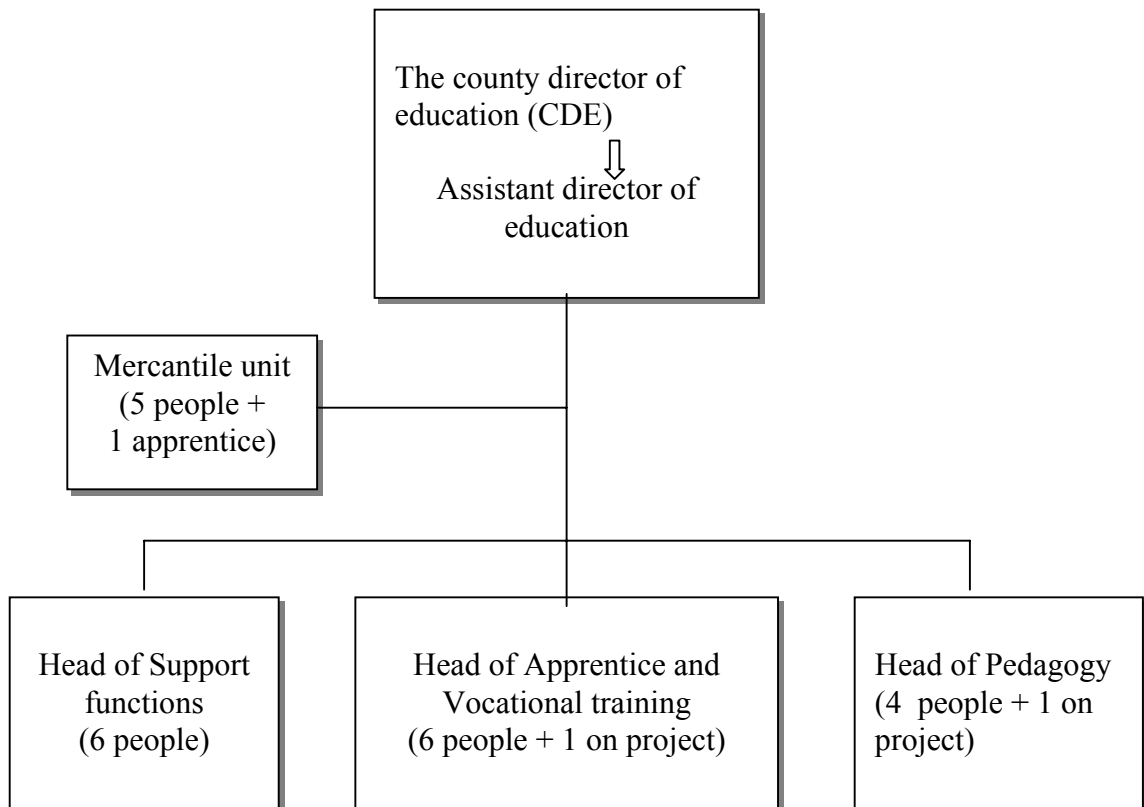
Both the executive of this office herself and the organisational unit is called the CDE, and it comprises 25 people in four sections, as shown below, (23 of these are employed on a permanent basis; the two others are temporarily engaged in projects).

The so called "mercantile" unit, is in effect just a name for a number of secretaries and others with purely administrative tasks, directly under the CDE, and it need not concern us here. The three other units are called sections, and they each have a section head. We shall present them quite briefly.

*The apprentice and vocational section.* More than half of the students in upper secondary education in Vest-Agder are taking vocational training, (in fact 59% in the first year last autumn). The reasons for this are complex, and one of them is that the labour market favours this type of education, at least at present. Also there is a quite close collaboration between the regional offices of the national associations of employees and of employers, the local labour market authorities, and the CDE. Together they have managed to bring about an attitude among a substantial number of young people that academic training is not the only way to have a career. And they have conveyed the fact that those who take vocational training may go on to the universities later if they change their mind, simply by supplementing their education with the required general courses.

One of the tasks in this section, in co-operation with members of the other groups as well, is to ensure that there are apprentice and trainee options for all students who are in vocational training. This has been a constant challenge over the years, since neither private businesses nor public administration organisations have provided sufficient opportunities.

*Chart 7. The county director of education*



*The pedagogical section* is the one with most direct relations to the schools, and its task areas are:

- Pedagogy and adapted teaching
- Pedagogical development tasks, especially as regards dropouts.
- Information and communication technology in education.
- Teacher training courses
- Exams
- Adult education
- Buildings

*Support section.* There are close relations between the pedagogical section and the one called "support", and whose task areas are:

- Student admission
- Economy
- Personnel

The work within these sections represents an important part of the relations between the schools and the CDE, but there is also a number of other types of co-operation and contact. One is the "Forum of the Principals", which represents an arena for contact between the CDE and all the principals in the county. A number of other meeting places consists of conferences and arrangements organised by the CDE or others.

The responsibility of the CDE may be summarised as follows:

- \* To motivate and provide support and advice to the schools.
- \* To contribute to the level of competence in the schools.
- \* To ensure, in co-operation with the schools, that the applicants are admitted to a school according to their preferences.
- \* To promote and carry out pedagogical development.
- \* To supervise and control, among other things on the basis of the yearly reports from each school.

Examples of concrete activities are that the CDE arranges further education for teachers; management training courses; and the new organisational structure is a result of development work with the CDE. Then there is a big project called "Differentiation", which is interesting not only for its content, which is to contribute to developing a more differentiated teaching. But apart from this aim, which of course is of value, the way the project is organised probably says something about the relations between the schools and the CDE.

Last year, the CDE requested each school to do some planning of their activity within this "Differentiation project", and to send their plans to her. In these plans the schools were to spell out what they were intending to do to improve the school and its functioning with respect to teaching. A sum of money was provided by the ME, and every school was given their small and equal share of it, provided that they had in fact produced such a plan. These processes show quite clearly that the CDE is in charge, that she may demand action from the principals; and, if they do not follow up, she is able to sanction them.

There is no doubt that she not only may withhold money, and that it is of some importance for the principals to have well functioning lines of communication to the CDE. More concretely, in the discussions on the budgets there is a certain element of negotiations, as the automatically produced budget for a given school is not always acceptable to the school. The principals who believe that they have valid arguments, are invited to try to obtain improvements in the figures in the budget, and one may reasonably assume that the ability of a principal to attract the attention of the CDE and have her listen with sympathy to the arguments, is somewhat dependent upon the standing of the given principal with the superior.

In the next chapter we shall return to the issue of the realities of the autonomy of the principals, especially as regards their relations to the office of the CDE.



## 5. TENTATIVE ANALYSIS

### 5.1. Introduction

On the basis of the descriptive material provided in chapter 4 we have attempted to analyse a few aspects of the organisations of the two schools, and our efforts are only in a few cases in the neighbourhood of being comprehensive. Our main intention is to point out a number of areas that we consider as interesting, and sometimes even a little puzzling, and we have attempted to try to understand a little more about them. But then our time has been severely restricted, and in most cases we have just been able to indicate a topic and to pose some questions.

This means that this chapter is more like a proposal for further research, and that our analysis is tentative and must be read as invitations to discussing the various topics that we have selected. This is especially true about the last sections. There are many other topics that would have been interesting to try to understand better, but that will have to be some other time.

We take the descriptions in the preceding chapters as given, and we shall try to avoid repeating very much of what has been said about the facts of the organisations. We want to put this description into perspective by commenting upon it and trying to say something about how it may be understood, both as regards processes and possible reasons for the observed design.

The two schools that we have visited are different to some extent, but the similarities are perhaps more pronounced, at least as seen from the outside. This fact, that the organisations are variations on a common theme, allows us to compare, in the sense that we may use the differences - or variations - to throw light upon the organisations, so as to understand why they are functioning as they are.

In this chapter we are primarily studying topics that we have selected because they are of *interest in themselves*, but we also want to consider the question of how the *design process* of school organisations is to be regarded, that is to say, how we may understand the organisation to find its form. At the outset one might assume that it is

established through a rational process of choosing means to achieve certain ends, as if a principal for instance develop a system of rewards for teachers because he or she believe that this would make them function better. To some extent such deliberation probably takes place, and so organisations perhaps represent the outcome of rational choices. On the other hand, it is fairly obvious that principals do not always act autonomously or rationally in this sense, and there are many reasons for this.

Firstly, a school is to some extent *institutionalised*, and this means that there is not a rational decision behind every element of its organisation, which belongs in an organisational field, in this case that of *educational institutions*. This makes itself felt by a set of beliefs and expectations as to how things have been or are done and how one normally thinks about organisation and management in this field, the Norwegian system of education. We may safely assume that what a principal chooses to do, is to some extent based on his or her belief about expectations and about how things are done in this kind of system. There are what we call social forces that keep things "in place", and a manager seldom is free to act on the basis of his or her own discretion. The expectations are, however, not always clearly defined nor consistent or coherent. There are many parties involved, and each of them may have beliefs and expectations concerning aspects that are important to them and that concern their specific interests.

Additionally, to design the school into forms that are acceptable to others, is not just related to tradition or expectations in the institutional sense, but also to processes of *negotiation and regulation*. A given school organisation is part of a larger system, where the parties involved seek to promote their interests and policies, so that it only marginally is open for specific solutions and local discretion. The principal has to comply with the basics of school organisation, as laid down in the framework agreed upon by the parties involved.

And then there is, of course, the direct *hierarchy*, which means that a principal has to gain the acceptance or take direct orders from those above concerning the structuring and operations of the school. His or her immediate superior is the CDE, but in the background the Ministry of Education has its say. This hierarchical system does not only have its impact on the structure of the school organisations, but even on the daily operations. An important element of the system, therefore, is the relation of the principal to those at the other end of the lines of authority. We shall return to this issue in the last section of this chapter.

There is no end to the list of possible topics to concentrate upon when discussing the management system of any organisation, and schools are no exception to this. We

have to select something that we consider to be important, and we have chosen to concentrate upon the school organisation in general, with the question of how to understand it, what it "is". One aspect of this is whether it should be viewed as *one* organisation, or if it makes more sense to consider it as two or more blended into one. In addition we shall touch upon the bureaucratic perspective, since there are reasons to argue that a school organisation has strong bureaucratic traits, while at the same time these traits are perhaps not understood or are not implemented systematically.

Then we go on to study the role of the management, both of the principal and the HoDs. This topic is connected with the more general one of leadership in upper secondary schools. What characterises it, what are the attitudes towards management among the teachers, what kind of leadership do they accept or consider right.

The last topic concerns the structure of departments, with an emphasis on the new system, about which there are differences of opinion. We are not going to try to reconcile differences of opinion or argue for or against a given solution, but we shall try to develop an understanding of what it concerns, what it is about.

## **5.2. School organisations as bureaucracies**

It is apparent from the descriptions in chapter 4 that the basic school organisations, as we have found them in our two schools, have quite pronounced bureaucratic traits, and at the outset the organisations would be characterised as such, although there are some traits that point in other directions also. A bureaucracy as an ideal type is an organisation with specialisation, with hierarchical lines of authority, with selection of staff according to formal competence, with a sharp distinction between the private sphere and affairs and the work place and its activity, and a bureaucratic organisations is, perhaps most distinctly, governed by rules.

"Rules" in this connection must be understood quite broadly, including the subject matter of the organisation, in the case of schools for instance rules for admittance to a study or for which courses that constitute a study, for the amount of work to demand or expect from a student, for the number of weeks and days of a term, etc. But the concept of rule also includes laws and regulations concerning the staff and their work situation, for instance as to working hours, required presence at the work place, procedures for employment, etc. Basically, "bureaucracy" in this sense means that decisions governing the operations of an organisation are built into the system; they are taken in beforehand, being part of the system. This also means that not much is left to the discretion of the managers; they are not there to govern according to their own preferences, but to interpret the system and deduce what is the right thing to do.

Such a mode of operation has many advantages, primarily as a way to obtain a unitary system and to implement a chosen strategy or policy. This of course applies especially to schools, as there are many small institutions, which easily could develop into a varied set of organisations, each with its peculiar structure and ways of doing things. For the authorities bureaucratisation is a main tool to avoid this and to be in control.

A second contribution to the bureaucratisation is the unions and their centralised way of operating. The Norwegian system of trade unions has this as one of its characteristics, emphasising a standard set of conditions for all employees of a certain category. This means, for instance, that salaries are to be decided on the basis of impersonal factors like education and experience, and not on the subjective opinion of the manager as to the qualities of the given person. Secondly, the unionised system is highly centralised, in the sense that many elements are negotiated centrally. This means that the conditions of work, the demands on the employees, the relations between the staff and the principal, are designed and determined through central negotiations, and that the local unions mainly are expected to comply with and implement what has been agreed upon in the national negotiations. Again we see the bureaucratic mechanism of control; the employees keep control over their own work conditions by reducing the local autonomy of the managers and by having the local representative act on the basis of a given set of rules and regulations.

A bureaucratic structure represents one of the most efficient ways of organising, but there are also some negative aspects of it. One of them is that the local units may be stifled and function according to centrally given rules and not on the basis of a local understanding and interpretation of the specific conditions under which it operates. This may not be a big problem, especially if there is a preference for central control and little need for local adjustment.

Another weakness is the "impersonality" of the system. The ideal type of bureaucracy is not inhabited by "people" but by "holders of positions". It is as if the individuals should not be seen, only the "official", or in this case the "teacher". There are indications that the schools are bureaucracies in this respect, as they are not very good at taking care of or relating to the individuals. And when positions are to be filled, the tendency is to consider not the specific person, but the "official one", meaning his or her education, experience and CV.

The official attitude of the major teacher unions is one of scepticism towards the use of interviews, and one of the reasons probably is that such a practice would mean that the personality of the applicant would count, and that is not "fair". This is an attitude

which may be interpreted in two ways. One is that there is a fear that applicants would be selected on "personality", perhaps personal charm, while the professional qualities would count less. The other possibility is that the negative attitude expresses the bureaucratic belief that an employee "is" the "position holder" and as such a neutral and impersonal entity, and that the personal qualities are irrelevant. What is to be employed is the "teacher", not the person. Individual qualities are relevant only after working hours!

Such a bureaucratic perspective is, of course, in many ways alien to the teaching profession, and in schools there is much emphasis, as shown in chapter 3, on bringing up young people into becoming "whole individuals". On the other hand, and a little paradoxically, teachers and their unions are proponents of some measures that seem to express bureaucratic attitudes. This is perhaps most directly to be seen in matters relating to work loads and agreements, where the teachers - and the authorities - are relying on quite detailed calculations and rigorous formalisation of work demands and procedures. And the same type of attitudes are brought to bear on evaluation of applicants for positions, where the teachers traditionally have emphasised an impersonal approach and through their unions tend to oppose the use of job interviews. However, there is also a certain ambivalence on the part of the teachers as regards such bureaucratic elements in the organisation. Their ideology is in many ways anti-bureaucratic, especially as regards their work in the classrooms, but some of their *interests* are well served by the bureaucratic organisation.

### *A process of de-bureaucratisation*

The tendency in the Norwegian educational system is in the direction of *local autonomy*, and there are two aspects of it. One is that the authorities seem to believe that *central control* is both costly and *inefficient*, perhaps even not functioning very well, and they are implementing a drive towards decentralisation or delegation. Secondly, there is an increased acceptance of *local variation* and autonomy, meaning that the official ideology now is that local managers should be allowed to design and operate their own organisation to a greater extent, and that this has two advantages. The school will become better, and the work situation for the employees will be more challenging and rewarding, since teachers will be allowed to reflect and decide on more aspects of their own situation.

Thus we may say that there is a drive towards *reducing the bureaucratic element* of the school organisations, but such a change is not always easy. Firstly, the system may be *inert*, in the sense that much continues to function as before. An organisation is a complex system, and many elements are interlinked. In order to be able to change one

part of it, others have to be changed too, and if this is not realised, things continue as before. This applies to a given organisation, but even more so for two systems that are interdependent, like the school organisations and the unions. They may in reality stifle each other's attempts to develop new ways of functioning.

Secondly, people are *socialised* into a system and will not automatically change their behaviour or attitudes even if there has been a change in organisation, in policy or in strategy.

Thirdly, a bureaucratic structure is one of *power*, and when local units are allowed greater autonomy and local variation, there is a danger of a more or less corresponding reduction in both status and power for central institutions and positions, and this they may not accept or allow. It is sometimes said that decentralisation can be achieved only if those in the central administration are given new tasks, so that they no longer have the time to exert direct control over the local branches (Nylehn 1997).

Thus we might expect that debureaucratisation is a process with setbacks and something that does not run by itself. And we may expect to find contradictory or conflicting elements in a given organisation. It is not possible to change everything at the same time, and a new system will always have to be implemented by people who are quite firmly embedded in the former mode of operating. To put it a little pointedly, debureaucratisation is a process that may be a bit slow, since it is under the control of bureaucrats.

Now, bureaucratic thinking obviously is a part of the wider culture of the educational system, both in the Ministry and the unions, as illustrated by the new agreement of work load and working hours (ny arbeidstidsavtale). A part of this agreement is that it should not increase the degree of bureaucratisation. This is, indeed, an interesting statement, and there are two conflicting interpretations of it. Seemingly the agreement is that bureaucracy should be *reduced*, but on the other hand the form of the agreement is one of solid bureaucratic thinking, namely that organisation is something that is a consequence of *decisions by the proper authority*! A more realistic attitude is to consider bureaucracy as inherent in the *behaviour and acts* of the members of the organisation, and not a matter of intentions. In this sense the new agreement is quite directly bureaucratic, in the sense that it specifies procedures for calculating workloads, and also the planning procedures for implementation. To ask for this to be introduced in a way that does not increase "bureaucy", may be compared to expressing an intention of disregarding gravity.

An important aspect of the process of debureaucratisation is that it is not a question of eliminating this organisational form altogether, since it has many qualities. The problem is to avoid some of its drawbacks, or to find out in which areas there should be a sound bureaucratic system and where to develop other forms. Perhaps one also will find that there is a need to *strengthen* the bureaucratic element in some areas, while *reducing* it in others. For instance, in order to be able to operate a school organisation as an autonomous institution under local control, there is a need to develop sound administrative systems of accounting, of archives, of rules and regulations for employment, for admission of students, for the use of resources, etc.

Such measures will quite unavoidably mean a strengthening of local bureaucracy, while reducing the dependence upon central systems of control. It is important to see this other side of "debureaucratisation". Reducing the central control and the centrally determined rules and regulations, does not necessarily mean that the "degree of bureaucracy" is reduced, and in fact it may need to be increased. Local bureaucracy replaces a central one, and, more generally, decentralisation to a local unit may necessitate the strengthening of the organisation of this unit. And if a principal is to be able to manage his or her school, there is a need to develop the *school organisation*. This is what we have observed; there is a new structure in the schools, more people are involved in the management of them, and there probably is a need to develop the new roles of heads of departments, for instance as regards their administrative tasks in relation to the local administration, which must take the challenge and cope with the new decentralisation.

Whether the changes in the local organisations need to be bureaucratic, is not given, but there are many aspects of the tasks of school organisations that point in the direction of bureaucracy. The school is to be a tool of the county council, be democratically governed, and the office of the CDE is still to be there as part of this system. It is difficult to see how these relations could be institutionalised without a fair amount of bureaucratic system. And then there is the internal administration, with its timetables, its participation, the employment procedures, the distribution of teaching load on the part of the teachers, etc. There is a need for a number of administrative systems, and they are probably well served by a bureaucratic structure. Such challenges illustrate the question mentioned above, of how far and in what areas the local bureaucracy is to be developed.

### *Non-bureaucratic traits in the school organisations*

In some areas non-bureaucratic elements have been developed in the organisations, and below we shall look into the aspect of teaching, which is not normally

bureaucratised. On the other hand, teaching also is an individual enterprise, and many teachers carry out their work individually. This is part of the tradition of one teacher-one class, and of the autonomous professional. Whatever the background, the effect is that co-operation may suffer, and we were told that this is sometimes the case, or, as one of them said: "We are not particularly good at co-operating"<sup>17</sup>.

One interpretation of this is, as mentioned above, that the school comprises professionals, and they are independent individuals who want their freedom to act. It is, however, also possible to see it as an indication of a bureaucratic attitude. In a bureaucratic organisation "co-operation" is to see to it that all tasks are allocated to a given position, and that there are clear lines of both authority and responsibility. The lists of the duties of the HoDs are illustrations of this attitude; everything has to be linked to someone, preferably to just one, so that there are "clear lines". And this is a possible perspective on the teachers' individuality, that may be an expression of professionalism, but also of the belief that things function better if people do not have to co-operate directly and personally. "Bureaucratic co-operation" (Nylehn 1999) is preferred, meaning that tasks are divided so that the individual may work by him- or herself. This reduces conflicts and makes it easier to work efficiently; direct collaboration is demanding and fraught with challenges that can be avoided by proper and clear division of work.

We are, as researchers, not able to decide if the teacher autonomy is "professional" or "bureaucratic", but we believe that the two possible interpretations are something that might be a topic for the schools to discuss. Another interesting topic is the trend of introducing into the school organisation elements that are non-bureaucratic, and even in conflict with this organisational model. A central element in this connection is Management by objectives (MBO) which may be considered as a "modern" touch, being part of a trend towards a more management-like way of operating<sup>18</sup>. The main idea is that people be allowed to choose their means and ways of doing things according to their own judgement, and that they be evaluated on the basis of *achievements* rather than on *behaviour*. The goals that they are to be evaluated against, are to be agreed upon by the manager and the employees.

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<sup>17</sup> It is our impression that co-operation is more prevalent between those who teach the same subjects, and this is a fairly well known phenomenon in Norway as well as in other countries. Hargreaves and Macmillan (1994:222) have observed rather permanent patterns of this kind of co-operation, and they call it "Balkanisation in schools" and claim that such co-operation can contribute to disintegration.

<sup>18</sup> A little paradoxically this element belongs with the arsenal of New Public Management, and therefore is "modern", but on the other hand it was developed by the management guru Peter Drucker (1964) in the 1960s. Norwegians may find detailed presentation of this management tool in Stenberg (1983).



This deviation from the bureaucratic organisation may be considered in two perspectives. One is symbolic and institutional. Operating the school organisation according to such principles the school is "changed"; it becomes "modern", and the principal becomes a "manager". These are heavy symbols of a larger change, about which the teachers and other may be sceptical and they may feel that the school is no longer theirs; they may become estranged. Perhaps such a change is "necessary", but there is at least such a cost in the form of a transition that concerns fundamental aspects of the institution and the way the employee feel about it.

This is to say that the change is not just functional, although of course it is that also, and the functionality of it may be the main reason for its introduction. And that brings up the question of whether the use of MBO in fact is a good idea, whether it "fits" the tasks and the organisation. There are good reasons for believing that this question has not been addressed properly, and as Røvik (1995) has shown, there is a tendency among consultants and managers to choose organisational means on the basis of their reputation or on the symbolic value rather than on their documented merits. Whether MBO and other modern organisational elements, are effective and efficient, we cannot say for sure, but there are reasons to believe that they are introduced for their *symbolic value*. This is not to say that they are useless, but that there is a question of where, in connection with what tasks and positions, these instruments are functioning well and according to their intentions.

### **5.3. A school as two organisations**

Two of the HoDs in both Flekkefjord and Mandal were explicit in their perception of the school organisation as two different systems. One of them saw himself as an administrator of a department and as being part of a management team with the principal as the leader. But then he also saw the various classes as centres of activity that had to be organised. Each class needs a classroom and a timetable; teachers will have to attend the class at prescribed times; there is some cleaning to be done, etc. We have pondered a little upon this conception of a school, and our interpretation of it is sketched below.

We may say that in the first perception there is the school as a management system to be operated, with an organisation built around the institution, including a management, a small administration, a number of teachers who are employed. And then there are the other types of staff and all the service functions and the physical framework to be established and maintained. Within this context the daily operations take place, but one may perceive some lack of continuity, something that is missing or

disconnected, because the classrooms and the activity inside them do not seem to belong to this perspective; it is something of a "black box".

In the school there is a direct line from the administrative structure to the daily operations of the small administration and much of what otherwise is taking place, for instance office work and building maintenance. But this line does not directly affect what happens in the classrooms, even though this is the *core activity* of the school. The classes seem to be operated on the basis of *another organisation*, built from below, and we believe that this "discontinuity" may be captured by the concept of "project organisation".

By definition a project is a task which is unique, limited in time and scope, and for which there is one or a set of quite clear goals. In order to accomplish this task, ideally, activity is organised around it so that its unique features and demands are taken care of, and the people involved will participate over time and according to the needs of the project, while attending other projects that they also are involved in. They also have their employment and position in the "basic organisation", and this gives rise to another set of responsibilities and tasks.

In this way we see the school organisation partly as the *basic organisation*, a structure that is established to provide a context in which it will be possible to have a number of classes, and the central management is responsible up to this point. But then, every year, a specific number of classes with a selection of students and teachers have to be launched, and each of them represents a *project*. While the basic organisation is operated "top-down", the classes are projects that in a way function "bottom-up", but this is only a part of the story. Projects are not necessarily democratic in this sense; they are primarily task-oriented, constructed to make possible the task that is given, more or less specified. This means that a project, in this case a class, ideally should be organised and operated on the basis of an understanding of what characterises this unique task and the conditions under which it is carried out.

In many ways it seems as if this organisational form of project fits well with what one might consider as an ideal for a teacher: That the class be considered unique; that teaching and the activity of the class be designed not according to standard procedures or school rules, but on the basis of what would seem to be most wanted or needed among these specific young people and what would seem to be possible with the given resources, most important of which are of course the teachers who are allocated to it.

We are not saying that the school organisation "is" the "two organisations", but that this is a possible way of seeing it, and that there are some aspects of the situation that seem to fit well with this conception. And there is a choice here, since a given school may decide that this is how they will choose to define their organisation. In that case there are some consequences. The first and most obvious one is that there is a need to discuss the implication of running the classes as a number of projects, and ask oneself if the head of the class really sees him- or herself as a *project manager*, and whether the staff has an adequate *understanding* of what a project is.

Another aspect of this is that the question of whether the HoDs are to be perceived as supporters of a number of project managers and more generally whether the "interface" of the "basic organisation" and the "projects" is sufficiently understood and organised.

A relieving consequence of the perception of the "two organisations" is that it represents an explication of a discontinuity which might make itself felt in the form of structural problems or conflicts in the organisations. If there are two organisations to be operated simultaneously, there will unavoidably be conflicts and difficulties, but they are not a result of somebody not doing their job, but follows from the lack of coherence in the two basic structures. Or we may say that a school organisation never can be operated smoothly, and that it functions according to its characteristics only when there are a number of conflicts. If there are no conflicts, then somebody is not doing his or her job properly, and such a way of understanding the situation may come as a relief to teachers and principals who have blamed themselves for the conflicts they have witnessed or been part of.

#### **5.4. Comments on management in a school organisation**

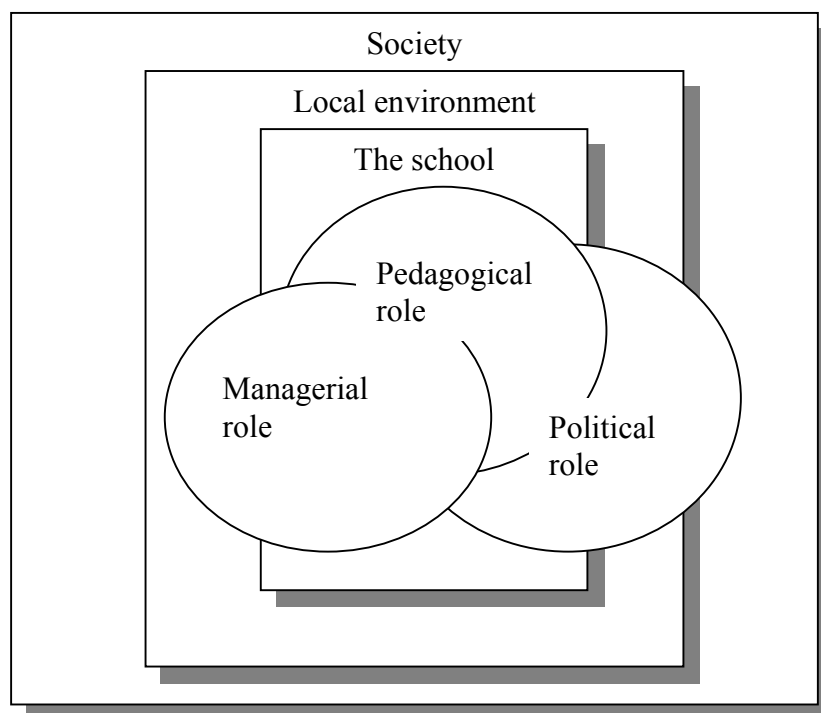
We have seen that a new structure has been introduced in the two schools, including a new set of positions as HoD. One of the intentions is to provide the school with a better or more professional leadership, as these 4-5 new people in "middle management" are to function both as managers heading a department each, but also as members of a management team, led by the principal.

For the principal the new structure will mean that he or she may share the tasks and responsibilities of leadership, and as a consequence of this be able to concentrate upon what may be considered most important, for instance, as suggested by the CDE, the challenge of "pedagogical leadership". This is a somewhat ambiguous term, signifying that one should take a total responsibility for the school as a learning system. This

may very well be a priority, but there is the problem that it is not very easy to see what it means in practical terms.

One of the tasks that the principals have emphasised is the challenge that follows from seeing that the school now is in a market, meaning that it has to compete for not only teachers, but also students. The future of a given school in Norway, and this also applies to Vest-Agder, is that the capacity of the upper secondary school system is larger than the demand, and so some schools have experienced a reduced number of classes. If the number of students in each class goes down, the CDE will reshuffle the distribution of classes, and in this process the small and peripheral schools stand to lose. Political pressure for greater efficiency is translated into securing near maximum of students per class, and in most cases a large school will win over a small one.

*Chart 8: The different roles of the principal*



For the principal this is a central concern, developing courses and studies that attract students, and perhaps even trying to do some lobbying to secure the support of either the CDE or the politicians. By being freed from much of the internal tasks of running the school, the principal may be able to act more effectively externally, and this may turn out to be a part of the job that is becoming ever more important. We may capture the nature of this change by saying that the role of the principal as a politician is

strengthened. Møller (1996:104) refers to the American researcher Coban (1988) and his presentation of what may be considered as the three core roles of the principals: the *pedagogical*, the *managerial* and the *political*. In chart 8 we show how the three roles may be interconnected, according to Coban.

Møller (1996) uses this figure to illustrate the tension between the different tasks of the principals. We would like to point out that the introduction of the political role adds to the complexity. It is not only a question of the principal striking a balance between being a manager and a pedagogical leader, there is also the political role to play, and this indicates activity related to the environment.

The direct concern for the economy also has external relevance, since there is money to be earned by running courses and even doing some consultancy work for business enterprises or the public sector. This has the implication that the schools are redefined as not only providers of education, but as *centres of competence* that should exploit their resources to increase the income. Especially in Mandal this activity has increased, partly owing to the independent AMO centre that functioned there before, and which has been developed into a broader institution of further education.

The change of the role of the principal in the direction of a professional manager, is of course quite dramatic for the holder of the position, but also for the teachers. Of particular importance is the question how they perceive themselves. The change is significant especially for those who came from the previous general schools. Not only are they now members of a comprehensive school with vocational studies and somewhat changed values and modes of operation, but they may even come to see themselves as part of a medium-sized business enterprise.

Secondly, the principal is no longer directly accessible for the teachers. Traditionally, a teacher would seek the principal when in need of talking to someone about professional or personal matters, but now there is in his place the HoD, a colleague as much as a superior. Of course, this person may turn out to be just as able and perhaps even better at communicating, but there is a question of context and culture. A school has always been egalitarian. The teachers belong to the same profession, they have the same tasks and roles, and they work together as colleagues, in principle as equals. There has, of course, always been some who are more popular or clever than others, but the teachers have looked upon themselves as a group of equals, and the principal has been *primus inter pares* - the first among equals. Nominally the leader, but not a manager, and he, for it has very often been a man, was mostly the leader of the

teachers; he was their man. Now he is not; he is the representative of the *employer*, and his most important relations are with external parties.

When the teachers turn to the HoD, he or she may, as said above, find someone who is quite able and hopefully even professionally competent as a leader, but the HoD may also be seen as a colleague. And to talk in confidence and trust with the principal is different from talking to somebody who is a colleague. At least there is a need to accept that the new HoD, recently a colleague, now is a leader and someone to go to. Not the principal, the one who is the head of the school, but one among a number of managers.

For these managers themselves, there is also a challenge, and they are probably those who experience the greatest change with the new structure. They are given a position which is new, and the role is not clear; it has to be developed. Among other things there is the question of whether the department heads are in charge of the department as a work unit, or just, as the case seems to be now, a number of loosely connected individuals.

In this connection an interesting interpretation is available, in that we may perceive the school organisation as a "loosely coupled system". The meaning of this concept is that not all organisations are "connected"; although an organisation formally is "one", it may function as more or less separate entities, and these units do not necessarily "belong" together. The organisation of a local authority may be perceived to function in this way, and even more so a university, and this concept was in fact developed in connection with studies of this kind of organisation, (March & Olsen 1976). It is, of course, not possible to determine whether a given organisation "is" loosely coupled, and this is not a productive question anyway. But in an organisation one may decide to understand it as being loosely coupled, and sometimes such a perspective might help the members develop more appropriate ways of functioning. For instance, the task of a manager may very well be perceived to be quite different if one chooses to see it in the light of the organisation being "loosely coupled". At least the expectations that the manager be able to have it streamlined, would have to be reduced!

The HoDs are expected to participate as managers in a team. This team is responsible to the authorities outside the school, to the CDE, not the colleagues, and it is responsible for more than operating the school as a learning system; the managers are responsible for an enterprise that is required to find its position in a market. One part of this is quite trivial, but still important; the managers have to function as members of an administrative system, and there is a demand for following procedures, being

precise and consistent, being formal and follow rules and regulations. In addition they have to develop their relations to their former colleagues, and perhaps experience that they are no longer "one of the boys". To become a manager is to some extent to lose the intimacy and relaxed relations between members of a group of equals, and to enter a position of authority.

Some of the HoD told us that they were not satisfied with their own ability or opportunity to emphasise pedagogical leadership, and they were of the opinion that there was too little time available. This may be true, but many of them are as a matter of fact new as leaders, and this may provide another understanding of the situation. In a study of school leaders (Madsen & Presthus 2000) it was found that in the first year new principals tended to concentrate on the administrative tasks, but after some time this changed. The administrative tasks became routinised and took less of their time and efforts, and they were able to turn their attention towards pedagogical leadership to a greater extent.

The new managers may take some time to develop their understanding and skills as managers, but they also have to confront a culture where there is little tradition for hierarchy and leadership. In a professional system, as a school may be perceived as, the professional competence is an important basis for action and for status. When there are challenges, these should ideally be met with responses based on professional competence, not on authority. But when there is a professional management, there is also a hierarchy of authority and power. The decisions are taken by the management team consisting of persons in superior positions.

One of the important issues, therefore, is whether schools are able to adjust their attitudes and perception of what constitutes an organisation and of leadership, perhaps even of subordination. For the HoDs this amounts to a challenge of developing their role from that of "administrator" to one of "leadership", but this is not just a matter of personal preference or ability, but of institutional culture and accept. Teachers are not very accustomed to having "leaders", and they may not easily come to accept such a role either. And nobody can be sure that there is a need for it in a school organisation, even though it probably is something that the authorities take for granted.

We have the impression that the teachers accept the new structure, including the HoDs, but without much enthusiasm. Vocational teachers are more critical of the new managers than the others, but why this is so, is not certain. A possible reason, which is a little paradoxical, is that they are more used to management and leadership as part of an organisation, and that they find that the new middle managers do not live up to

what in their eyes is a "manager". More specifically, most of the HoDs are recruited among the general teachers, and they may not have an adequate understanding of the vocational studies, and so they do not function as expected or wanted.

Also, there is the question, mentioned in the previous section, of developing new management skills among the teachers themselves. They are not only to function as teachers in a classroom, but as project managers. Or, more generally, management is becoming a topic in many different ways.

### **5.5. The department structure - some comments**

We might say that departments are established for three basic reasons. One is that the principal is in need of a management team, to have someone to support him or her, or someone to discuss with. Then the members of this team are given formal positions as HoDs so as to provide legitimacy or a reason for their management role.

Secondly, the management of a large institution is demanding, and it is a good idea to involve more people, and they may be called HoDs. Whether they in fact are in charge of a department, is not crucial in this respect; they are holders of management position.

Thirdly, the argument for HoDs is that they are meant to take care of a number of persons, since there are too many employees for the principal to handle by him- or herself. And here is, perhaps, the main aspect of the department structure, namely that it divides the employees into manageable groups of people.

The weakness of a structure as this is that it does not correspond very closely to the work being done, and this may render it liable to negligence. Work organisations are systems that fundamentally are instrumental, meaning that are set up as an instrument that can be used for the purpose of accomplishing some task. And if a given structure does not contribute, the chances are that it will deteriorate and be forgotten.

All the HoDs are working on the basis of rather long and detailed lists of tasks or responsibilities. There is a problem with such lists in that they signify a clarity that is perhaps not realistic. The lists are presented as *functions*, and perhaps this is an appropriate name for them. However, we might also call such a list a specification of what the given person is expected to do; it is a list of *tasks*. Or it is a list of *duties*, so that the person holding the position is told that if something is not done, he or she has failed his or her duties. And, fourthly, it is a list of *responsibilities*; saying something about what the given person is responsible for. Of course, these four words might be



taken to mean much the same, and they probably are, but then it also is a point worth contemplating on, that there are some differences between them, but that this perhaps does not matter much. A possible conclusion is that these lists are not all that important. They represent "something", but what that means more precisely is not known, and this may be quite as well, since there are some difficulties with listing these duties, or tasks, responsibilities or functions.

One of them is the lack of specification as to *means or resources*. The HoD is expected to take these lists seriously, one may presume, but how seriously? How much energy should the HoD use in relation to each of the items on the list? How should he or she actually set about doing anything about them? How much money should be spent to accomplish the given task, duty, function or responsibility?

Another difficulty is that of simply understanding what is referred to by the various items. For instance, one item is "departmental planning". These are plain words, but what do they mean, what is it to act according to them? Is the HoD to do the planning or see to it that it is done? Are the plans meant to concern teaching, staffing, economics, safety - or perhaps everything? Such questions are of course answerable, but the important point is that the lists do not provide these answers, and there may be many opinions as to what would constitute a response to a given question.

What we may conclude is that the lists are quite vague, even though they are so specified and detailed, and they may function deceptively by making us believe that much of the running of the organisation is under control, while perhaps it is not.

One aspect of the departments is the composition of them, or to be more precise, their mix of vocational and general subject teachers on the one hand and of teachers and other categories of personnel on the other. In our two schools they have chosen differently, with a more "pure" structure in Mandal than in Flekkefjord, as shown in the table below.

We see that the structure in Flekkefjord is "mixed" in two ways: two or three departments consist of both teachers and other categories of personnel, and only one department is purely vocational. In Mandal departments are either general or vocational, and four of them purely comprise teachers, while the fifth contains "other personnel". It is possible to speculate that the structure in FSS may contribute to "integration" in the school, but we do not have any indication that this has been the effect or that the degree of integration is any less in Mandal. However, there are

reasons to assume that structure does have an effect, and that these two ways of choosing may come to mean something in the longer run.

*Table 6: Categories of personnel belonging to departments*

<i>Flekkefjord SS</i>	<i>Mandal SS</i>
Dep 1) Teachers in Arts, crafts and design, language and social sciences Dep 2) Teachers in Science, business, construction and building, ICT, including system responsible. Dep 3) Teachers in Electrical and mechanical trade studies, janitors and cleaning personnel Dep 4) Teachers in gymnastics, pedagogues engaged in specially adapted teaching, work therapists.	Dep AF 1. Teachers in General studies Dep AF 2. Teachers in General studies Dep YF 1. Teachers in Trade studies Dep YF 2. Teachers in Trade studies Dep Gyda. Administrative staff, secretaries, janitors, cleaning personnel and cafeteria employees.

Previously, we have argued that school organisations are bureaucratic to some extent. The descriptions of the positions of the HoDs certainly is supportive of this, and in this connection we may claim that one effect of the detailed lists is a stability which may also be called rigidity. When elements in the organisation are prescribed with precision, the given patterns represent a conservative contribution, in the sense that they continue until someone takes the initiative to change them. And the insistence that tasks "belong" to a given HoD may of course provide a certain clarity, but sometimes it also means that things become more complicated and take time. For instance, when there is a need for substitutes for a teacher who has fallen ill, this should be handled by the one HoD who is responsible for these matters, but perhaps it could be solved better and more quickly if the ones directly concerned acted promptly. Then of course the procedures might be a little deviant, and the administration would perhaps not be informed properly, but the problem might be solved. The question again is what are the pros and cons of the bureaucratic systems and where are they more or less adequate?

### **5.6. A new organisation - organisational change**

Our two schools have been through a period of organisational change, and their organisations are "new". We shall look into this process of change a little, just to consider the implications and the possible meaning or understanding of organisations being changed.

First of all, let us say that reorganisation has been going on for some years in the schools, depending upon what is included in this concept. There was a fusion of former independent institutions; there has been a few educational reforms; the school buildings have been reconstructed; there is an ongoing attempt at changing the system of negotiation on salaries; the system of teaching and learning is being reconsidered, and, lastly, there has been a new department structure. All of these changes have implications on the organisation, but we shall concentrate on the last one, since somehow it is most directly experienced as a "new organisation". There are a few aspects to be considered in this connection.

Secondly, an organisation is not just the structures, but also comprises processes and behaviour. The "new organisation" may, in this perspective, not be very interesting, for even if a set of departments have been established with corresponding heads and changes in the distribution of tasks and responsibility, not very much may have been affected. In fact, the behaviour may continue as before, leaving the change ineffectual. We are not saying that this is so in these cases, only that this is something to bear in mind and to consider before a change is introduced. For instance, the new HoDs are expected to carry out systematic talks at given intervals with the staff in their departments. This is not yet fully implemented, and even if there are many staff members who have these talks, it is an open question how this is done and what is the content of them.

Basically, this difficulty of knowing what a reorganisation is coming to, is an indication of the limits to the powers of the management, but also with what is considered as constituting the organisation. Very often one refers to new systems and structures as the organisation, and these may quite easily be changed by drawing new charts and lines of authority, while the actual changes may take a long time. Management or the authorities may demand a "new organisation", but what they are able to implement is the formal systems and structures, and then they have to work with the employees for the realities of behaviour to catch up with what they have been planning. We may say that the important part of a change is what comes after it has been introduced, and here is a paradox of organisational change: when the authorities are active in introducing change, their very activity may serve to alienate the employees who are to carry it out.

This means that a change is always a process over time, and that the members of an organisation have some power over what is in reality implemented. One may in fact argue that only those changes that are *acceptable* to the employees will be realised. For the management this means that they should not contemplate other changes than

those that will be accepted, and this, again, depends also on the *understanding* of the planned changes.

And here is an important aspect of any new structure. It is easy and seemingly obvious to anybody what the "new organisation" is about; it is shown on the charts. But then there are further implications, as presented in, say, a document where the arguments for the new organisation are given and where the change is elaborated. Perhaps these documents are not read by everybody, and even if people do read them, they will not necessarily agree with or accept them. So what is implemented is a version that is somewhat different from what was planned, and this is always the case for organisational change; there is one formal version and one which is put into practice. And there is a symbolic change and a functional one. The personnel talks of the HoDs are quite clearly important in a symbolic way, conveying the idea that "management cares". Whether they are in fact able to function in this manner - or accepted as such managers - is an open question. In the two schools there are differences of opinion, as some find it a good idea that the HoDs have taken on personnel responsibility, while others are more sceptical.

A further complication is that very often there are *many changes*, and at the start of this section we have mentioned a few, like for instance the system of negotiations over the salaries. This is on paper a separate change, and in a way has nothing to do with the department structure. In reality the two appear at the same time, and their combined effect is not known. This means another limit to the powers of the authorities, since they may introduce a number of changes, and they may have quite clear intentions with every one of them. The problem is that they are not able to predict or control the combined effect, the total outcome, so to say.

What we are saying here is that organisational change is in principle *unpredictable*, and that the intentions and design of various new elements are perhaps of lesser importance than one should think. The "outcome" is decided by the processes taking place over time, and the important thing is how the employees are reacting to and implementing the various changes by their own behaviour. In this connection it is also worth remembering that "reorganisation" takes place as de facto outcomes of other types of changes. The new building structures at our two schools quite obviously had organisational impact, bringing people together across borders of different types, and functioning in an integrative manner.

In this perspective we may say that perhaps the local activity in relation to new ways of teaching and learning, and in relation to the increased emphasis on further

education, is a very important contribution to organisational change. The reason for this is primarily that such local activity engages teachers directly, and it concerns the "core activity", and as such it may be more potent than charts of new structures and imposed new ways of working from above. Also, local activity is a good thing in itself, contributing to development activity and counteracting the tendency that day-to-day functioning dominates, and it will bring teachers together, so that to a lesser extent they work in isolation.

The main ideas that we have presented in this section are that organisational change is a process that involves many aspects at the same time; that it is quite unpredictable; that the employees perhaps are more decisive for the final outcome than often understood; and that the power of management in bringing about change is both limited and may turn back on them. The very active and resolute manager may find that the efforts are counterproductive.

### **5.7. Realities of school autonomy**

In this section we take as a starting point that the various schools are supposed to function quite autonomously, and we would like to look into the realities of this intention. Have they have been fulfilled or not, and which factors seem to have a bearing on this aspect of the functioning organisation.

The formal picture is that the principals operate the schools under the supervision of the CDE, who is under the authority of the county and the ME, and that authority has been delegated to increase the degree of autonomy on the part of the principal. The question is what the realities are.

Such questions are notoriously difficult, and thorough studies would be needed to come to definite conclusions. We can only present a number of arguments and observations. Another difficulty is that there is no firm point of reference in this matter, and our informants most likely refer to what has been changed. The experiences they communicate most probably reflect the *increases of autonomy*, not the absolute picture.

Autonomy in an organisation is always limited; otherwise there would be no organisation. This means that there is always a question of the *degree of autonomy* for an organisational unit or a position, and this degree is dependent upon many factors.

First, there is the *formal system*, which grants rights and authority and spells out which laws, rules, and regulations are to be observed. A part of this system is the lines

of authority, stating the *rights of instruction* granted to the superiors and conversely the subordination of the position in question. On the other hand, there are also the formal authorities or discretion *granted to the unit and its management*, which in a school are vested in the position of the principal, providing the legal right to make decisions in certain situations or matters, and giving legitimacy to independent action.

In addition to the formal rights of a school, its ability to function is dependent upon the *resources*, both financial, human and material that are allocated to it, and then comes, of course, also the actual *availability* of these resources. For instance, the qualified people working in an organisation do not always function to their full potential.

Finally, a unit, such as a school, will not achieve autonomy unless it manages to function well *as an organisation*. Independence is dependent upon the ability of the management and the staff to utilise resources so that the goals of the organisation are realised in a way that they see as important or right. The unit has to be *managed properly*, and that means several things, for instance that it is organised in an appropriate way, that there is a supportive culture among the staff, that the level of conflict is not too high, etc.

Most directly this means that the *actual autonomy* of a school is not just a matter of a formal decentralisation or of granting the rights of the principal to act independently. It is also a question of whether the resources are allocated so that action is possible, and whether the principal has been able to make the organisation function so that it in fact operates in ways that are in accordance with the local priorities.

At the outset there is no doubt that schools are allowed to function at the discretion of the principal to a certain extent, and thus are given a measure of independence or a degree of autonomy. For instance, the *budget* does not specify in detail how the money is to be spent, and schools are even allowed some right to generate local income to supplement the grants. *Teachers and other staff* may be employed at the discretion of the principal, both as regards their number and the selection of who is to be preferred among the applicants. Also the principal may propose *courses and studies* that he or she considers interesting or promising, and the *internal structure and management* is to some degree open for local adaptation. Taken together, there are realities in the claim that the principal is the manager of a rather autonomous institution.

The most important factor that might infringe on the autonomy of the schools, is the CDE, who is formally the superior of all the principals in the county, and being herself under the authority of the county council. Thus there is a rather heavy hierarchy above the principal, the staff at the CDE consists of app. 25 people. These resources are used for guiding, controlling and following-up the 16 upper secondary schools. This does not necessarily mean that the principals are in reality subordinated to a great extent, and according to the opinions expressed at the schools, the staff at the CDE seem to be hard-working and utilising the resources well, and also that the CDE and her staff represent a necessary and resourceful unit that serves the schools.

However, we may also look into the role of the CDE and her staff to see *what kind of activity* they are involved in and how they in practice relate to the schools. This will give a picture of the actual behaviour, which of course is important in trying to understand the relationships and the actual autonomy of the schools. We shall present a rather summarised list topics of relevance for this question. Please observe that this list is not comprehensive, but is meant as a number of indicators as to the realities. In the longer run it might be an idea for the schools themselves to develop and discuss such a list and to come up with their own interpretations of it:

- The budget is based on an input of data from the schools, which are used to calculate a number of sums of money intended for use for various purposes on the basis of a set of indicators. These part sums are then added to constitute the total budget. However, within the limits of the total sum, the principal is quite free to dispose of the money.
- There are aspects of the budgetary system that in reality makes for a quite detailed control. For instance a certain amount of money is allocated to "administration", and this varies according to the number of students and teachers from one year to the next. The school does not need to follow this up by making changes of the staff, but if it does not, there may be less money for other purposes. There is an indirect control in this.
- On the other hand, in some cases the autonomy is greater than the formal system allows for. At Mandal upper secondary school one of the studies is allocated so small resources that the principal may decide to terminate it. This is formally not a decision that belongs to her, but to the county council. But the reality is that if the principal is reluctant, and perhaps even outright negative, to continue to provide this course, the council may yield; the councillors understand that decisions that are forced upon the principal may turn out to be of little value.
- There are certain elements of both a decrease and an increase in the economic freedom. Locally generated extra income provides more freedom to act, while

earmarking of sums for specific purposes limits the autonomy, for instance when extra money is allocated to IT equipment. Also, any money saved in a given year is not automatically transferred to the budget for next year.

- For the staff most of the conditions and terms of employment are given by national laws, regulations and agreements, and the CDE is responsible for ensuring that they are implemented.
- The CDE assembles information of the plans for classes and studies at every school in the county, and proposes a plan for all the schools. The budget is a result of this plan, and may limit the number of classes planned, with direct implications for the number of teachers and other staff in the given school.
- The CDE proposes and co-ordinates certain activities of interest to the schools, so as to utilise resources better, like organising teacher training in subject areas that are small at each school.
- The CDE has an obligation to ensure that standards are high and the same across schools, for instance as regards exams.
- Every school has to submit an annual report every year, disclosing very many aspects of the operations of the school. Also there are numerous reports at intervals during the year.
- The CDE takes initiatives and proposes measures to ensure that processes of development are continued at the schools.
- The CDE has a basic responsibility for the operations in all schools, and though much may be delegated, there is no doubt that CDE both controls, follows up and, perhaps rather seldom, directly instructs the principals to act.
- The CDE, in co-operation with the CEO, is a link between the Ministry and the schools, being responsible for the implementation of projects and plans as elements in a national educational policy, for instance by providing money for training in IT.
- The county council has decided to try out new ways of providing adapted teaching, especially in relation to the weakest of the students. The schools are trying out alternative ways, but the reality of their free choice is limited, primarily for economic reasons.
- The reorganisation into a structure of departments was designed by the CDE and proposed to the schools in such a way that they probably felt it as an instruction. Even for details, like the title of the second in command, the CDE overruled the principal.

Taken together, these items indicate that the position of the CDE and those institutions that are above her are quite strong, and that schools are quite effectively controlled, directed and designed by these higher authorities.



Some of this central dominance has to do with resources or economy. For instance, adapted teaching is very costly per student, and the council may interfere with the operations of the schools to try to cut costs in this area. There is a very real danger that the drive to save money imposes on the professional autonomy of the pedagogues; they are not free to design the pedagogical system at their own discretion.

Also there is no doubt that many of the teachers and perhaps also the management feel that they are being quite closely controlled, especially in the form of information flow. How this is interpreted, is not certain, and there is probably an attitude of ambivalence, as expressed in this quotation: "The central bureaucracy gets to know everything, but we are independent".

Another ambivalence may be captured by the observation that the CDE is supporting the schools, which is considered a good thing, but at the same time this central institution is taking some responsibility away from the schools. In reality the CDE may be seen as providing a direction to their development on their behalf, so to say. Still, on the whole there is a positive attitude towards the CDE and the other authorities in question, and this may be understood as an expression of the way the schools perceive the CDE, the educational system and its history.

The principals may be considered as having a basic choice between seeing the CDE as the *superior* who controls and tries to reduce their budgets and increase the demands for efficiency. Or, they may see her as a *resource*, both as a partner in their fight to improve their position, as a co-ordinator and as a resource of competence that may be utilised by the schools. That the CDE is also a superior is of course important, but she may be more of a help than a threat, since the schools realise that they are at the mercy of the Ministry and the county politicians. They are in need of someone to help them in their fight against the other public sectors who want their share of the budgets. And perhaps the traditions of the educational sector contribute in the same direction. The schools always have been under a central authority, and there is a culture for accepting that many factors are decided centrally.

This is perhaps not just a matter of obedience and subservience in this culture, but also a source of strength. The schools in Norway are part of a national institution, and by accepting guidelines and politics from the centre, the single school, as a representative of the larger, national institution, is both protected and defined as belonging in the institutionalised educational field. By accepting the rule of the CDE, the schools are

free from interferences from others, and the CDE is acceptable as one of their own, part of the culture and with loyalties towards the institution. So, somewhat paradoxically, the subordination to the CDE is a way for the single school of retaining a quite autonomous position.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### *Introduction*

In the previous chapters we have concentrated on the substance of the two schools and on "organisation". Now, in this last chapter we shall comment briefly upon the study and its possible value as a research paper and as a document that may provide some understanding of "school organisation", and not just as something of interest to those immediately concerned with these two schools in the county of Vest-Agder.

We shall do this by looking into the question of *how typical* the two schools may be, not just in our own region, but also in Norway. Then we will try to say something about the implications of this, whether the claims and conclusions are more generally applicable or not.

This discussion is continued in the next section, where we pose more directly the question of the possible value of the present study for other schools, not only in our own country, but also in *other cultures*, and more specifically in the context of Latvia. Not because this country is so special, but since this work is meant to be used there for comparative purposes. Then we go on to comment briefly upon our own study and its limitations.

Lastly, we try so sum up - very briefly - by proposing a number of issues for discussion in the schools. This is strictly as we see it and based on what we have been a little intrigued by; it is not an objective conclusion about what is important.

### *How typical are the two schools in Norway?*

We have visited two schools in Vest-Agder, and they are at the same time typical and special. They are *typical* in that they represent two schools that belong in the field of education and are very "normal". They are for instance not experimental, they do not have a very special history, they are not known for extreme results, neither outstanding nor very poor.

But they are also somewhat *special*. First of all, they were selected by the CDE, and there were of course some reasons for choosing these two. As far as we understand it, the two were chosen primarily for being comprehensive and middle- sized schools. In the largest city in the county - Kristiansand - there are no comprehensive schools, and therefore the CDE had to limit herself to what could be found in small towns. In reality, there were three candidates, out of which one was engaged in other projects, and so there does not seem to have been much choice. In addition, as we see it, the CDE most likely would be interested in letting us study schools that functioned well and from which she did not expect any negative surprises. And she also probably would like us to come to schools where the principals were both competent and interested in this kind of study. Our conclusion is that we have studied two schools whose mode of functioning is "not below average".

The more "objective" aspects of these criteria are that the two schools are located in the region of Sørlandet, they are of a medium to large size and they belong in small towns. On all these scores there is something to say. *Sørlandet* is a region in Norway known, rightly or wrongly, to be "different". People here are more religious than in the rest of the country; they drink less; they are not making much noise about things, and they prefer a quiet and somewhat sedate way of behaving. If this is true, it might for instance mean that the level of conflict in the schools is lower than in other parts of the country, or that the conflicts do not easily come to the surface.

FSS is a medium sized school, while MSS is above average. The *size* probably is of some importance, not least as to the way things are organised and the amount of resources available for management and support activities. Perhaps even teachers and candidates for management positions prefer larger institutions, so that there is a tendency that well qualified teachers apply for positions in such schools?

This tendency is perhaps even more pronounced as regards the *location* in the region. The peripheral schools, that also tend to be small, may have greater difficulties of recruitment than those situated in towns or cities. And then there is a difference as to the students and their culture. We were been told, at the CDE, that if a school in Kristiansand, with a population of 70,000, had been included in our very small sample, this would have had a significant effect upon our study compared to what we found in the two small towns of Mandal and Flekkefjord (13,000 and 6,000 people respectively). About the exact impact of this dimension of size, we know little, but it is, we are led to understand, of significance that we have studied the schools in these two communities and not in a smaller or a larger one.

Our conclusion is that our observations may not be generalised without caution; we present a study of two distinct schools, not of "Norwegian upper secondary schools".

### *Lessons for other schools - even in other countries?*

There is potentially something to learn from such a study in many ways. One of them is to observe the way things have been structured and organised in these two schools, as a source of reference, inspiration and ideas. On the other hand, there is a danger in copying uncritically organisational solutions from one context to another. In fact, it is strictly speaking not even possible, since only the formal arrangements may be given the design, while the functioning organisation always will express the history of its making and the local context. This means that *learning* about organisations probably should be considered as a process that must be primarily *local and unique*. The experience that others have gained and the solutions they have attempted and even succeeded with, may be of interest, but also come to nothing if they are copied. They may even become stumbling blocks if they are not understood in the light of underlying theoretical constructs and put into perspective. Organisations probably need to be developed as a more or less continuous learning process, and there are no definite answers, and there is much need of learning-by-doing. This learning process, hopefully, may be stimulated by studying what others have attempted, but local discussions and consciousness are needed in order to benefit from such input.

Another possible source of learning is the kind of list that we give at the end of this chapter. Here we have tried to summarise some of the topics and issues that we have found to be the most challenging or intriguing ones, and possibly the staff in the two schools may find it interesting to discuss and analyse these matters. And we consider such a list, even though it is put together on the basis of the observations in just two organisations, to serve as a useful reminder of what issues are likely to represent difficulties or challenges for others, even in other countries.

But here is a question that we have little to say about, namely the possibility of transfer of experience or learning *across cultures* and systems. When we look at what we have written in this report, very much of it expresses or is based on the Norwegian context: laws, institutions, agreements and regulations, educational policy, organisational concepts and thinking, more general culture, etc, etc. In a way it seems as if everything is interlinked and thus that every claim and proposition is valid only within the given country. However, these differences are perhaps not so important after all, and many things are equal. Young people, teaching and organising are phenomena that are at least comparable and therefore understandable from one setting to another, we hope. And, most important, when experiences in one country is

summarised and presented as in this report, it may be read and commented upon by people from another culture. In these discussions, an understanding may be developed that not only makes sense of the material for the "foreigners", but that may even provide new learning for the "insiders".

### *A few comments on limits of our study of school organisations*

Our own study has been limited in two ways, both as regards the number of institutions visited and the amount of work done. We have been very concentrated upon the empirical data from the two schools and have spent very little time on theory and other research. In this we have been true to our contract, but still, this is a serious limitation.

But also for the fieldwork, much would have been needed in addition to what we have done in order to have a sound basis for analysis and conclusions. We have concentrated very much on schools as local organisations, and only in a limited way considered the larger field of education. Such a wider scope would have taken us on to the national institutions: the national politics of education, the Ministry, the unions, the relations to the universities, etc.

Upper secondary schools are quite complex organisations, but in some ways they are simple; they are not very large, measured by the number of staff; they are public institutions not much exposed to the market; and their "core activity" is centred around "learning and teaching" and as such limited in scope. However, there are changes taking place, and schools are becoming more complex, entering into a market more exposed to competition, and upper secondary institutions may be considered as being concerned with "competence" as a wider concept than "teaching". They may develop into something different from what they are now in several ways, by becoming not just public institutions providing teaching and learning for youth, but partly private or autonomous *institutions of competence*; they will be, and already are to some extent, targeting adults as well as youth, involving in further as well as basic education; and they will be marketing consultancy work as well as teaching. A full study of upper secondary institutions would have to include these possible developments and the conditions for and consequences of them.

### *Issues that we have found to be of special interest*

The items and issues mentioned below are strictly expressions of what we as researchers in this study have come to consider interesting. This opinion may not be shared by those who are working in the schools or their institutional surroundings, and if this is so, we certainly do not claim that they are mistaken! We present this list as a

kind of invitation, saying that here are some questions that one might find challenging to consider.

*1) The organisational understanding in the school organisations.*

Perhaps the "organisational consciousness" might be an issue to discuss and develop in the schools. In organisations it is not unusual to find that the staff is not normally engaged in reflections upon the structures and systems they are part of, and there may be something to gain by increasing the level of consciousness in these matters. What are the perceptions of the staff, primarily the teachers, of their own organisation, and what do they consider as adequate measures in order to make it function better?

*2) How embedded is a bureaucratic way of thinking?*

More specifically, the bureaucratic traits and measures are perhaps considered as something fundamentally "right" in the educational field, indicating that the bureaucratic perspective on organisations is rather dominant and pervasive. This seems to apply to the management with their belief in defining the various elements of the organisation clearly, and also the unions, with their emphasis on precisely defined and quantified work loads and procedures. Whether the teachers also think along these lines, is something that we do not know, and it might be an idea to try to look into this matter.

*3) The attitude towards "organisation"*

Teachers are at the same time autonomous individuals and members of a collective, and it might be an idea to sort out the kind of balance to strike between these two somewhat contradicting aspects. Possibly, teachers have a certain attitude of ambivalence towards leadership and management on the one hand, and towards organisation and co-operation on the other?

*4) Does "management" belong to a school?*

The attitude towards management is maybe also a little ambivalent, in the sense that it may not be seen as belonging to a school. Perhaps it does not, but then the implications of this would need to be explicated. There is a certain danger that the principals and the CDE carry on with management development while the staff finds this to be a strange and not very welcome activity.

*5) Pedagogical management*

Pedagogical leadership (or management) is a key concept, and there are opinions in the two schools that there is too little of it, perhaps because there is not enough time allocated to it. At the same time there is perhaps not a very precise or shared

understanding of what is meant by this concept. We believe that it would be an idea to try to discuss possible meanings and, not least, implications of the concepts that are defined.

*6) The interface between "two organisations"*

We have proposed that the school be perceived as two organisations, and that the head teachers of the classes may be seen as project managers. Whether this is a promising line of thought is not certain, but one could speculate on the possible implications of it. For instance, a consciousness would need to be developed among the teachers of this understanding and of their own functioning; another that the "interface" between the school bureaucracy and the various "projects" would have to be discussed, and the HoDs would have to redefine their role accordingly. There is a connection here to the item above on pedagogical management.

*7) The departments and the role of the HoD*

The structure of departments and HoDs is quite new, and it is reasonable to assume that it has not found its final form, and we are not even quite certain what the departments are meant to be, and what is the role of the HoD. Perhaps these questions have been posed and tentative answers given, but they may be discussed more explicitly, we believe.

*8) The new role of the teacher - and a new school*

Traditionally, teachers in the general studies have been lecturing in classrooms and have taken much responsibility for the learning of the students. New ways of working are being developed, and the consequences may be that schools will have to be reorganised quite fundamentally both as regards physical structures and formal structures. There are indications of such changes, and this is probably the main topic within the broader issue of "school organisation" in the years to come. The implication may be quite dramatic for students as well as teachers, and a "new organisation" is a likely outcome.



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## APPENDICES



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## DESIGN FOR AN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY OF A UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

### **1. Background**

Our intention is to carry out an organisation study in two upper secondary schools in Norway, for practical reasons in the Agder Counties. The two of us from Agder University College will do the actual research, but we shall be in close contact with the principals of the schools in question as well as the Director of the National Education Office in Agder.

The study will be focused on the school organisation, with a certain emphasis on the role and work modes of the leadership. "Organisation" should be perceived as an encompassing concept, and we are aiming at providing a rather broad picture of how the school organisations are structured and function. Perhaps the study best can be described by saying something about what it *does not* include. We are not going to study the techno-economic system or the concrete work processes related to these aspects, other than to provide an adequate background for our main topics, and the same goes for the administrative routines and procedures. Nor are we trying to describe the pedagogical activity as such, that is to say how the pedagogical thinking and principles are converted into practical action, and we shall not study the school as a society where the pupils and the teachers spend a considerable part of the days together. Our main aim is to describe and try to understand how the given school work as a organisation, primarily as regards its core activity: that a number of teachers work together to provide for a learning environment for the pupils, with a local management team and in interaction with a number of external actors.

The primary research mode will be qualitative, with an emphasis on interviews, supplied with documents. The interviews will be based on a guide, which in its turn will be developed from the following list of topics. This list will be discussed both with the Director of the National Education Office in Agder and the principals of the selected schools. Reactions from our Latvian counterparts also are of interest. Interviewees will be the principals and other members of the management team, representatives of the pupils' council and teacher associations, administrative officers and possibly some of the teachers.

On the basis of the collected information a report will be written for each school, or these substudies will be chapters in a comprehensive report, which is to be finished well ahead of the scheduled conference in January 2001.

The local school studies will take place in August/September. The selections of the two schools to be studied more closely will be the responsibility of the Director of the National Education Office in Agder. For us as researchers a main challenge will be to describe the two schools as distinct specimens, and to avoid subsuming them under the general picture of the Norwegian upper secondary school system. We are not aiming at painting a picture of the average or representative upper secondary school, but are concentrating on each of the two entities as unique cases to be described and understood in their own right.

The two studies may be supplemented by more superficial descriptions of the other three schools to be included in our sample, and which are to participate in the cooperative project with Latvia. After having collected our data from the two main cases, a questionnaire may be sent to the others. They will be asked to answer a number of descriptive questions, enabling us to form an opinion as to how representative our more detailed studies are. These supplementary studies also may be of interest to the Latvian schools which are to participate.

The topics that are listed below are quite numerous, and it would be quite a large project if all of them were to be covered fully. However, some of the questions on the various sublists are overlapping, so that the total number of questions to be asked is not as many as it might seem. And even if the lists are very long, and not all topics will be fully answered, we believe that it is of some interest to have a list that provide a total picture of what we would have liked to have covered. In this way we say something about the character of our coming study, while we have to accept that for practical reasons we have to reduce our ambitions a little.

It is not just the practical limitations, however, that will make us eliminate some topics and prioritise some at the expense of others. We may, during the course of the study, make a point of evaluating the various proposed items, and form an opinion as to which topics are more or less central in order to understand a school of this type. This also may be a challenge to the participating schools; they may also find it of interest to try to answer the question:

*which kind of information is of interest to someone who wants to describe and understand the functioning of a given school organization? (There is much to be learned for all here!)*

## **2. Some topics of interest**

### **1. The School:**

The intention with this cluster is to provide a set of variables which describe the framework for the activity in the given school; the terrain in which the relevant actors move.



- The number of pupils, teachers, and other categories of personnel, and also their distribution across background variables like gender, age, and, for the employees, also education and work experience.
- The curricula, the level and specialisation's offered to the pupils. Also the criteria for admittance.
- The buildings, number of rooms and their use, the available areas for outdoor activities.
- Equipment
- Budgets and economics foundations
- "Owners", governance structure, "external" representations in this connection.
- Organisational charts
- Positions, their corresponding tasks and salary levels.
- A broad outline of the history of the school, with an emphasis on recent decisions or events that would seem to have been of importance for the development of the school and its organisation.

## *2. External relations:*

Here we would like to obtain an understanding of who are the important external actors or institutions for the school. We should try to have the schools confirm who in reality are of importance, so that we avoid drawing conclusions on the basis of what we already believe that we know or what the formalities seem to indicate.

There may be a problem here in that the difference between "external" and "internal" actors is not always clear. For instance, both "parents" and "pupils" are at the same time inside and outside the organisation, while the teacher associations may make themselves felt both as national organisations and as local cells.

- Who are the external actors and in which way do they have an influence on the school. We are here thinking of the Regional Director of Education, the County Council, the Local Government Council, Teachers Associations, The Ministry, "the local environment", whatever that may be in addition to the Council.
- In which areas do these actors have an influence, and which types of questions are taken up with each of them or decided upon on the basis of an understanding with them.
- What are the premises which to some extent are laid down by these actors.

## *3. The Organisation*

Here we would like to go a little deeper into some aspects of the structuring and functioning of the organisation. When going into such questions we have to expect that some of these topics may be presented differently by the various informants, owing to the fact that things have different meaning in dependence of the position and experience of the given person. It is important that we are sensitive to such variation.

- What are important factors that have to be taken as given (the selection and standard of the pupils, the curricula, rules and regulations, budgets, building structures, given limitations of various types, externally given premises, etc.)

This is to say, what is that has to be accepted, and how important are these factors for the running of the school.

- This school as distinct in relation to others, is it special in any way, and why.
- Which aspects of the running of the school is optional, what are the areas of real autonomy as to the organisation.
- Main goals and criteria for the running of the school. What is it that is considered important criteria when evaluating the daily operations, and what are the aims that one is supposed to try to attain.
- What are, in the opinions of the managers and others, the main challenges, problems, possibilities and limitations for the school.
- What is it that, in the opinions of the managers and others, might be done differently or that could have been handled differently formerly at this school.
- Reorganisation and reforms: What has been attempted, what are the experiences, what is it possible to consider or attempt to change? We are thinking not just about the changes or reforms that have been imposed from above, but also and most importantly on the reorganisations and reforms that have been attempted locally. We are looking for the “local experience”, not the official or national evaluation of possible reforms in the past.
- “Quality of school”. What does this concept imply, what is meant by “quality” at this school. What kind of measures have been taken to improve the quality here?
- Which other goals than “quality of school” is important?
- What do the concepts of “organisation” and “management” represent here? What are the main dimensions of these concepts, and what is meant by or are the criteria for “good organisation” and “good management”?

#### *4. The Work Environment*

- The general picture: what characterises the work environment at the school, positive and negative aspects.
- Some concrete data: absence for various categories of personnel, work related illnesses and their distribution on categories.
- Conflicts and conflict areas, both as regards locations and topics.
- Formalised work on environment issues: topics and the way they have been handled.
- Relations between the management and the other employees. What may be said about it and what are important issues.
- Relations between the teachers and the pupils. What may be said about it and what are important issues.
- Relations between the teachers. What may be said about it and what are important issues.

#### *5. The Management*

- More detailed about management positions and their content: tasks, responsibilities, areas of competence or authority.
- More detailed about the managers and their qualifications.
- More detailed about the employment process of managers: criteria and procedures.

- Work mode of the management team. Which tasks are important, who are tasking care of them, by which procedures are decisions taken, and what kind of role is played by external actors, if any.
- Formalised meetings and other forms of organised interaction internally amongst the managers and for the organisation at large.
- Relations to the union, both locally and as regards the national associations.
- Relations to the pupils and their parents.
- Formalised participation on the part of parents, pupils, teachers and other categories of employees.
- The role of the principal and others in leadership positions: what are they, why this content, what are options or alternatives if any, what are the scope of expectations felt and what are limitations as to the actual roles played.

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Kjellbjørg Auestad, Acting County Director of Education  
and two of her staff: Oddvar Håland, Head of Department  
Terje Andersen, Head of Department

Tore Berntsen, Head of Personnel and Organisation, Aust-Agder County

Per Birkeland, Principal, Flekkefjord Upper secondary School  
Karl-Erik Rudolfsen, Head of Department, Flekkefjord Upper secondary School  
Anne Marie Njerve, Head of Department, Flekkefjord Upper secondary School  
Brit Versland, Head of Department, Flekkefjord Upper secondary School  
Liv Haugland, Head of Department, Flekkefjord Upper secondary School  
Kåre Eie, Head of the union board (Lærerforbundet)  
Members of the student council.

Helga Ahlsen, Principal, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Tor Arvid Gundersen, Deputy / Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Ellen Johanne Skofteland, Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Arne Tobiassen, Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Marie Helene Nørgaard, Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Jean Perre Adriaenssens, Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Åse-Lill Kimestad, Head of Department, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Hilde Witsø, Head of the union board (Norsk Lærerslag)  
Kirsten Møll Birkeland, Office Manager, Mandal Upper secondary School  
Members of the student council.