

# Leadership in Change

The Danish Public School Reform Anno 2014



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# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	4
1.1 Problem Area.....	4
1.2 Research Question.....	7
1.2.1 Working Questions.....	7
1.3 Clarification of Concepts.....	7
1.3.1 Leader.....	7
1.3.2 Organisational Change.....	8
1.3.3 The Reform.....	8
1.4 Delimitations.....	8
1.5 Reading Guide.....	10
1.6 Introduction of Cases.....	11
Chapter 2 - Methods.....	12
2.1 Philosophy of Science.....	12
2.1.1 Ontological Approach.....	12
2.1.2 Epistemological Approach.....	13
2.1.3 Hermeneutics.....	13
2.2 Choice of Theory.....	14
2.2.1 Mintzberg's leadership roles.....	14
2.2.2. Culture Theory.....	15
2.2.3 Theory U.....	15
2.3 Research Strategy.....	17
2.4 Choice of Cases.....	18
2.5 Data Collection.....	19
2.5.1 Interviews.....	19
2.5.2 Interview Guide.....	20
2.5.3 Interview Ethics.....	20
2.5.4 Recording and Transcription.....	21
2.5.5 Credibility.....	21
2.5.6 Limitations.....	22
2.6 Project Design.....	22
Chapter 3 - Theory.....	25
3.1 Mintzberg's 10 Leadership Roles.....	25
3.1.1 Interpersonal Roles.....	25
3.1.2 Informational Roles.....	26
3.1.3 Decisional Roles.....	26
3.2 Organisational Culture.....	27
3.2.1 Culture in Organisations.....	27
3.2.2 Leadership and Culture.....	29
3.2.3 Impact of Culture on Change.....	30
3.3 Theory U.....	31
3.3.1 The Phases of the U-Process.....	33
Chapter 4 - Leadership Styles.....	36
4.1 Increase in Formal Authority.....	36
4.2 Leader A.....	37
4.2.1 Managing and Motivating Employees.....	37
4.2.2 Implementing the Reform.....	39
4.2 Leader B.....	40

4.3 Leader C.....	43
4.3.1 Marketing a School.....	43
4.3.2 Distributing Resources.....	44
4.4 Conclusion.....	45
Chapter 5 - Culture Analysis.....	47
5.1 Culture A.....	47
5.2 Culture B.....	50
5.3 Culture C.....	52
5.4 Conclusion.....	54
Chapter 6 - Organisational Change.....	56
6.1 Leader A.....	56
6.2 Leader B.....	58
6.3 Leader C.....	59
6.4 Conclusion.....	61
Chapter 7 - Discussion.....	63
Chapter 8 - Conclusion.....	67
Chapter 9 - Reflections.....	69
Bibliography.....	71
Books.....	71
Journal Articles.....	72
Book chapter.....	72
Webpages.....	72

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 Problem Area

“Every company must change and innovate to survive” (Daft et al. 2014: 419). This is not a shocking statement when taking into consideration the rate at which consumer interests change and new competition enters into a market. It suggests that a company should be in a fairly constant state of self-evaluation, realising its place within its external environment. If the customers, stakeholders or other interested parties do not approve of a direction a company is going in, it will have to make alterations or risk losing its state of business.

But what happens when an organisation is supported by the government? Is it less necessary for such organisations to keep a keen eye on its surrounding environment and evaluate its position? For as long as the government approves of, and continues to support such an organisation, its sustainability is relatively secure. The Danish public school is just such an organisation. After having been a part of the public service for so long, the public school has a certain set structures and cultures, making change less appealing and a harder feat to accomplish (Gundelach & Sandager 1996). Therefore, the new school reform which has been introduced by the government could present itself as quite a challenge for the public school.

The public school has been under heavy discussion for many years. After a controversial OECD-report in 2004, stating why Danish pupils had such low scores in international studies like the PISA study in 2000, Danish politicians have been calling for a stronger “evaluation culture” (Pors 2009: 6) and a change of the public school system. The debate has been influenced from two positions, on one side from the representatives of the school, claiming how political control and retail management are depleting the schools’ values. On the other side, political advocates for more evaluation are frequently launching new initiatives (ibid.), a typical approach within New Public Management (NPM).

NPM was a trend starting in the 1980s, not as a theory, but rather an umbrella term for a number of ideas, initiatives and reforms in the public sector, with the purpose of creating a more cost-effective management from a market-driven economy. Hood (1991: 5) describes NPM as a marriage between two sets of ideas. The first partner is the “new institutional economics”, whereas a set of administrative reforms were created, based on contestability, user choice, transparency and incentive structures (Hood 1991: 5). The second partner in the

marriage is managerialism, based on “hands-on professional management” in the public sector and private-sector styles of management practice, as well as measurement performance (ibid.). Hildebrandt (2014) explains NPM shortly as measurement, documentation, competition, comparison, control, efficiency and productivity in the public sector.

To support this transition, different leadership models, leadership strategies and leadership philosophies were introduced to the public sector, mainly leadership technologies intended for the private market but now used in the public administration by a growing consultancy business (Risak & Falck Larsen 2007: 35). According to Hildebrandt (2014), NPM is still the dominating thinking within the Danish public sector. One of the key elements in NPM is decentralisation, but the tendency today is going more and more towards centralisation and top-level decision making. In fact, the public school reform is one example of this development.

In June 2013, the government agreed on three main goals to improve the academic standards in the Danish public school (primary and lower secondary education) (UVM 2013: 2):

1. “The public school must challenge all pupils to reach their full potential.”
2. “The public school must lower the significance of social background on academic results.”
3. “Trust in the school and pupil well-being must be enhanced through respect for professional knowledge and practice in the public school.”

These goals should contribute to a clear direction and a high mutual level of ambition for the development of the public school and ensure a clear framework for a “systematic and continuous evaluation” (ibid.). To fulfil these goals, the agreement includes a reform of the public school. This reform focus on three main areas of improvement (ibid.):

1. “A longer and varied school day with more and improved teaching and learning.”
2. “An enhanced professional development of teachers, pedagogical staff and school principals.”
3. “Few and clear objectives and simplification of rules and regulations”.

Qvortrup (2014) calls the school reform a paradigm shift in the public school where we are moving from a teaching paradigm to a learning- and competency paradigm (UCN 2014: 6). Firstly, education and development of learning environments will now be a part of a target management and research-driven information. Secondly, teachers, pedagogues, school leaders and school administration are measured by learning- and competency goals.

This development paradigm is inspired by a reform in Ontario, Canada, based on the principles of Capacity Building (UCN 2014: 12). Capacity Building emphasises clear formulation of expectations to measure performances of the school, often agreed in contracts between the school and school administration on common goals to develop a sense of community. Capacity Building also believes that schools and education are so complex that they cannot be led from the outside, only from the inside. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the professional competencies of the actors and the institution; the human capital (i.e. the employees), the social capital (i.e. teamwork) and the decision capital (i.e. leadership and decision-making). Capacity Building focuses on research based knowledge, both to ensure that goals have been achieved, and to get an idea of what works. Ideally, it should be “visible learning”, a concept to make the pupils’ learning more visible for the teachers in how to approach methods and techniques in the education (UCN 2014: 13).

The new school reform was implemented in August 2014 together with a new work hours regulation for teachers (Act 409). For the school leader, this law basically means that he has the full managerial authority over the teachers’ working hours and there are no central or local rules/agreements on (SL 2014):

- “Time for individual and joint preparation”
- “Placement for working hours”
- “Maximum number of teaching hours”
- “Time planning for other tasks etc.”

Not only does this reform alter teaching styles in the schools, but being such a radical change, it will also end up having an impact on the cultures and structures of the schools. Prior to this reform there has been a fairly decentralised structure, where each teacher has been the boss in their own classroom and the school leader has had a more administrative role. However, after the introduction of this reform, the teachers are forced to work more together towards common goals, also requiring the school leader to take a more hands on approach and act like a strategic leader rather than a coordinator (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a). Whether he is aware of it or not, the leader is also largely responsible for the culture present in an organisation (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 159), and the culture itself can have a strong impact on whether or not an organisation is willing to and ready for change.

This is why the focus of this project is on the leadership styles, and the measures the school leaders take in order to implement this new reform. Seeing as this reform applies to all

schools, it will be interesting to understand the different approaches to the change. Furthermore, it is part of the leader's job to create the culture and ensure that employees are following the rules, which makes it interesting to investigate the leader's role in the changes brought on by the reform. Especially since it is not a decision the leader has made himself and that he believes is tailor-made to the school - it is instead something the government is 'forcing' all schools to implement and relying on the principal to enforce this implementation. This project will therefore be studying the techniques and styles of a leader implementing change in an otherwise traditional organisation. This will be done by interviewing three school leaders at three different schools, and relating it to leadership, culture and change.

## **1.2 Research Question**

To what extent do leadership styles differ between public school leaders during an organisational change and why?

### **1.2.1 Working Questions**

In order to answer our research question, we will answer the following working questions through our analysis. Their relevance will be elaborated on in the research design section.

1. What are their different leadership styles?
2. What are the cultures of the schools?
3. How are they responding to change and challenges?

## **1.3 Clarification of Concepts**

### **1.3.1 Leader**

The definition of a leader in this project is based on the same characteristics as described by Mintzberg in his 1989 book about management (Mintzberg 1989), where he defines a leader as a person "vested with formal authority over an organizational unit" (Mintzberg 1989: 15). In one of the cases, the leader is in fact the deputy school leader, but the previous school leader, with whom she had been working in close cooperation with in her 14 years as deputy, has recently retired. This means that she represents the leadership of the school.

The organisational structure of the Danish public schools has traditionally been very horizontal in nature and the leader, deputy and the heads of department work in close cooperation (Aisinger & Christensen 2013a). However, this horizontal structure can vary in

degree among the individual schools, which will also become evident when we compare the three school leaders in this project as their view on leadership and involvement of the management differs substantially.

### **1.3.2 Organisational Change**

According to Daft et al. (2014), the definition of organisational change is the process from an initial idea to the implementation. The process is divided into some general steps, which include the ideas that spark the process, the need for a change that serves as the basis for the ideas and the adoption and implementation process where the ideas are planned and executed (Daft et. al 2014: 424-26). These characteristics of the process of change are in this book based on private corporations and there is an obvious difference between the private and public system: In the case of the school reform, it is a change that is centrally decided by the government on the basis of a need that *they* perceive. This means that, for the individual schools, they actually have to go straight to the adoption and implementation processes in order to execute an idea that is not in essence their own.

### **1.3.3 The Reform**

The goals and objectives of the school reform have been explained in the problem area. However, there is a need to clarify the use of the term reform in this project. Concurrently with the adoption of the law that constitutes the school reform, another law about the regulation of the work hours of the teachers was passed (Act 409), which required them to teach more hours a week and conduct their class preparations at the school. The work hour regulation is, as we will look at later in the project, subject to interpretation. As they were passed at the same time and are also meant to go hand in hand, we have, for the sake of this project, chosen to treat them as part of the same organisational change faced by the schools.

## **1.4 Delimitations**

After delving deeper into this topic of the school reform and what implications it has for the individual schools, it became quite apparent that there were many angles from which one could investigate. This section therefore briefly presents the delimitations of what is being discussed in this project.

Seeing as the interest has been on the leader, his style and how it affects his employees, this project therefore is not focusing on aspects such as the schools' economy or location. We



are aware that these factors still have an impact on the leadership or where the focus lies, however our focus is more on the actual approaches and their effects rather than the factors. We do mention these internal factors in the project, however in the light of what it means to the leaders and how they view their tasks.

When looking at public institutions it is also relevant to note that they have a responsibility to the government and what their intentions are. In the same sense, when investigating these schools, the different municipalities and what their individual politicians intend obviously also have an effect on the guidelines the schools have to follow. However, it is still up to the school leaders to implement and lead at their own schools, which is what this project is focused on and therefore why we are not investigating in depth what the different municipalities intend.

The fact that this project is concerned with understanding the reasons and ways these leadership styles can differ means that we are not evaluating what way is best or what has been successful or not. This means that we will also not be evaluating the impact of these changes on the pupils at the school nor their parents. This project is not a normative investigation and is based on the organisation itself, not on its output.

Finally, it is interesting for this project to evaluate how the approaches to this change can differ within organisations that have technically the same top manager - the Ministry of Education. Therefore there will be no focus on private schools and how they are dealing with this reform as they have different circumstances to work with.

## 1.5 Reading Guide



## **1.6 Introduction of Cases**

School A has approx. 600 pupils. The school leader has been working here since December 2013. The school leader was mainly employed to turn the financial situation around at the school, and the school reform came as an “extra” challenge.

School B is a larger school with approx. 1300 pupils. Approx. 125 teachers. The school leader has worked in this position for over 14 years. She technically has the title of deputy school leader, however the actual school leader whom she has been working closely with has just gone on retirement.

School C has has approx. 400 pupils. The school leader has been working in this position since December 2014. The school leader has been working at a similar position in a similar school in the same municipality for over 10 years and successfully implementing new structures.

# Chapter 2 - Methods

This chapter deals with the methodological choices made during the course of this project. We explain the choices we have made in terms of philosophy of science and how this affects the research. It contains a brief introduction and background of our choice of theory as well as empirical data. In the case of the latter, the research strategy will be described and discussed in order to point out the benefits of this strategy as well as the many reflections we have been through in the process of gathering the data. This includes an exposition of how we have chosen our cases, the creation of interview questions and how we have collected data. Finally, there will be a description of the project design; how the theoretical framework and empirical data interlinks, and how this is seen throughout the project.

## 2.1 Philosophy of Science

This following section outlines both the ontological and epistemological approaches that we have taken in this project and why they are relevant in answering the posed research question.

### 2.1.1 Ontological Approach

The focus of this project is to understand how different approaches can be taken when an organisation has to undergo change. According to our theory, leadership style and organisational culture go very much hand in hand, hence our focus on both these theories. As the theory chapter in this project further elaborates, organisational culture is something constructed communally between the leader and his employees and can be both an obstacle, but also an instrument when facing change. Therefore, a social constructivist ontological approach has been taken for this project.

According to Hacking (Hacking 2002: 422) one of constructivism's elements is to essentially deconstruct an idea, not because it is wrong, but more to be able to look at it from an alternative angle. This is very appropriate for this project considering that we are looking at how two concepts can affect the process of change. These concepts are also ones that are constructed within the organisation's society, which means they are also bound to differ, considering that no two organisations and their dynamics are the same. This project does not believe or argue that there is one universal organisational culture or leadership style, rather that there are as many different cultures and styles as there are organisations.

### **2.1.2 Epistemological Approach**

In order to answer our research question, we deem it necessary to take an interpretivist standpoint. Taking an interpretivist approach enables the researcher to use an alternative approach to positivism, where there is a 'right' and universal answer, and instead allows the researcher to investigate and understand phenomena in their relevant contexts (Bryman 2012: 28). From our perspective, we can not examine the different elements in our research satisfactorily with a statistical analysis. We aim to study leadership during a process of change. To do this, we need look at the phenomenon within its own context, especially when we are dealing with human beings and their actions. To take them out of their reality and place no emphasis on their surroundings and the culture around them hinders a thorough understanding of the reasons behind their actions. We view the leaders both as a product of their own reality and context as well as an active partaker in it. Therefore, it has been prudent for us to take an interpretivist epistemological approach to this project.

Seeing as none of us have any particularly strong opinions or attitudes towards the school reform itself, we have not felt this particular point to be an issue when interpreting our interviews. We do, however, technically have more personal opinions towards leadership and what it means to be a "good leader". Nonetheless, we do not feel as though this has had a drastic implication on our way of interpreting, because we have been very aware from the start that we are using the theory in this project to analyse and interpret the interviews from.

### **2.1.3 Hermeneutics**

As will be elaborated on further down, this project uses interviews as the empirical data on which to base the analyses. With the interpretivist approach this project also takes, it is important to discuss how this data will be handled. Essentially, hermeneutics is a method of interpreting documents, social actions and other phenomena where the analyst brings forth the meaning "from the perspective of the social actor" (Bryman 2012: 712). This idea, that an analyst is able to make such interpretations of the actor's perspective is based on the idea that all human beings share some common traits or humanity (Cassell & Symon 2004: 196). This method is therefore essential to our analyses, considering that, if we could not interpret these interviews, we would not be able to reach any conclusions. For this project, we are interpreting not only what is being said by the school leaders, but also certain words that are used or repeated. This is because the choice of words of a person, whether conscious or subconscious, reveals underlying emotions the person may have towards the subject.

## **2.2 Choice of Theory**

Our research question could prompt us to attempt to understand the leadership during change by taking point of departure in the empirical data and then analyse our findings inductively. However, we have chosen to let existing theory on the different aspects of our problem field and our conceptual framework guide us in our research. This is both due to time restrictions, but also because we view the close link between empirical data and theory in our analysis as enhancing the wider relevance of the research.

The choices we have made about our theory reflect in many aspects our ontological viewpoint. Our focus of the research is to examine the leaders of the schools and understand how they have responded to the change the reform has brought on in different ways. It is therefore necessary to investigate established theories about leadership styles as well as theory about the response to change from leaders of organisations. However, as stated above, it is also relevant to understand the context in which the persons of study operate in order to understand their style of leadership, which is why we choose to look at the culture in the school. The three theories that have been used for this project are all quite interconnected, as will be elaborated on in the following section. Understanding how an organisation deals with change and analysing the culture of an organisation can be useful when determining potential obstacles or advantages. In order to understand the culture, one has to understand the leadership style employed. Also implied in this is the leader's more direct approach to change, which is perhaps not as culturally related.

### **2.2.1 Mintzberg's leadership roles**

In order for us to be able to determine the school leaders' style of leadership, we found it relevant to incorporate a theoretical point of view. By doing an academic search on leadership and management, we found that Henry Mintzberg is one of the most cited authors on the subject. The study that lays the foundation for his definition of 10 leadership roles is conducted among private sector CEOs, but Mintzberg himself argues that the operational framework for managers is largely the same, whether we are looking at a CEO or a football coach (Mintzberg 1989: 15). The categorisation of the leadership roles is extremely simple and concise and at the same time very broad. This allows us to use the theory to create a framework for understanding the school leaders' actions and reasonings behind these as well as leaving room for our own interpretations.

### **2.2.2. Culture Theory**

As mentioned above, using culture theory can help determining any attitudes an organisation may have towards a change, and the way it can impact the process of the change itself. Culture theory goes in and evaluates how culture can impact various aspects of an organisation and both the leader and the employees' role in this. Therefore, it is a very appropriate theory for this study as it offers a very broad understanding of the culture's relevance, but also allows us to go in and understand more specifically the leader's role in this. Seeing as we gather no empirical data focused on the schools' employees, it can be argued that we are missing the ability to evaluate the culture in its entirety, as we do not have a thorough understanding of the employees roles. However, as this project is focused on leadership styles and how they can differ, we believe this theory was still relevant, as we can get focus on the leader's role in this culture, and understand the part they feel that they play.

To create this theory for our project we have used two texts. Schein's (2004) book on organisational culture and leadership can almost not be avoided when discussing culture within organisations. Being almost a godfather within this field of research, his writings have given this broad and relevant insight into the relevance of this theory. Even though it originally came out a number of years ago, Schein (2004) has continuously updated his book and released newer editions in order to keep his theories relevant and up to date. The other text, written by Gundelach & Sandager (1996) focuses culture and leadership within the public sector. This is almost even more relevant for this project when considering that the schools here in Denmark are part of the public system. This allows for valuable insights into what underlying cultures there also are in the Danish public system and how this may affect the various smaller organisations. Even though this literature is from 1996, it is still greatly relevant, as the schooling system is not a new concept, and something which has been in place far earlier than 1996.

### **2.2.3 Theory U**

There are many ways to approach organisational changes. Theory U presents a new and different thinking, typically based on learning experiences of the past but also on learning how to sense and connect with the highest future potential - people's inner sources. Since the book "Theory U - Leading from the future as it emerges" was published in 2007, it has inspired people all over the world, especially leaders and consultants in Denmark. The Danish public sector, in particular the municipalities, has shown great interest in this alternative way of

thinking. There are several reasons why this theory is suitable for organisational change in the public sector. First of all, the Danish leader culture is based on dialogue, mutual respect, a flat organisational structure and moderate use of power (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 13). Also, the municipalities use a lot of effort on developing social capital to increase cooperation and teamwork within the organisation. Therefore, Theory U is a natural choice to make, as it is formed on principles like co-work, trust and justice. One of the fundamental ideas of Theory U is to make the best out of the future's possibilities, which talks directly to a public sector in financial difficulties (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 15). Many of the employees in the public sector are not driven by high salaries or bonuses, therefore connecting to their inner source of creativity where they can access their full potential or "presencing" (one of the key concepts in Theory U) is a motivation factor that makes sense for them. Theory U can also be seen as a complementary to New Public Management; instead of redesigning the public sector as a private company, Theory U can be a framework for interdisciplinary cooperation between the two sectors (Belling 2012: 32).

Many people have a hard time understanding Theory U and it is natural to ask if everyone can be a part of the process. Does everyone have the ability to be open, curious and empathic? (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 25). Some concepts are also unclear, like to reach "presencing", you have to let go of the past. What does this mean? To ignore the past or limit the thinking of the past? (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 29). Or what is the inner source? This might be very subjective.

In all change processes there are losses, destruction and creation. How to acknowledge loss and sorrow is not addressed in Theory U, neither how to deal with anxiety and fear (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 49). In addition, Scharmer (2009) has weak definitions of core focus as well as of negotiation, persuasion and project management. There is also a lack of tangible tools. The tool is yourself and your consciousness, which may be hard for many to grasp and difficult to operate and practice (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 74). This way the responsibility is handed over to participants and leaders. In this framework, Theory U may seem abstract without providing methods to use or giving the answer where to seek inspiration. No social conflicts or power structures have been addressed either; when implementing change, there are often conflicts and power relations between departments, groups or individuals (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 80).

The process of Theory U is formed as the letter U with both a right and a left hand side. In this



project, we have chosen to look at the left hand side of the U process only. Going down the left hand side is more an individual process, whereas going up the right hand side is more on a collective level. As we are looking at the leaders as individuals, it makes more sense to just focus on the left hand side.

We are aware of the discussion if whether Theory U is a theory or not. According to Karl Popper's falsification criteria, this is not a theory (Heimann & Lind-Hansen 2013: 85). Others have also defined Theory U as a metatheory (Belling & Gerstrøm 2010: 24), as a leadership philosophy or as a new social field theory (Scharmer 2009: 17). Still, we have decided to use Theory U as a theoretical approach for organisational change.

## **2.3 Research Strategy**

As a research strategy that will enable us to answer the research question, we have chosen to do multiple case studies. This research strategy works extremely well with our initial epistemological decisions as it allows us to better gain an understanding of the context within which we conduct our research. As mentioned above, we have used theory to guide us in gathering the empirical data and case study as a strategy provides the necessary framework for us to both investigate the problem at hand as well as utilise the theory in our analysis. The decision to focus on a number of cases rather than just using one came naturally seeing as the focus of this project is to understand how it can be done differently, and not simply how it can be done one way. The fact that we have chosen multiple cases to answer the research question of to what extent and why these approaches to change differ, gives room for a somewhat comparative analysis. However, it should not be understood that this is a strictly comparative analysis. This is due to the nature of the research focus being on what each school individually does and why it is appropriate to them, rather than investigating very narrow and specific points. If this were to be a comparative analysis, there would also need to be stricter guidelines for choosing our cases and there would be a need to ensure certain similar variables such as municipality, establishment year and size. Without having these common denominators it would be hard to formally compare and draw conclusions. This can also be seen in our empirical data in the fact that we do not strictly ask the same questions to each leader, but rather questions within the same themes. This is to allow the interviewees to elaborate more on what they find is relevant to their situation. Therefore, this multiple case study puts the three schools in opposition to each other and investigates to what extent and why their approaches differ rather than directly comparing.

Case study as a research strategy has been criticised for not being useful in terms of generalising conclusions (Bryman 2012: 71), but our aim is not to gain a statistical and generalised view of how the school reform is approached by school leaders, but rather to understand to what extent and why different approaches can be taken by digging deeper into a few cases. This allows for more detail in the analysis. Therefore, we have not chosen our cases because they are samples that fit with the nationwide statistical situations among schools, but rather because they were different and thus provided us the opportunity to contrast them. The wider relevance of this research is more in terms of the analytical process and how to look at leadership during change by using theory as a point of departure (Cassell & Symon 2004). During our analysis, however, we both aim to investigate the empirical data within our theoretical and conceptual framework but also use the empirical data to add further complexity to the existing framework. Besides providing us with an insight into leadership during times of change in our particular research area, the iterative processing of theory and empirical data can also serve as a broader view of public leadership.

## **2.4 Choice of Cases**

As stated above, this project is not focused on any specific type of school or comparing how a change processed can be handled “right” or “wrong”, but rather how it can be approached differently and what factors play into this. Therefore, there were no specific criteria when we were finding schools to collaborate with. The only criteria we were resolutely interested in was the fact that the schools were located in different municipalities. This was based on our understanding of the influence of the municipality and its politicians on the schools.

Investigating schools all from the same area would mostly likely make the analysis part of this project slightly one sided, seeing as it would not offer the variation we are interested in.

Without the need for the school to fulfil certain specific criteria, we found our cases by writing to a number of different schools, all in different areas. We had also made considerations as to which ones would be more interesting, for example comparing a newer school established in the 2000s to some of the more older and traditional schools. However, being aware that this reform has put extra pressure on the schools, we expected that some schools would not have the time and energy to help us with this project. We also considered the fact that schools who were having a hard time implementing the reform might not be as willing to talk to us as they might feel exposed. This is fortunately not an issue for this project, seeing as the focus is on the different ways change implementation can take place and not on how it can be done

“right” or “wrong”. The three schools that were chosen were therefore the ones that had an interest in collaborating with us. Working with cases that are not interested nor have time would also make our gathering of empirical data that much harder.

## **2.5 Data Collection**

The implementation of the school reform is still new, which makes it a fairly unexplored topic in regards to the role of leadership in the change processes - both in terms of quantitative and qualitative data on the subject. This led us to gathering our own qualitative data for the analysis part of this project, and not any quantitative, as this is not the focus. Our focus is the leaders of the school and the research therefore revolves around them and the reality they are responding to and acting within. Thus, it is natural to see it from their point of view in order to understand the thought processes that caused them to act in certain ways to the change they face.

Our primary empirical data consists of semi-structured interviews with three school leaders. This is consistent with our epistemological approach to this project. We want to examine first-hand the leaders’ own experiences of their modus operandi as well as to understand how they view the reform itself and how they seek to communicate this change to the teachers and other relevant parties. Furthermore, the interviews give us an understanding of the specific steps that are taken to introduce this new reform into their schools.

### **2.5.1 Interviews**

For this project, the qualitative interviews we decided to conduct were semi-structured interviews. Even though an unstructured interview could also have been an option, we still had themes and questions we wanted to make sure we covered, thus an unstructured interview might have been too open and free. Instead, the semi-structured interview approach allowed us to have a frame of reference to the questions and themes we wanted to ensure were covered during the interview. This also provides a freedom for the interviewees to make comments or bring up points that they feel are important. As interviewers, this approach also means that we are able to probe deeper when they bring up an interesting point (Bryman 2012: 470). The reason it was necessary for us to have some form of framework or structure of the interviews is due to the contrasting and deductive nature of this project. The deductive nature means that we are using certain theories on which to base our analysis, meaning that we will need data within the same subjects in order to analyse them properly. Seeing as we are

also interested in contrasting these different leader's and their approaches, it was useful to us to ensure that we had similar data with which to contrast them. It would for example be a bit useless to discuss only the physical structure of the school with one, and more the administrative structure with the other.

### **2.5.2 Interview Guide**

As stated earlier, we are taking point of departure in our different theories. This is especially evident in the way we have structured our interviews. After familiarising ourselves with the theory on our chosen focal points, we used the theory as an inspiration to the questions we wanted to ask. We want the leaders to reflect on their situation, their surroundings, themselves as leaders in general and during the process of implementing the reform. We are also very interested in determining any specific actions or considerations they have made in regards to the culture in the organisation or specifically how they implement the change. As can be seen in the attached interview guide, we made a list of questions that would have as natural a flow as possible. This would both allow us to remember the questions easier without constantly having to reference, but also hopefully put the interviewee more at ease to begin with. Therefore, we begin the interview guide with introductory questions such as how long they have been a school leader and if they have been in other places before. Quite naturally during all of the interviews, they take on their own pace and certain topics are covered earlier in some interviews than others. However, because we have our guide we can make sure we cover all the topics needed.

It is also important to note that the interviews are conducted in Danish. This is done very consciously, seeing as we are all Scandinavian speakers, who are also fluent in English, and therefore do not feel that anything would go lost in translation. We also want the interviews to be as comfortable and easy as possible for the interviewees, hence we do it in Danish. This way the interviewees will not have to fish after words or avoid explaining something if they feel their English is inadequate. We hoped this factor would ensure even more flow and ease to our interviews. Where some questions are very straight forward, with quite a short-natured answer, the majority of them are fairly open questions allowing the interviewee themselves to control the answer and lead the conversation towards a topic they feel relevant.

### **2.5.3 Interview Ethics**

When conducting interviews it is also imperative to consider the position the interviewee is

in. It is not all who wish to have their names or positions known and this needs to be respected. This is not only relevant when interviewing people about personal matters, but also if they feel what they say puts them in a predicament. For example, these school leaders may not be interested in their employees reading what they have said, if they perhaps put the teachers in a bad light. In the same sense, the leader may not be interested in the politicians of the municipality reading what they have said, if they make some unfavourable comments towards them. Therefore, it has been decided to leave out the names of both the schools and their leaders of this project. Instead they will be referred to as Leader A, Leader B and Leader C.

We have also made a point of ensuring that we do not let any personal feelings or opinions spill over into the interview. Not only is this unprofessional, but it would most likely put the interviewee in a state of unease meaning they would perhaps be less likely to cooperate or answer questions fully.

#### **2.5.4 Recording and Transcription**

For these interviews we were fortunate enough to be able to record all of them with tape recorders. Bryman (2012: 483) raises the point that certain interviewees may find it uncomfortable being recorded, however they were all well aware of the microphone and seeing as it was not intensely personal questions that were being asked, none seemed to have any visible problems with the microphones. Not only did recording the interviews allow us to focus more on the subject, seeing as we did not need to take notes, but it allows us to remember exactly what was said and how it was said. Taking notes does not always necessarily convey the tone or meaning of a sentence. Finally, the recording also allows us to exactly recall the extra questions we asked or the further elaborations we asked for.

Due to time constraints and the ability to attach audio files, we did not deem it necessary to transcribe the entire interviews.

#### **2.5.5 Credibility**

Seeing as there are essentially different ways of interpreting social phenomena, it is important for a researcher to evaluate the credibility of their research (Bryman 2012, 390). With the explanation and reasoning behind our methods, there is a high level of transparency to this project and the ability for any other researcher to recreate this project. It would of course never end up being exactly the same, even if the same school teachers were involved

considering the interpretations would not necessarily be exactly the same.

Though it would have been optimal to be able to send our final project to the school leaders and receive an approval from them that we had interpreted their words correctly, there was unfortunately not enough time for this. Instead we made each school leader aware of the fact that they were welcome to contact us afterwards if there was anything they regretted saying or did not want us to use in the project. However, since they are anonymous in this project and that they have not contacted us since, this has not been an issue.

### **2.5.6 Limitations**

There are a number of limitations connected to only conducting interviews. The major limitation for this project is having a one-sided perspective. Taking this approach, we only get to understand the situation from the leader's perspective. This is why we had originally intended to have focus groups with some of the teachers as well, in order to confirm or falsify the leader's statements. However, it very quickly became apparent that the teachers did not have the time or capacity to do this. The project is also here to understand the different approaches to implementing change, therefore, these focus groups would have been a bonus to have, however not necessary in order to answer the research question.

It can also be argued that taking an interpretivist approach limits the credibility of our conclusions when taking into consideration the fact that data can be interpreted differently by different people. However, using theory as base for our analyses and ensuring that we do not allow personal opinions to cloud our judgement, this has not been an obstructing limitation.

## **2.6 Project Design**

In order to answer the research question and present it in an understandable way for the reader, this project has a quite specific set-up. First there is a section in which all the relevant theory is presented and discussed. This allows the reader to gain the same knowledge we had when making our analyses, and also helps make the conclusions we reach in our analyses more understandable. The three theories are presented separately and in a logical order which corresponds to the three analysis sections. The order that makes sense to answer our research question is first to establish the difference in leadership roles, secondly to understand the culture and finally their response to change. This order is specifically chosen, because when trying to investigate how each school reacts to change, one must evaluate the culture the organisation has and whether it is change friendly or not. As will be elaborated on

in the theory section, leadership styles go hand in hand with the culture, thus the difference in leadership styles will be evaluated first.

The first analysis deals with the leadership styles, evaluating each school leader individually followed by a discussion with which we put them in relation to each other. The leadership styles are defined with the help of Mintzberg's 10 leadership roles, but not every role is explained. Rather, the theory is used when relevant to the leader in question. This analysis allows us to understand how, even though the leaders are dealing with the same type of public institution, there are still different ways of tackling the tasks and thus enables us to answer the first part of the research question.

In the second analysis we then explore the different cultures that can be found within the public schools and define them by using two different words that characterises each individual school. This is done by extracting from the interviews the things the leader does, both consciously and subconsciously, to create or maintain a certain atmosphere in the school. The role of theory in this part of the analysis is equivalent to the first analysis; theory is used when it has relevance in explaining the culture of each of the schools. The purpose of exploring the culture of the schools is to understand the framework that the leaders operate within. This is the foundation for being able to discuss the reasons as to why their leadership styles are different.

Finally, the third analysis is where we are looking at the way these leaders approach the change they are facing in the form of the school reform and external or internal challenges they may face. They are initially investigated individually, where we, by looking at certain parameters as defined in the corresponding theory section, such as their relation to employees etc., seek to understand how open or closed they are in the process of responding to change. Subsequently, we set them up against each other in order to further the understanding as to how they differ.

After the three thematic analyses, chapter 7 is a discussion, where all the sub-conclusions made in the analyses are interlinked and compared with each other. Thus, the aim of the discussion is not to draw in new examples and analyses, but rather to understand the contrasting differences of the leadership styles and what aspects work together to create the basis for these different ways of reacting to change in seemingly similar organisations.

Finally, the conclusion follows with a summary of what has been investigated and concluded throughout this project in order to answer our research question. Lastly, there is a short

reflection of other possibilities, approaches or considerations that could have been made and taken when tackling this subject.



# Chapter 3 - Theory

In this chapter we will present the theories we have used in the project. As described in the previous chapter, we have allowed for the theory to guide us in developing our interview questions as well as form the framework for our analysis. We present each theory by itself.

## 3.1 Mintzberg's 10 Leadership Roles

In his 1989 book "Mintzberg on Management", Canadian author and professor Henry Mintzberg has defined a set of roles to describe the way leaders and managers operate. This book, as well as his other publications, revolves around a critique of the established way of looking at leadership and management and is directed towards the private sector and businesses. However, he asks himself the question of whether a hockey coach can have anything in common with a prime minister and according to Mintzberg (1989) the answer is yes (Mintzberg 1989: 15). He argues that the broad relevance of his categorisation of leadership roles and actions arises from the fact that leadership itself comes from a formal, institutionalised authority. So, whether we are dealing with a Danish public school leader or a CEO of a large multinational company, the patterns remain the same as they are both operating within the framework of institutionalised authority. Mintzberg (1989) uses the term manager instead of leader, but in this section, they are used interchangeably.

### 3.1.1 Interpersonal Roles

Based on a large study of managers, Mintzberg (1989) defined 10 roles which encompasses the different aspects of being a leader. From these 10 roles, he categorised them into 3 main parts: The interpersonal, informational and decisional roles. The first set of roles, the interpersonal, derive directly from the formal authority that is vested in the leader as an institution. He or she must have a figurehead role, which is largely ceremonial. In the case of a school leader, it could be approving the teachers' schedule, initiating the weekly staff meeting or participating in public events in the capacity of a school leader. These actions, being of a more ceremonial and routine nature, are characterised by not involving a large amount of decision making and planning (Mintzberg 1989: 15).

The second, and perhaps the most influential role of the manager, is the leader role. According to Mintzberg (1989), leadership is what determines how effectively the manager uses the potential of exerting the power that comes from the formal authority. In other words, the

degree of leadership is not necessarily a given extension of the formal authority. The actions that fall into this category are the ones dealing with managing the workplace in terms of employees. The manager here has a direct role by being in charge of hiring and firing the staff, but there is also the indirect responsibility of motivating employees and streamlining individual needs and abilities to fit the larger goal. The last interpersonal role is the liaison role, where the leader establishes contacts outside of the formal organisational structure. In his study, Mintzberg (1989) concluded that the main reason for leaders (in this case CEOs) to create external connections is information-gathering. This provides the leader with the extra layer of information that is necessary to manage an organisation and thus, “the manager emerges as the nerve center of his or her organizational unit” (Mintzberg 1989: 15).

### **3.1.2 Informational Roles**

In their capacity as managers, they have access to information that might be unobtainable for the employees, both qua the liaison role and the leader role. Leaders have the possibility of creating external connections and they have access to the knowledge and skills of their employees. The gathering of information is in the center of the next 3 roles of a leader. The first is the role of the monitor, where the manager utilises the network of contacts, that his or her position as leader has facilitated, to obtain information. In order to gain the advantage of this knowledge, the leader then needs to enter the disseminator role, which means that he or she passes along relevant information from external connections or in other cases between departments or employees. Lastly, the manager functions as a spokesman for the organisation when dealing with the different interested parties. As mentioned above, the study conducted by Mintzberg is based on CEOs of private companies, where the informational roles arguably are more relevant in terms of delivering the best product in the end. However, a public school leader also serves as the informational go-between. He has a large number of interested parties and responsibilities for the municipality, labour unions, parents etc. The disseminator role in the case of a school leader is most salient in distributing externally obtained information as the Danish public schools in general are very horizontal in structure and only have few departments.

### **3.1.3 Decisional Roles**

The last set of actions performed by managers is the 4 decisional roles. These roles are based both on the formal power to make decisions as well as the leader being the informational

nerve centre of the organisation. In the role of entrepreneur, the leader oversees the implementation of various projects in the organisation. These projects are mostly dealt with simultaneously and the manager thus operates like a juggler with several balls in the air. The actions of the entrepreneurial leader are all more or less voluntary and the projects here set in motion of own accord. Occasionally, the leader will also need to respond to exogenous changes and pressures and assume the role of disturbance handler. A relevant example of this could be strikes by employees as it happened in the Danish school system in April 2013. The third decisional role for the manager is the role of resource allocator. As Mintzberg puts it, the most important resource a leader must allocate is her or his own time (Mintzberg 1989:20). The responsibilities of structuring the organisation and coordinating in terms of 'who does what and when' falls under this category. Finally, the leader must assume the decisional role of negotiator. The negotiations encompasses both the internal and external. The leader seeks to optimise his organisation by pleasing the interested parties and at the same time negotiating the best possible terms. A manager's most important job is communicating.

## **3.2 Organisational Culture**

Culture is a concept that anthropologists have used to describe rituals and customs of societies and how these manage to bring the society together (Schein 2004: 7). When these rituals and customs are repeated or are given meaning by the group involved, it creates a shared history, which in turn creates the shared culture (Schein 2004: 11). According to Schein (2004: 1) culture is a constantly changing phenomenon which is created, re-created and passed on to future generations through interactions with others and strongly influenced by a group leader. Therefore it is often hard to precisely define a culture, seeing as those within it can take it for granted and not even be able to pinpoint it exactly themselves. This implicit understanding of the group's culture will then in turn have an effect on the dynamic and ethics of a group. This makes culture a vital factor when looking at organisations, because having the "right" culture can make an organisation more effective (Schein 2004: 7).

This following section will give an insight into the role culture plays in an organisation, namely the impact it has when change is occurring and the interlink that exists between culture and leadership, as according to Schein (2004: 10) "..they are two sides of the same coin".

### **3.2.1 Culture in Organisations**

Culture has a significant impact on organisations. Not only does it help create a shared reality

among the employees (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 15), but it also has an impact on the way the organisation is structured (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 20). For example, if an organisation's culture is one of trust and experimentation, one could imagine that the structure becomes a very decentralised and organic one, where employees are allowed to try out alternative approaches to their work without being micromanaged. However, this is a two-way street and an organisation's structure can have equal impact on the culture. For example, if there is a strong sense of hierarchy in a very centralised organisation, one could imagine the culture could become one of obedience and structure.

According to Daft et. al (2014: 379) organisational culture is "the set of values, norms, guiding beliefs and understandings that is shared by members of an organisation and is taught to new members." As will be discussed later in this section, leaders have a large influence on the culture, however once it has been adopted by the rest of the employees is when it has its true impact on the organisation. Having a strong and well-understood culture within an organisation can help employees react and make decisions when faced with a situation they are unfamiliar with (Daft et al. 2014: 382). For example, if there is a strong culture of flexibility and customer satisfaction within a jewelry store, a salesperson will be more inclined to say yes if a customer approaches them with a special request. The employee will have the confidence to do this, considering this is in alignment with the culture that is been chosen and adopted for that organisation. Having strong cultures in place can also help ease the need for strict rules, structures and micromanagement, because the norms and habits created in connection with culture have a larger impact on actions than rules and laws (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 9).

Creating a culture is both something that happens naturally, but also consciously with a purpose in mind. When evaluating the environment in which an organisation exists in relation to its strategic focus, four different broad culture categories can be found (Daft et al. 2014: 387). When an organisation focuses primarily on the external (their customers and clients) and the need of the environment is to be flexible, the Adaptability Culture can be seen. Likewise if the focus is on the external, however stability is the need of the environment, the Mission Culture is present. When the focus is on the internal (members of the organisation, their participation and contentment) and the environment's need is flexibility, it results in a Clan Culture. Finally, when the focus is on the internal, however there is a need for stability in the environment, there is talk of the Bureaucratic Culture. Fairly superficially, this shows how cultures can vary in organisations that are still within the same industry. Because

environment has such a strong impact on organisational culture, it is also relevant to consider the country, and even the specific area's culture, seeing as it also will impact the organisation's culture (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 34-37). This factor impacts larger, international companies who therefore cannot directly apply the culture of the office in for instance London to the one in Tokyo. Large companies that are not international can also face multiple internal subcultures (Schein 2004: 20). This can present itself when evaluating the different departments. An organisation's Research & Development department may have a strong culture of innovation and codependence helping the employees brainstorm more, whereas the financial department may have a culture of consistency and independence allowing the employees to remain focused on their individual tasks.

### **3.2.2 Leadership and Culture**

As mentioned earlier, culture and leadership are very much two sides of the same coin. According to Gundelach & Sandager (1996: 8) a leader has to have a thorough understanding of how the organisation works if they want to successfully lead it. To a great extent, this also includes the organisation's culture, seeing as culture can also be used as a managing tool (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 23). The leader therefore has to evaluate whether or not the culture is something they wish to control, or let it control itself. This of course depends on the leader and the organisation. In a very centralised and vertical organisation it would for example not necessarily make sense for the leader to not interfere at all with the creating and the shaping of the culture, as it is her the employees look to. Either way, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or subconsciously, the leader bears the brunt of the responsibility for creating culture, which in turn rubs off on, and affects the rest of the employees. According to Schein (2004: 16) it is not until the leader experiences a success for the organisation with their culture, that the rest of the employees begin to adopt their culture.

There are various indirect, and more direct ways of implementing or creating culture. The majority of them rely on common experiences or understandings, seeing as the culture technically applies to all in the organisation. According to Daft et al. (2014: 382) rites and ceremonies are a way for leaders to enhance the culture and make it more visible. If the leader of a sales department wishes to have overachieving as a significant part of their culture, it may be pertinent for her to have a monthly award ceremony where a prize or gift is handed out to the employee who has sold the highest over the expected quota. Stories can also be a very useful tool when impacting culture (Daft et al. 2014: 384). Highlighting certain stories or

myths from the organisation, and burying others can give employees an idea of what is expected and how things are done within an organisation. For example, continuously telling the story of when employee X babysat employee Y's cat while she was on vacation emphasises to the rest of the employees how much the organisation values caring for each other. These are but a few examples of directly affecting or maintaining cultures within an organisation. Once the culture is in place and adopted by all, the leader's role becomes more of a conductor role, making sure that all the divisions and employees "play well together" (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 110).

### **3.2.3 Impact of Culture on Change**

In a well established organisation, change is hard to come by, seeing as in some ways, change and culture are quite contradictory (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 147). As discussed earlier, culture is created through common experiences and understandings, therefore when change is introduced, it challenges these existing traditions and norms which are accepted by the group. This challenge is not equally easy for all employees to accept, and some even have a hard time keeping up with these new norms that the change presents (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 151).

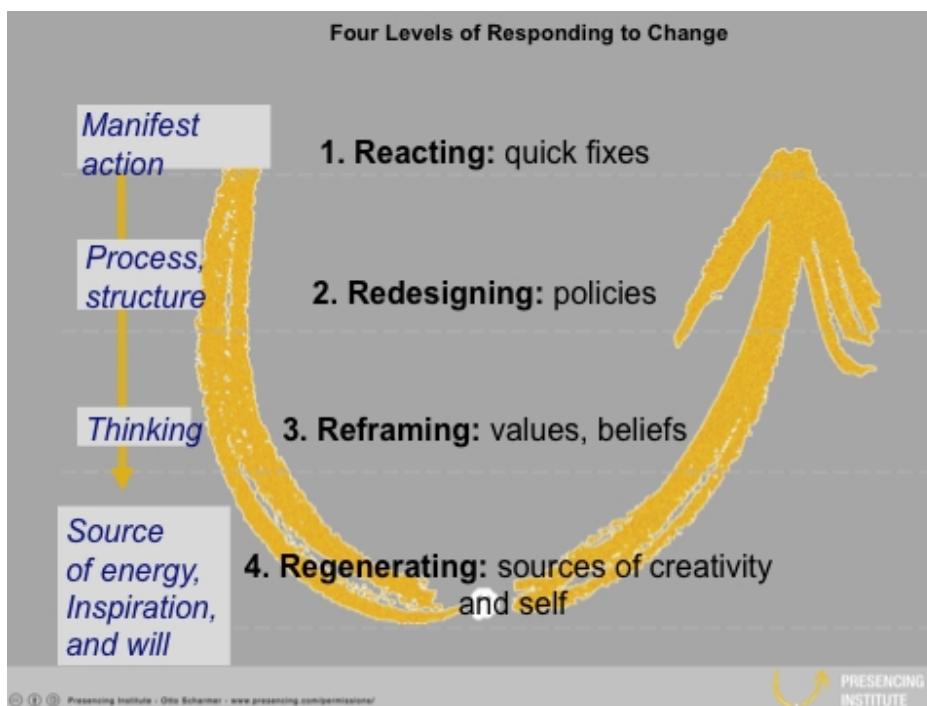
Change is also something that does not just happen overnight. It is not so simple that the management can make an announcement stating how they wish the new culture to be (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 161). In order to successfully change and alter the culture as needed, the rest of the employees also need to be onboard and adopt it. This can happen as was discussed earlier, by the leader convincing the employees with his success. According to Gundelach & Sandager (1996: 161) involving the employees in the change process will help them adopt and accept these changes faster, making the process much easier. Naturally, if the pre-existing culture within the organisation is one which is very open to change, the change process will also go much smoother. A leader can also go the other way and use culture to change an organisation. By conducting research and comparing themselves to other organisations, they can pinpoint an appropriate culture for their own organisation - and as mentioned earlier, having the right culture can make an organisation much more efficient (Schein 2004: 7).

This section has attempted to outline the importance of culture within an organisation and how it can impact the general working style. It has also touched upon how closely related leadership and culture are, and how leaders can use and manipulate culture to their

advantage, but also how necessary it is for them to understand it in order to properly lead their team. Finally this section has discussed how culture can both aid, but more commonly impede change. Culture is quite an intangible subject and can often not even be pinpointed by those within the organisation, however it is still one of the most influential forces.

### 3.3 Theory U

C. Otto Scharmer, a German/American economist, is the creator behind Theory U. Based on 150 interviews with leaders on innovation and leadership (Scharmer 2009: 17), Scharmer presents a different approach to meet changes in a complex global world. Scharmer does not only focus and learn from the experiences in the past, he also pays attention on how to learn from the future as it emerges. Theory U is a mind-set for change on all levels, from individual to groups and organisations, global as well as national. How we deal with changes depend on how we respond to them, and according to Scharmer (2009: 51), there are four levels of responding to change:



Level 1 is reacting in a habitual way, a common approach when a change occurs. But, if the same problem arises several times, you need to go to level 2 and redesign, i.e. a process or a system. Studies in the 1990s showed that about 70 per cent of business reengineering projects failed due to operations on the first two levels only. The people involved did not think through or “reframe” the problem (Scharmer 2009: 51) or taking people’s different behaviour and culture into consideration. Instead, they reacted to the problem and reorganized structures

and processes based on previous experiences.

When we go a step further to level 3 reframing, this is where we start to change patterns and thoughts. By addressing these challenges, we can move to level 4 regenerating, where thinking and behaviour is generated and we are able to learn the future as it emerges. This is what Scharmer calls “presencing”, a combination of presence and sensing, and the essence of Theory U. The concept “presencing” will be explained more in detail.

By focusing on the present and its opportunities to create innovation and change, we have to break old patterns and adapt leadership styles to our reality and the challenges the future is facing (Thorborg 2013: 27). How is this possible? By joining the journey of the U process, we can strengthen our presence and active participation (Scharmer 2009: 379). The U process works as a matrix and got its name due to the “shape” of the journey. Instead of downloading and act, you go down the U on the left-hand side, reach “presencing” at the bottom, and then go up the U on the right-hand side to bring the new into reality.

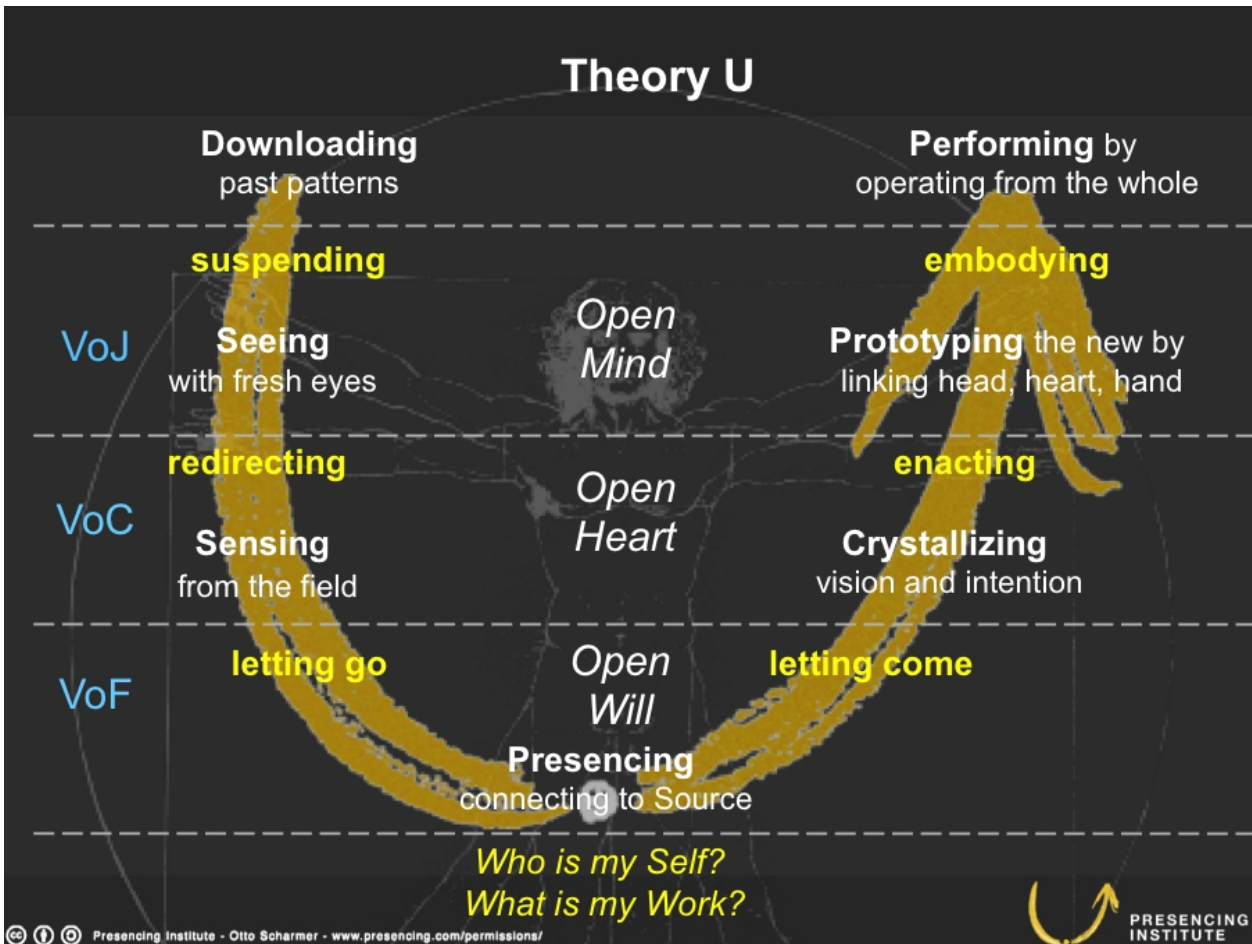
To do this, we have to use three instruments that we all have available; an open mind, an open heart, and an open will (Scharmer 2009: 40). In our everyday life, we often tend to do what we always do and hang on to patterns and habitual routines. If we open our mind, we access our intellectual, or IQ, and see things from a new perspective. This is where we show genuine interest and inquiry. When we open our heart, we enter our emotional intelligence, or EQ, where we are able to empathize and put ourselves into other people’s way of thinking. The third instrument, the open will, is where we pay attention to our authentic purpose and self, also known as spiritual intelligence, or SQ (Scharmer 2009: 41).

According to Scharmer (2009: 42), to connect our open mind, heart and will, we have to deal with and master three enemies: the Voice of Judgement (VOJ), the Voice of Cynicism (VOC) and the Voice of Fear (VOF). The first enemy, VOJ, blocks the gate to the open mind, the access to our real creativity and presence. The second enemy, VOC, blocks the gate to the open heart, that is, to all types of emotional acts of distancing, i.e. the position of vulnerability. The last enemy is the VOF, which blocks the gate to the open will, that is, what prevents us from letting go of what we have and who we are. Examples of VOF could be fear of losing economic security or being ostracised (Scharmer 2009: 43).

When the open mind, open heart and open will are connected, there is a profound shift in the way we learn. Many of the change and learning methods today, are based on the Kolb Learning Cycle: observe, reflect, plan, act (Scharmer 2009: 30). When we observe and reflect, we



evaluate and learn from our experiences of the past. Scharmer's theory is built on two different sources of learning: learning from the experiences of the past and learning from the future as it emerges (Scharmer 2009: 7). Scharmer claims the key to what we create, is what we pay attention to and how we pay attention. To do that, Scharmer wants us to ask ourselves: Who are we? What are we here for? What do we want to create together? (Scharmer 2009: 14).



### 3.3.1 The Phases of the U-Process

#### 1. Downloading.

The first phase of the U process is downloading. Instead of “doing it the way we always have”, we let go of habitual routines, patterns and control (Thorborg 2013: 28). This practice demands a suspension of existing ways of thinking and acting. The field of attention is called “I-in-me”, typically recognised as “Yeah, I know that already” where everything that happens is something you already know (Scharmer 2009: 11).

#### 2. Seeing.

The world or the situation is now seen from the outside with a new pair of glasses. Patterns

and habits do no longer block our thinking and we are able to listen to others and ourselves. We have moved to the next place of attention, “I-in-it”. The senses are free, the mind is open, i.e. “Oh, look at that”, and the way you listen is either object-focused or factual (Scharmer 2009: 12). The focus is on information that is different from what you already know, based on curiosity and inspiration to start ask questions (Scharmer 2009: 12).

### 3. Sensing.

In this phase you use your senses and intuition to notice what is going on. What you observed from the outside is now what you are going to sense from the inside and reflect upon (Thorborg 2013: 28). You start to connect to the field and attend to the situation from the whole - the boundary between observer and observed collapses (Scharmer 2009: 39). Your heart is wide open “Yes, I know how you feel” and you connect with other people, often you feel what the other person is going to say. Your listening is empathic and you are engaged in dialogue (Scharmer 2009: 12).

### 4. Presencing.

“Presencing” is a combination of presence and sensing. This is where you connect to your deepest source and the field of the future begins to arise (Scharmer 2009: 39). At the bottom of the U you let everything go, this is where you are ready and receivable for letting new inspiration and creativity come. You have now reached your deepest attention, the “I-in-now”. The way you listen is called generative listening (Scharmer 2009: 13) and requires us to access our open heart and open will – “our capacity to connect to the highest future possibility that wants to emerge” (ibid.). You have now connected to a deeper source of who you really are and to a sense of why you are here – “a connection with your emerging authentic Self” (ibid.).

### 5. Crystallizing.

This is the phase where visions and intentions for the future are created, typically through “futuristic workshops” or brainstorming. In this process, it is important to listen open and active to each other and acknowledge all ideas on the table – everything is possible (Thorborg 2013: 28).

### 6. Prototyping.

It has to be developed a prototype, or parts of a prototype, to test the idea or vision. It does not matter if it is a new product, a new concept or a new business model, it should still be a clarification of the vision (Thorborg 2013: 30). This way you get elicited feedback that can take

you the next improved version (Scharmer 2009: 210).

## 7. Performing.

Scharmer (2009: 217) defines performing as to “operate from a large field that emerges from our deep connection”. This is often a long and hard process “from inspiration to reality” (Thorborg 2013: 30). To implement the vision or the new idea, all stakeholders have to be convinced and dedicated. If it is a successful implementation, a transformational change has happened; a new way has been found to meet the future (ibid.).

Scharmer (2009: 39) compares the U model to a house with seven rooms or spaces, where the challenge for most organisations and institutions today, is that they use only a few of these rooms.

What often prevents us from attending situations more effectively is that we are not aware of or in touch with our inner place from which attention and intention originate. This is what Scharmer calls our “blind spot”. We can observe changes and what leaders do, and how they do it, what strategies and processes they use. But we cannot see the inner place, the source from which people act. The blind spot concerns the part of our seeing that we usually do not see. It is present every day in every system, but it is hidden (Scharmer 2009: 22). The blind spot concerns the structure and source of our attention. It is not only what leaders do and how they do it but their “interior condition,” – the source and quality of their attention (Scharmer 2009: 27). Therefore, the same activities may result in totally different outcomes depending on the structure of attention from the action is coming. “I attend (this way) – therefore it emerges (that way)” (Scharmer 2009: 13).

By moving through Scharmer’s U process down to “presencing”, we consciously access the blind spot and learn to connect to our authentic Self - the deepest source of knowledge and inspiration.

# Chapter 4 - Leadership Styles

As mentioned in the problem area, we see a tendency in the Danish public system towards a greater amount of centralisation and 'capacity building'. The school reform, which was implemented in August 2014 is a continuation hereof; both in terms of the reform itself and the work hour regulation. The school leader now has the authority to decide on and delegate hours based on individual competencies of teachers and importance of ongoing projects in the school (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013b).

The tradition in the Danish school system had until this point been a centralised negotiated fairness and equity in the distribution of hours for preparation, meaning no real room for managerial manoeuvring in the different schools. This has significantly changed the roles of the school leader from being *primus inter pares* and managing an extremely self-governing environment to a more strategic leadership style, where human resource management, planning and organisation is part of the job description (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a).

When we look at Mintzberg's 10 leadership roles and the fact that all roles in the three main categories, in some form or another, originate from the formal authority, it makes sense to discuss this change in formal authority in general terms before moving on to the individual analysis of the leaders later in the chapter. The analysis of each school leader will be based on interviews and backed up by articles that address the issues of leadership during the implementation of the reform, many of which come from the journal *Folkeskolen*, which deals solely with investigating and debating the Danish public schools and in particular the reform.

## 4.1 Increase in Formal Authority

As explained in the previous chapter, the more traditional and ceremonial actions a leader performs are included in the figurehead role. The school leader is still the formal, hierarchical leader in the school structure, but his ability to execute power has increased with the implementation of the reform (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a). Aside from the enhancement or in some cases commencement of managerial control of the teachers' working hours, the reform furthermore necessitates an increase in the leader's function as a negotiator between the municipality administration and the teachers (*ibid.*). They need to "translate" the reform, the interpretations and guidelines from the municipality to build a strategy and a language that the teachers can understand and to some extent accept.

As stated by professor Steen Hildebrandt in an article on the change of leadership in the schools (ibid.), these changes demand a lot more from leaders in terms of personnel management and their relational and social capital. These statements about the change in leadership after the reform is generally confirmed by the interviewees with the exception of Leader B. But as we shall see later in the chapter, there might be several reasons, both external and internal, as to why the interviewees view the changes in the role of the leader differently.

## **4.2 Leader A**

“Formal authority vests the manager with great potential power; leadership determines in large part how much of it he or she will in fact use” (Mintzberg 1989: 16). This quote is very telling in regards to the way a leader utilises the increased formal authority that the reform has brought about. The leader of School A is very conscious about how much influence he can have on the functioning of his school and emphasises the importance for him to step in and be a visible leader and with clear direction and goals (Interview A, 10:10). He arrived at the school in December 2013 with a very specific purpose - namely to turn around a school that had suffered from a bad economy for several years.

The fact that he came with a specific purpose shines through large parts of the interview and he comes across as a very goal-oriented and an authoritarian leader. This is seen both in the way he refers to how he dealt with the employees that worked at the school when he arrived as well as the way he describes his situation. He defines his initial job as “cleaning up” (Interview A, 08:50) and referred to the environment and school when he arrived as “chaotic” (Interview A, 19:20).

### **4.2.1 Managing and Motivating Employees**

The leader role, as defined in the previous chapter, focuses on the management of the employees - both directly by hiring and firing and indirectly by motivation. Leader A has a very firm view on this issue, which is likely in part due to his goal-oriented manner of thinking and the fact that the school’s economy was so critical. When asked about his thoughts on the new role of the school leaders in the implementation of the reform prior to his employment at this school, he confirms the statement above about the difficulty of managing teachers that are used to the centralised negotiated fairness and the previous role of the leader as a “first among equals” (Interview A, 40:13). He explains, however, that he had never expected things to be as problematic and chaotic as they were in terms of the employees and specifically their

interrelations (there had been several marriages, divorces and new relationships among the teachers as well as the previous leader (Interview A, 52:50)).

His view on this environment is evident in the fact that he calls it “unprofessional” (Interview A, 53:18) and he says: “There was simply too many relationships and too many marriages that were broken, it was so messy, really, but many of these people are not here anymore” (Interview A, 52:55), implying that these interrelations had a part to play in their dismissals. He goes on to explain how there has been further exchange among teachers since he arrived; “Those who left, left, there was a few who slammed the door behind them because there was a new leader, because of the new work hours regulations, some people have been very angry about that, written letters to the editor and stuff like that, been bloody disloyal towards the institution and towards me, but they are gone now” (Interview A, 21:20). It is not only relating to the teachers that there have been an exchange in staff as he explains that the person, who was disloyal was actually a head of department (Interview A, 15:40) and that he got rid of the that person (Interview A, 15:42). In relation to the cooperation with the previous leader, who had been blamed for the bad economy and demoted to deputy school leader, he explains that “in [his] eyes, that cooperation was extremely difficult, so she left, or.. was asked to leave” (Interview A, 15:30).

He is generally very articulate and clear in his way of describing his role as a leader, his visions and goals for the school as well as the manner in which he wants to implement them. However, when he discusses the unexpected problems with the employees in terms of their personal lives and the role he had to play as a leader, he seems less confident and out of his comfort zone and also states that it was hard for him to be the center for so much attention and values (Interview A, 35:31). Problems that deal with personal issues and the relationships between teachers makes him unable to maintain the professional distance between the employees and his status as a leader, which might explain why he quickly dismissed the teachers concerned. He emphasises the necessity of the teachers’ willingness to see themselves in the culture and the profile of the school and if they don’t, he will not have trouble finding other employees who do (Interview A, 38:26). So, when he said “cleaning up”, he seems not solely to have been referring to the economy, especially taking into account that he mentions several times that these changes in staff had been “a good investment” and had heightened the social capital of the school (Interview A, 14:25).

In a way, from what we can see from his direct management of the employees, he seems to

distance himself a great deal as a leader from them and instead centre the focus on the goal of improving efficiency by streamlining the staff and by extension the culture and professional environment. On the other hand, when discussing the teachers in terms of motivation and improvement, he mentions that he uses himself a lot as a person and tries to act as a professional role model, for instance by being present throughout the day, working hard and attempting to create a leader, whom the employees can “mirror themselves in” (Interview A, 31:26).

#### **4.2.2 Implementing the Reform**

Prior to his appointment as a school leader, Leader A worked in the administration of a different municipality and even toured the municipalities with the purpose of explaining the school reform. He states, that he is generally very positive about the content of and idea behind the reform (Interview A, 39:49) and was aware that the school leader in the new structural framework would need to focus more on personnel management et cetera. We have seen from his way of handling the human resource management, that he is not afraid to tackle difficult issues in order to increase the efficiency of his school. He also refers to it as a ‘little shop’ several times during the interview, which further indicates that he has a business-like approach to leadership.

In order to implement the reform and the new working hour regulations, Leader A has utilised his insight into the municipality administration and as far as the ministry, where he mentions, that he had connections. He entered the school into a project, where external ministry consultants came to facilitate and ease the transition from one-teacher education to the new team-work based education. This reflects very well the liaison and the monitor role as described by Mintzberg (1989), where the leader establishes and uses external connections and information to optimise his organisation. These external liaisons as well as his previous occupation in the system allows him to function well in the role of negotiator between the municipality and the teachers and he has managed to implement a large degree of flexibility in the interpretation of the working hour regulations; they “have been much more pragmatic and said: ‘it should make sense if you have to be at the school’” (Interview A, 13:26). His interpretation is not exactly in line with the municipality as they view him as “too nice” (Interview A, 15:08), but, as he says, “they haven’t fired me” (Interview A, 16:53).

## 4.2 Leader B

We have seen throughout this project, both in the interviews and in the articles about the role of the school leader after the implementation of the reform, that it has indeed changed. The main points that are pointed out are the shift in the school leader's responsibility from a more administrative and motivational role towards much more personnel management and evaluation. This is, however, to a large extent defined by the interpretations of the law by the individual municipality administrations, which is confirmed by all of the interviewees as well as the previously referenced article (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a). The fact that there are these different interpretations is extremely relevant in the case of School B, as she says that they "have a municipality that has a very unique agreement with the teachers regarding the way their working hours are carried out" (Interview B, 03:40) and further states that other schools are viewing this agreement as something to aspire to and work towards (Interview B, 45:45). By contrast, Tårnby municipality has been mentioned in the media as one of the more extreme examples of how the municipality has interpreted the work hour regulations. The Tårnby municipality administration has imposed a punch clock system, where the teachers would then have to clock in and out (Brix, S. & Trier, M. B. 2014). This shows the very different circumstances that the individual school leaders operates under and that extent of external power over the manoeuvre room of the schools. In the case of School B this becomes especially relevant.

Leader B states early on in the interview that it is not the case that school leaders have received more authority (Interview B, 01:40) and that they have in fact not seen any changes in the relationship between management and teachers (Interview B, 01:56). This is in sharp contrast to the other two interviewees but also to the article from the Folkeskolen journal (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a) on the change of the role of leadership after the reform. It seems as if Leader B's municipality has interpreted the work hour regulations in a way that is not necessarily in concordance with the objective of the law by government. She emphasises several times throughout the interview that they have managed to maintain status quo and status quo is not what is the purpose of the reform. What this shows, is how the extent of the different political interpretations of the working hour law can influence the room for manoeuvring in the individual schools.

Despite the fact that Leader B along with the other district leaders and the local teachers' union had negotiated this very favourable work hour agreement with their municipality



administration, she does still deal with some of the same issues in the implementation as the other school leaders. And before they managed to reach this agreement, she explains that “they were terrified of having to tell [their] teachers they would have to be here full time” (Interview B, 43:02). So they did have time to feel the pressure of the work hour regulations and she also says that, if the municipality had not approved their proposal, many people would have had to quit their job as they would not be able to combine it with their family life (Interview B, 23:18).

The agreement with the municipality means that Leader B has been able to implement a flexible work hour schedule based on what “makes sense”, both for the management in terms of staff meetings or teacher-parents meetings, but mostly for the teachers themselves. They are able to decide in the teaching teams when it makes sense for them to be present at the school (Interview B, 49:02). The degree of self-governing among the teachers is something Leader B returns to often in the interview and something that clearly defines the environment on the school.

The leader role is based both on the direct management of employees, but as Mintzberg (1989) also states: “every manager must motivate and encourage his or her employees, somehow reconciling their individual needs with goals of the organization” (Mintzberg 1989: 16). It is easy to see that the part of the leadership role that revolves around managing employees is the least important and challenging part of Leader B’s work. She explains how the school has a long tradition of freedom for the teachers and room for them to experiment with their teaching methods - there was never just one way of doing things, but rather they could find their individual way (Interview B, 22:40). She also mentions how they “have always had trust in the fact that the teachers did their job satisfactorily” (Interview B, 06:53). While it can seem like she is not stepping up as a leader and does not have a finger on the pulse in the way she manages her employees, it might be just a different approach to the role of a leader.

In the leader group, they work very determinedly towards upholding both the relational and professional environment they have created. She explains how the management organised and executed a party for the teachers (Interview B, 15:03) and welcomed the teachers back after the nationwide strike in April 2013 with breakfast rolls and coffee (Interview B, 11:47). It shows that she values a very catering sort of leadership style, where micro-management, control and evaluation becomes unnecessary because of an environment based on trust and unity. It plays in well with the part of Mintzberg’s leader role that relates to encouraging one’s

employees.

As mentioned earlier, this way of conducting leadership based on freedom and trust can easily come across as though she is not aware of what is going on in the school. She even says, that “a lot of things has happened, that we didn’t find out about until parents came and told us about it” (Interview B, 07:09), which in terms of the informational roles shows that she focuses very little on the internal information-gathering when it comes to the professional side of her employees. The way Leader B uses her role as a leader in relation to gathering and distributing information is also based on trust. This becomes evident in the way the management discusses the reform with the staff, where she says: “It has never been a secret what [the management’s] attitude has been” (Interview B, 41:45). She mentions a few other times as well, that the management is not withholding information from the teachers, but here we see that attitudes towards the external challenges are also discussed in plenum. The openness extends to the teachers as well: “I feel that we have a very free tone and people can come and say if something is wrong or needs to be different. I don’t think there any teachers who are afraid of expressing things they are dissatisfied with or insecure about” (Interview B, 21:10). This shows a focus in Leader B’s interpretation of the informational roles as more horizontal and inclusive both in terms of sharing knowledge and opinions as well as distributing information throughout the organisation.

When looking at the decisional roles of the Leader B, we can see that the actions she mentions most is in the capacity of the negotiator. She explains: “Sometimes, if a colleague comes and tells us something about another colleague, we first ask if they have spoken to him or her themselves” (Interview B, 54:35) and if the teacher have trouble doing this, the management will step in to help. As is the situation in all of our case schools, there has here also been issues with the further integration of pedagogues in the education process (Interview B, 36:28) and here the management has also occasionally stepped in during team-meetings if there are trouble among the teachers and pedagogues (Interview B, 55:30).

There is no doubt that Leader B is managing a very open school and she expresses often that she has maintained the same leadership style as before the implementation of the reform. Aside from the favourable agreement with the municipality, we argue, that the fact that it is possible for her to avoid the shift from administrative leadership towards personnel management comes from the open environment and horizontal structure based on trust. If she is to avoid micromanaging, she needs to maintain the culture, where teachers are expected

to approach the management themselves if they have any issues.

### **4.3 Leader C**

The leader of school C, while only employed in this position for a short amount of time, has been working in the same environment for many years. He was previously deputy school leader on a different school in the same municipality, but the restructuring of the school system meant that he would have been 'demoted' to head of department. The head school leader decided in consultation with the different school leaders in the district, that they should conduct a shuffle between schools, meaning that school leader C went from another district school to the present one. He states clearly that he was in favour of this decision as he would not have liked to be 'only' head of department (Interview C, 12:24). He likes to be in the center of the decision-making process, the negotiation with the external parties as well as seeing the decisions executed. He also feels that the original school leader would not be able to implement the necessary changes, as Leader C is now able to act unpredictably and break down the reciprocal expectations that exist when the leader has been there for a long time (Interview C, 13:04)

His previous work place had been experimenting since 2002 with restructuring the school in a way that corresponds with some of the changes that the new reform also requires and they had had success with these changes. He believes that this is the reason why he was chosen for this school specifically as school C had been closure-threatened for some years prior to his appointment (Interview C, 41:41), which, considering his success in the previous school, makes sense. For him as a leader, it means that he is quite focused and goal oriented in terms of his task when entering this position.

#### **4.3.1 Marketing a School**

Throughout the interview, school leader C is very frank about his vision for his school in terms of changing the image and promoting the school, both for the municipality and especially for the parents. He is aware of the fact that leading a closure-threatened school requires some strategic management; about the primary school department he uses the metaphor of a factory, - "if the raw material doesn't come in, you [the teachers] will end up empty handed" (Interview C, 54:23). He does not, however, see this external threat of closure as a problem in itself, contrarily he see it as a challenge and, as we shall see, strategically incorporates it in both his informational and decisional actions.

By using his experience in his earlier occupation as well as the external circumstances, school leader C is consciously in a process of changing the profile of the school. He mentions habitual thinking and the traditional, individually focused perception of the teacher role as some of the biggest challenges for him as leader in the process of implementing the reform (Interview C, 03:32). In order to break down the habitual environment, he chose a very progressive strategy by dissolving the old teams and creating new ones based on his idea of the individual teachers' competencies (Interview C, 09:23), whereas the general tradition in the Danish school system is a large degree of co-determination, in this school in particular. It shows that he is not afraid to challenge the 'linear thinking' that existed before, despite the fact that it did cause some initial opposition and chaos (Interview C, 47:01).

His strategic leadership style is also seen in the way he monitors and disseminates the information and knowledge of the organisation. He consciously utilises the slightly insecure future prospects as a platform for creating an environment that will respond better to his structural changes (Interview C, 53:27). But before imposing any changes, he spends a large amount of time collecting the information he needs for a smooth implementation. This is seen in the fact that he decided to visit every teacher in their classrooms before initiating the staff development interviews (Interview C, 17:19). On the basis of observing them in their element and of the development interviews, he then felt able to create new teams and move a number of teachers away from their comfort zones. Another strategy Leader C uses in terms of creating the desired environment, is storytelling: He asks the teachers to define the advantages of working in their school and discovered that they value the protective and comfortable teachers' college (Interview C, 49:20). But, as he says, "that does not sell any tickets" (Interview C, 50:18), so he used this information-gathering to articulate in plenum the profile of the school and encourage them instead to direct their focus towards "being open and challenging each other, ask the curious questions, why are we doing this et cetera" (Interview C, 50:32). It shows again his strategic focus and how he interacts with his employees in order for them to embrace and understand his idea of the progressive and challenging environment needed for this school to function.

#### **4.3.2 Distributing Resources**

In tune with Mintzberg's (1989) statement that the most valuable resource of a leader is his own time, Leader C mentions several times his problems with time allocation. However, his awareness of the importance of marketing the school, prompted him to direct his attention

towards the primary school department - a department that was in trouble when he arrived (Interview C, 44:20). Again, the idea of a factory comes up, where the initial part of the production line requires raw material and marketing tactics in the form of pleasing the parents (who essentially are the customers). By being present in the morning and greeting the parents as well as breaking down the habitual environment, he succeeded in implementing the necessary changes and the response was tangible: He received emails from parents of primary school children, appreciating his initiative (Interview C, 56:28).

As a school leader and a leader in general, one of the main roles is that of the negotiator, which, as mentioned above, has been made even more salient by the reform. The communication between municipality administration and the schools is more in focus in the initial phases of the reform implementation, but also the need for cooperation between school and pedagogues (Aisinger, P. & Christensen, E. 2013a). School leader C, while generally coming across as progressive, present and innovative, does have some issues when it comes to incorporating the after-school pedagogues who work with lower secondary school children. He is challenged by the fact that they are organisationally separated, but seems to be at a loss when trying to facilitate a good team-work between them and the teachers. He believes that the after-school pedagogues have a “traumatic relationship to schools, that is maybe the reason they have chosen to become after-school pedagogues, because they think, now we can compensate and do something for those ‘poor children’ who had a difficult time in school” (Interview C, 20:54). Furthermore, he mentions the cooperation as a culture clash, where uses examples such as the different attitudes towards the childrens’ manners and language as well as the pedagogues lack of ability to plan ahead (Interview C, 36:52). This seems like somewhat generalising statements and when he discusses the pedagogues he comes across as very patronising and unwilling to cooperate unless the pedagogues conform to the culture and norms of the school. It contradicts his otherwise open-minded and listening approach to his teachers.

## **4.4 Conclusion**

The first thing that comes to mind when looking at the differences between the three leaders and their leadership styles is the external pressures they are faced with as well as the regulative foundation and on which they are forced to operate. The very obvious differences in the agreement they have each reached with their municipality forms their leadership style. This is especially salient in the case of Leader B, who has managed to maintain an

administrative leadership responsibility, whereas Leader A and Leader C are faced with external pressures that shape their most important objectives and thus forces them to rise to the occasion. This also explains why they are focusing on the parts of the leader role that corresponds most to a leader in the private sector; Leader A has to salvage a badly handled economy and live up to the expectations of parents and municipality, and Leader C has marketing issues to deal with to compensate for the insecurity of being closure-threatened. They also both describe their school as a “shop” and a “factory”, respectively.

The leaders' approaches to their personnel management tells us a lot about their view of their role as a leader. What characterises Leader A is a distinct top-down approach to handling his employees and when faced with personal issues which he finds unprofessional, he dismisses the people involved to replace them with teachers, who see themselves as a part of what he has defined to be the profile of the school. Leader C has also taken a number of drastic and unwelcome decisions regarding his employees, but these were to a larger extent based on their professional abilities, rather than their personal profile. Leader B is functioning more as a negotiator in cases of teachers having problems - if they are unable to handle them among themselves, she will step in to smooth things out. Generally, Leader B bases her personnel management on involvement and the self-governing of her teachers, which is in contrast both to Leader A's authoritarian and direct approach and Leader C's attempt to break with the tradition of involving the teachers in every decision.

Another part of the role of a leader, where there are distinct differences between Leaders A, B and C is that of gathering and distributing information in order to function as the *monitor* of their school. Leader A, qua his experience as a part of the municipality that dealt with the reform prior to its implementation, is very externally conscious and knows how to work the role of negotiator between school and municipality and how far he can push the flexibility. He does not involve his employees in his considerations of how best to implement the reform or how he views the reform itself, but rather uses the objectives of the municipality as an 'explanation' of his decisions. Leader B is extremely internally focused and shares all the challenges and thoughts of the management to the teachers, creating an environment where unity in facing the challenges is most important. She is also operating with an environment where she does not need to gather information, but counting on information to come to her. Leader C is focused on being as well-informed about his employees as possible before implementing his extensive changes and thus uses his presence and research as his 'foundation'.

# Chapter 5 - Culture Analysis

That leaders have a central role in creating and maintaining the culture within an organisation has previously been outlined and argued for in the theory chapter. The role that this culture then plays when an organisation undergoes change has also been introduced in the theory chapter. This following section uses the mentioned theory to evaluate the different cultures the leaders at each of the three schools both consciously and subconsciously create and what they find important. This will be done both by analysing which answers are given to certain posed questions, but will also be done by pinpointing certain uses of words, which may reveal how the leader views themselves, the employees and how they interact.

Even though it is the same school reform that is being introduced in all schools, we have understood through our empirical data, that it is in fact not as black and white as it sounds. Though the reform has its more straightforward points that need to be followed, there are also sections, which can be somewhat interpreted by the school's leader. The way in which these leaders interpret and enforce these rules will essentially affect the culture of the organisation, because according to both School Leader A and B, their attitudes towards the workplace are inevitably contagious, and will rub off onto the other employees, as will be seen later. The following analysis will build on the leadership approach and evaluate the effect they have on the culture and the rest of the employees. As has also been mentioned in the methods section, this analysis does not take into consideration how the culture is in reality, nor how the employees perceive this, but investigates it only from the leader's point of view.

This section will begin with an analysis of School A, followed by School B and finally, School C. There will then be a short comparison of the three to discuss how, even though they belong to the same public system, these organisations can all encompass vastly different cultures as well as roles that the leaders play in this.

## 5.1 Culture A

School A is certainly an interesting example when evaluating the organisational culture. This is mainly due to the fact that, besides the reform, the school has recently undergone a quite drastic change and is therefore generally on quite an unstable ground as an organisation. According to the current leader, the culture was very different before he arrived, and the teachers were quite used to their freedom (Interview A, 09:34). He was hired, not only to

implement the reform when it came around, but also to “clean up” – as he puts it in his own words (Interview A, 08:51). This was due to a problematic economy and perhaps too interconnected and personal relationships among the employees. Naturally, this posed quite a number of challenges for Leader A, however it did open the opportunity for him to almost recreate the culture within the school. As elaborated on in the theory section, culture is not something that changes overnight, nor is it something adopted by all simply because a leader says it should be so. Yet it is easier for a leader to alter it when employees are thrown off balance due to changes. This breaks the routine of the traditions and history of the organisation, which are the foundation of culture, and creates room for new traditions, which in turn create new culture.

When evaluating how the culture was before, the two keywords that spring to mind are interrelational and laissez-faire. This is based on the current leader’s description of the school prior to his arrival. He mentions the high amount of personal relationships there were between the teachers, even involving the previous school leader (Interview A, 52:42). Also, “that there hadn’t been any clear management, meant it had turned into self-management.” (Interview A, 09:08). Each teacher took care of their own responsibilities without really working as a whole. That nobody took charge before he arrived could be the reason for the questionable economy of the school, and the ongoing and unfinished construction work at the school - hence the laissez-faire description. Everyone ensured their own work was done, yet no one took the responsibility of looking at the bigger picture.

This culture was very consciously altered when Leader A arrived. As outlined in the theory section, culture is the shared reality within an organisation (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 15) and the fact that the employees of this school have been so interconnected could hint at the strength of this shared reality and culture. Therefore, when Leader A arrived with his visions and goals, there were many who did not appreciate this challenge to their norms. This is a reaction which is also supported by Gundelach & Sandager (1996: 151). There were certain freedoms that Leader A had to take away from the teachers, which he reveals led to a “change in the personnel” as some decided to stay and others decided this new atmosphere was not for them (Interview A, 09:34).

Now that the previous culture had essentially been broken down, it was up to Leader A to either consciously or subconsciously create the new culture within this school. Based on this analysis, Leader A has now both on a conscious and a subconscious level, managed to create a



culture with the two keywords professionalism and loyalty. The professional aspect can be understood in the sense of the new structure that has been created. Referring back to the theory section, Gundelach & Sandager (1996: 20) make the point of the impact which the structure can have on the culture and vice versa. In this instance, Leader A has created a much more vertical structure, whereas before it can be understood to have been much more horizontal. Leader A now has new heads of department (Interview A, 27:40) to whom he has delegated certain tasks. The way in which he speaks, and the language he uses also indicates how he has imposed more demands towards the teachers (Interview A, 58:15). Throughout the interview he consistently refers to himself when mentioning decisions that are to be made, which he then also expects to be respected and followed. This shows that he views himself as the epicentre of all decision-making. Leader A has also spent a quite a bit of time with competence development for the teachers, also indicating to them the level and professionalism he wishes to be at.

Along with having established this professional culture, Leader A also focuses quite a bit on loyalty. This is implicitly understood seeing as he continues to refer to those employees whom he had let go as disloyal - therefore it can be understood that he values loyalty quite highly. This is not necessarily to be understood in the sense that the teachers have to be exclusively loyal to him, but more towards the school and the work that they do. He also indicates that this is the case when he mentions that the teachers that have stayed “have always wanted to create a school, and do it to the best of their ability” (Interview A, 20:35) and that they are a “nice and capable” group (Interview A, 54:18). It is also clear to understand his own sense of loyalty towards the school when he mentions how important it is for the employees to show up to their yearly activity day and how important he deems it that he as a leader is there to “perform” as well (Interview A, 49:10). The fact that he uses the word “perform” indicates that he is not entirely comfortable with the situation, however is still willing to go through with it to show he is part of the team.

Though it has not been all employees who have been equally happy about the instatement of Leader A, he has still managed to implement himself and drastically alter the culture. He has created the more professional culture by taking a somewhat distant approach to the rest of the employees and making it clear that he was the boss and decision-maker now. However, he still hopes to create a loyal culture by consciously sharing stories of himself and his family (Interview A, 35:25), hosting social events for the teachers and ensuring that he is equally a part of the school activities such as the yearly activity day (Interview A, 49:10).

## 5.2 Culture B

In almost complete opposition to Leader A, Leader B has been working in a somewhat stable environment where the culture and atmosphere has been generally the same in all the 14 years she has been there, and even in place before she arrived (Interview B, 53:34). Rather than having to create a new culture, Leader B's focus has been to maintain the existing culture. As she herself states, "I do not feel we have had the need to lead in a different way, in terms of how we are used to leading here" in order to implement this change (Interview B, 20:15). According to Gundelach & Sandager (1996: 28), when a culture is very established and in place, it can often make an organisation stagnant, as the employees can adopt a mentality of 'well, that's the way it has always been'. However, even though this culture has been in place for a long number of years, it would not seem as though it has made the organisation stagnant, due to a high degree of flexibility. This is because the two keywords this analysis has produced surrounding the culture are trust and harmony. Although these are the two final keywords, there was a larger debate whether it should have been some combination of the above-mentioned and flexibility and unity. In the end, we argue that flexibility could be combined and placed under trust, and in the same way unity could be placed under harmony as will be explained in the following section.

The culture of trust is very strong within this school. It is a constant mention throughout Leader B's interview, where she particularly states "that the management has always trusted that the teachers and employees took care of their work (Interview B, 06:53). This trust has also led to the aforementioned level of flexibility, understood in the sense that the management has trusted the employees enough so that when they have had a certain issue the management has been happy to find a flexible solution considering the trust that is felt. This has also meant that the teachers have had a lot of independence and room for experimentation within their own classrooms. Leader B gives an example of her meeting a pupil's parents who were praising her for the exciting work they were doing in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, where she smiled and nodded and immediately afterwards went to the 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to find out what was happening (Interview B, 07:11). Even though there has been this style of self-governing, Leader B underlines that the teachers have always had room to come to the management for help or if they needed more guidance (Interview B, 17:48). This goes to show that the trust does not only go one way - it is in fact mutual. She also goes on to mention that she feels as though there is an open forum at the school, and that teachers are not afraid to approach the management about any concerns (Interview B, 21:10). The experimental nature

that has been produced from this trust has also helped the teachers to see that there was not only one expected way of accomplishing goals (Interview B, 22:40). One can assume that having this culture within the school has helped when facing changes as the employees have been able to find their own comfortable footing when approaching new tasks.

Having this flexibility has also meant the teachers have been able to find their own arrangements with the management in terms of their working hours. As Leader B states, “it has to make sense for both the management, but also the teachers” (Interview B, 27:31). This goes to show the sense of comfort that can be experienced as part of the school’s culture. This is also where the unity plays a significant role, as the school management makes sure to involve the teachers and employees in their decision-making processes, like with the new changes which have been introduced lately (Interview B, 51:32). Leader B also makes a strong point about the need to respect each other (Interview B, 19:00). This once again goes to show that harmony by having mutual respect is an important part of their culture. She explains that if there are problems, she always makes sure to ask if that person has talked to the other about it (Interview B, 54:35). This is because, as she states herself, conflict resolution is part of their culture in the school (Interview B, 55:03). Boiled down, Leader B is very interested in finding a middle ground where all employees and the management are happy. This also spills over into the issue of the pedagogues and teachers now having to share rooms. In order to solve this, “rainbow folders” have been created where there are certain rules or guidelines as to how this new collaboration should work (Interview B, 37:20). Of course the teachers and pedagogues are welcome to establish their own rules and norms, but they will always have the “rainbow folders” and management to turn to for help if need be - a prime example of harmony.

Leader B has taken very conscious measures in order to ensure these cultures are maintained (Interview B, 52:50/55:43). Along with arranging parties where it is the management that decorates, serves and clears up (Interview B, 15:03), Leader B is very focused on making the employees understand the management’s appreciation for the work they do. According to her, these efforts do also pay off (Interview B, 15:20). Being so aware of these factors and wanting to ensure a solid cooperation between everyone involved in the school would seem to have paid off for this establishment. The employees and leaders seem to help each other in every way they can, which in itself continues to strengthen and solidify their trust and harmony.

### 5.3 Culture C

Leader C differs once again from the two other cases in this project, yet is also somehow a combination of the two. As with Leader A, Leader C is a new addition to the school, and has only been there since December 2014 (Interview C, 59:50). However, even though he is new to the school, he is still quite familiar with its system. This is because the municipality to which the school belongs decided to shuffle the leadership of the three schools in this district, in the hopes that it would inspire new directions and styles at the various schools (Interview C, 41:41). Therefore, Leader C had previous knowledge of the school and knew some of the challenges he would face, for instance that the school had been on the verge of being closed down (Interview C, 53:40). Taking on the challenge of making the school more appealing and trying to remove the threat of closure meant that Leader C would take on the adaptability culture when referring back to the broad culture descriptions in the theory section (Daft et al. 2014: 387). This is because Leader C's focus is on the external, rather than the internal, seeing as he already knew that there existed a good collaboration and relationship between the teachers (Interview C, 57:54). His focus also lies on being flexible for the environment, both with the new changes being introduced, but also trying to find out how he can make the school more appealing to pupils and parents alike. With this overall culture theme in mind, this analysis has produced the two keywords, namely collaboration and development as the primary indicators of this school's culture. These two go quite nicely hand in hand considering Leader C's approach as he wants everyone in the organisation to lift the school together and have employees not simply reflect on what I am good at, but what we are good at (Interview C, 51:55).

A strong reason for this development culture is due to the school's previous culture. Like with the other schools, and the general culture surrounding the Danish schooling system, this school has had a quite independent and self-governing culture (Gundelach & Sandager 1996: 40). As Leader C describes, the teachers were used to deciding for themselves what the best solutions were and based the reasoning on previous experiences and what the norms were (Interview C, 03:32). This is something the school leader was interested in changing. Leader C was interested in the teachers being good at challenging each other instead of simply reacting out of habit (Interview C, 50:52). When he asked the teachers what they would recommend about working at that school to other teachers, most of them said that it was that the teachers took care of each other – but Leader C deemed this insufficient (Interview C, 49:40). To break this self-governing habit, Leader C felt it necessary for the employees to have a common

direction instead of each working in their own self-assigned directions. He therefore made it very clear very quickly the direction he wanted to take the school in (Interview C, 48:45). To the teachers, this created new demands and forced them to take new approaches and develop themselves to approach their tasks differently or at least realise that there were different ways of tackling tasks. He also presented his aims of development by specifically helping a department he knew was having a difficult time (Interview C, 14:50). This also went to prove to the other departments that when there is an issue, or a weak link in the chain, the approach to this is to develop and fix it, rather than to let it run its own course.

In order to create this development, Leader C has found collaboration to be key. As he himself states, a key goal is to create a collective lift in the school, and instead of having parents say how happy they are that their child is in teacher X's class, he wants the parents to be saying how happy they are their child attends their school in general (Interview C, 45:07). However, as briefly outlined in the section above, this does not mean that he wishes to include the teachers in the decision making process as they were used to before (Interview C, 45:51). Instead it would appear that he attempts to do this by giving clear communication to the teachers about what is expected and which direction is being taken. Having this clear communication makes the teachers feel included, even if they are not directly a part in making decisions. To do this, Leader C explains that he has been focused on making sure the right words are used, so instead of teachers talking about the direction that *I* am interested in taking, they should be talking about the direction *we* are interested in taking (Interview C, 15:00). However, he is aware that this is not simply something that happens overnight, and that there are some clashes that can occur between employees, which is why he has consciously arranged social weekends focused on team building in hopes that the differences will fade out with time (Interview C, 25:21). To further unify the employees and based on his interest in music, Leader C has also incorporated a joint song for them to sing in the morning (Interview C, 57:20). This is a step in proving to the teachers that tasks can be tackled collaboratively and perhaps also in a creative manner. This does not mean that the organisation should simply become one collective mind, as Leader C still wishes there to be room for the individual to challenge the norms (Interview C, 58:35). Instead, he wants the employees to reflect on their tasks and approaches in terms of the school as a whole, rather than only considering the impact it has for themselves.

After analysing Leader C's approach to the culture at the school, it would seem that he neither has to strictly introduce a new culture, nor maintain an existing one. Rather, he has been to

tweak and enhance certain aspects. For example, when strengthening this collaborative culture, he did not need to find a way to get the employees to like one another, seeing as they already did. Rather, he had to make them more aware of working together to reach what he defines as their common goal. In the same way, it did not appear as though the teachers were shy of trying new methods or finding a way to better the school, rather they were too stuck in their habitual ways. Therefore, introducing the atmosphere of more development helped get the teachers on a new and innovative path.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

By analysing the different interviews and putting them in relation to the culture theory presented earlier in the project, we can deduce that each of these schools has their own characteristic culture. These cultures have been influenced both consciously and subconsciously by the leaders, but of course also influence the teachers and the organisation's general approach to the changes being brought about.

What characterises School A's culture is very much Leader A's determined and goal oriented approach to solving existing issues within the school. Prior to his arrival, there had been a very - and perhaps too - familiar culture in the school, which had led to a seemingly relaxed and self-governing atmosphere. Leader A deemed that this culture and approach would not help him reach his goals, hence his active, conscious approach to change this culture. The culture seems now to be one of professionalism and loyalty. This creates an atmosphere where the teachers are set to follow Leader A's methods in reaching the goals he has set for the school.

In contrast to this culture found at School A, what characterises School B's culture is vastly different. Leader B has been at the school many years and therefore knows the employees well. There has been a long standing culture where teachers and the management work closely together in the decision making process. The teachers are also given loose reins in the sense that they are given the freedom to experiment with their teaching methods within their own classrooms. This is possible due to their culture of respect and harmony. The management trusts the teachers to fulfil their work requirements and the teachers in turn trust the management to look out for their best interest and together they ensure that all employees are content with their work environment.

As with Leader A, Leader C is also new to his school, and also has a very goal-oriented

approach to solving certain issues at hand. However, unlike Leader A, Leader C has taken a less radical approach to altering this culture, and instead tweaked the pre-existing one to fit the direction he is attempting to take the school in. Therefore, what characterises School C's culture is development and collaboration. Having this developmental atmosphere encourages the teachers to continue evolving themselves and finding new ways to improve their work. While the collaborative atmosphere helps remind them that not only is it nice to have a communal atmosphere, but that working together is key to reach their goals according to Leader C.

# Chapter 6 - Organisational Change

The school reform is the most radical change within the Danish public school system in many years. When a change is implemented from the top of the organisation, there can be several obstacles throughout the process, obstacles that are both visible as well as invisible. In this analysis, we want to understand how the different school leaders have approached this large organisational change, what their focus areas have been, the biggest challenges they have faced, and how they feel their relations to employees have been during this transformation.

In a top-down approach, it is critical to give attention to and coordinate the implementation processes. Often institutions have the knowledge, insight and previous successful experiences, but still they seem to be stuck in locked patterns when there is a change within the organisation. According to Theory U, what we pay attention to and how we do it, is the key to what we create. If we are not aware of this and are in touch with our inner place where attention comes from, it stops us from being more effective.

## 6.1 Leader A

Prior to the school reform, Leader A has given talks in the Local Government Denmark (KL) about the reform (Interview A, 39:41), therefore he was well prepared to take the implementation on board. He was employed at the school to straighten up the economy and turn the deficit around. The school reform more or less came on top of the financial instability the school was facing. Leader A had a strategy for the school implementation, but he was too focused on the monetary situation, which reflects Leader A's approach to the reform. He is only reacting to the reform, implementing it without any significant changes as he is too focused on his primary goal, the economy. But, now when the finances seem to be more controlled, he is looking more into processes and structures to see if they can be improved, i.e. if they can use more teachers instead of pedagogues in the assisted learning (Interview A, 10:58). In fact, he has contacted the Ministry to get extra consultancy in regards to the reform, i.e. how to work in teams, leadership skills, goals and expectations (Interview A, 45:21). This shows that Leader A is now changing his response to the change by redesigning processes and structures.

Leader A's main focus has been the financial situation within the school. Throughout the implementation, the center of attention has naturally been on the three goals in the reform. In



addition, the municipality has emphasized the need to create an even clearer and better learning for the individual child as well as individual performance management (Interview A, 01:43). It has therefore been essential to prioritise collaboration and dialogue to express what is important and what is not important to him (Interview A, 35:54). In Theory U, recognising patterns of conversation are essential for leading change (Scharmer 2009: 272). Dialogue is to share and listen to each other as well as to think together. Leader A is focused on the importance of communication, but this is rather based on facts and stating differences, not connecting to each other. This is visible in the way he expects the teachers to adjust their work conditions.

The biggest challenge for leader A has definitely been the economy. It has been hard to create innovation on a school filled with high expectations without any resources on top of the new reform and work hour regulations (Interview A, 17:40). Another challenge has been the change of the leadership role: "Difficult to take on the role to become centre for so much attention, so many values" (Interview A, 35:31). Leader A also states in regards to the new leader role: "Now it is staff management. Previously, it was administrative management ... It matters more how you play yourself on the field ... Now something else is needed, you have to dare to be yourself" (Interview A, 41:23). Scharmer says (2009: 10), we have to learn to attend to what is said. Even if Leader A is aware of the importance of a close collaboration with the teachers, he is not letting go of his barriers to open up for more interaction, but is still keeping himself on a distant level.

School A has been characterised by a high degree of autonomous teachers due to a previous invisible leadership. When Leader A started, a clear agenda and new objectives were made. It seemed like the teachers were divided into two groups, either against or with him. Some of the teachers felt benefits were taken away from them, which naturally created resistance towards the new leader. Several teachers were asked to leave and the entire leader group was swapped out. The remaining teachers had to adjust themselves to the new working conditions (Interview A, 21:55). The teachers were only expected to stay at school if it was meaningful and necessary (Interview A, 12:00). This shows that Leader A is listening and giving attention to his employees on certain areas, as long as it does not interfere with his goals and therefore can be seen as a good investment (Interview A, 14:25). According to Scharmer (2009: 273), Leader A is here balancing between two fields of attention, I-in-me and I-in-it, characterised by speaking from the leader's viewpoint, what the leader thinks, as well as what the teachers want to hear.

## 6.2 Leader B

School B has continued more or less the same way as before the school reform (Interview B, 01:58) and Leader B has interpreted the reform as very much up to the school leaders themselves to figure out what and how they want to implement (Interview B, 01:48).

According to Scharmer (2009: 30), this is the most common and visible approach to change; a change occurs and we “react”. Like for Leader B, the focus is on what the leaders do, i.e. results and how they do it, i.e. structure and process based on experiences from the past. In this case, they have not been especially challenged by the new reform, there has been no extra need of more collaboration or change of power relations (Interview B, 01:26). Several of the initiatives in the reform had already been implemented, i.e. homework assistance (Interview B, 07:44).

Leader B’s approach to the implementation has been: “Ok, this is where we are now, how can we do it the best way?” (Interview B, 10:08). As a leader group, they have taken the stance to ease in the implementation and thereby release the pressure on the teachers (Interview B, 19:45). School B has also been covered by a rather flexible agreement with the school administration in the municipality (Interview B, 04:10) before the implementation of the school reform. After the reform, school B was therefore still able to offer flexible working ways to the teachers, and Leader B thinks the teachers would have approached the school reform and its changes in a very different way if the same conditions had not been offered (Interview B, 23:16).

The leader group has kept an optimistic focus in relation to the reform: “Let us do it the best we can. Not a laissez faire attitude, but still ...” (Interview B, 39:20). As the reform has not been their own choice, they focus on opportunities instead of limitations (Interview B, 40:52). This shows that she has the best intentions for her work environment, i.e. like the teachers are happy to go to work or the children can get the best out of the change.

The fact that the teachers have had less preparation time and been able to adjust this time themselves, has challenged both the teachers and the leader group. Many of the teachers have asked the leaders for help, which the leaders have provided if they could (Interview B, 03:19). This shows how Leader B is relying on, and trusting the teachers to contact her if there is anything to discuss. Another challenge has been the assisted learning (Interview B, 08:25). This activity should be planned by the teachers, but the time factor and the competency development of teachers and pedagogues seem to have been forgotten in the implementation process. The assisted learning has also impacted the relationship between the teachers and

pedagogues. It has not been running smoothly all the way, but they are working on it by trying to adapt and respect the different working conditions the two professions are facing (Interview B, 18:30). This shows she takes genuine interest in her employees and she is interested in finding solutions to create the best work environment for the teachers. The greatest challenge has been: “This is a test year, we have to take it easy” (Interview B, 19:22), an attitude that also affects the teachers.

School B has trust in their staff. It is a stable relation between the two parts, filled by mutual understanding and where the teachers have pretty much autonomy to experiment and do things the way they want to. Some of the teachers have started to “count hours” after the reform (Interview B, 13:31), but otherwise most of them continue the same way as they did before the implementation. As mentioned before, the teachers have not been affected the same way as many other schools of the work hours regulation due to their special agreement, therefore it seems like the reform has not been such a big changeover for them. Therefore, Leader B has not felt the need to make any major alterations in her approaches to leading her staff. The work environment is doing fine as it always has, therefore there is no need for changes. It is an open place where they can educate in different ways (Interview B, 22:42), dominated by flexibility and responsibility for own work tasks where the leader group trusts their staff to do their job (Interview B, 30:32). Many of the teachers have expressed satisfaction to be working at school B, as they have heard stories about other schools with far worse working conditions (Interview B, 44:13). The leaders also do extra things, like throwing parties, to show how much they appreciate the teachers (Interview B, 15:20). This proves that the leaders are truly willing to socialise with their employees and in a sense cater for them to prove their appreciation for the work is done.

### **6.3 Leader C**

“I don’t think you can be prepared for something that is so new” (Interview C, 02:56).

Leader C was strategically employed after the school reform to change the school’s traditional structure in a more reform approachable way, as well as to inspire a certain direction (Interview C, 41:41) with autonomous teams, flexible planning and “leadership learning” (Interview C, 08:51). This leader has had a previously successful experience from a similar implementation and was therefore aware of some of the obstacles that could appear in relation to the school reform.

However, the approach to the implementation was a very conscious consideration about how to lead, communicate, define teacher roles, see new opportunities (Interview C, 11:33) and express expectations and challenges. The implementation strategy was to “Poke my finger in the soil, but always be careful for it not to get stuck” (Interview C, 48:20). This indicates that even though he was very willing to listen to the teachers and get down to their level to understand them as individuals and the way they worked, he was however not willing to let it compromise or control his own way of leading. Leader C was determined of the direction, but wanted to involve the teachers to get them to follow the same direction, as well as develop the school, challenge each other, maintain openness and ask critical questions (Interview C, 48:11). School leader C saw this new position as a gift to develop something new based on his own experiences from the past (Interview C, 1:00:20).

The teachers now shifted from an autonomous working way to closer team building and Leader C’s goal was to get more of this type of feedback “I am so happy for my child’s team of teachers in the second year” (Interview C, 45:07) instead of individual feedback only. By emphasizing more collective values, Leader C’s approach to change is significant to what Scharmer (2009: 51) calls reframing, where the response of how to respond to change is characterised by reflecting and changing the underlying pattern of thought. By making his employees work together more collectively, they will find more meaning and inspiration in their work. Leader C has spent energy on communication and visible leadership. Instead of being in his office, he has attended class education to get to know the teachers in action as well as being able to provide relevant feedback to the staff (Interview C, 17:19). It has also been important to express the narrative direction: “Where I want to go, so everyone wants to go there” (Interview C, 15:00). This indicates his desire to have all of his employees on board with him, understanding the direction being taken and therefore working towards the same goal.

The biggest challenge has been the habitual thinking. The teachers have been used to working autonomously, controlling their own working hours and doing things by routine: “If this is right for me, I will just do it” (Interview C, 03:32). At school C, the teachers have been used to a certain way of doing things and the big clash in the leader group has been to break this pattern of “Let us ask the teachers first” and “This is the way we used to do it” (Interview C, 45:41). In other terms, this is called “downloading”, the first phase in the U process. When downloading occurs, actions are reproduced by patterns of the past without any reflections or views of the world in a different way. These patterns have to be broken to be able to move down in the U

and see the situation with fresh eyes. Leader C has broke the existing codex of always asking the teachers of what they thought. Of course this led to some resistance against Leader C. At the same time, other teachers who have missed clear directions, are now experiencing new opportunities and thinking. This also shows that Leader C's approach to the job was clearly strategically driven by being a strong leader determined to show the desired direction (Interview C, 14:00).

During the implementation, Leader C has actively tried to understand how the teachers have been working by attending the teachers' classes and emphasizing the need of expressing challenges and including the teachers in planning, for example (Interview C, 07:52). This shows that Leader C takes interest in his employees by spending time with them to build a relationship and to understand their way of teaching by talking with the teachers. By shifting the structure of our attention, Scharmer believes we can access our blind spot, the inner place from where we operate or the intention behind what we are doing. When we are engaged in dialogue, we open up for our heart and connect with other people. The deeper you listen, the more empathic your listening is (Scharmer 2009: 12). By focusing on the teachers and providing them with necessary information to why there are changes within the organisation, Leader C implies he has opened up his heart and he is ready to be attentive. When people within organisations understand and sense the desire, meaning and necessity to change, that is when they are ready to move - to think, sense and act in a new way (Belling 2012: 11).

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The Danish school reform is the same for all public schools in Denmark. Still, as we can see from the analysis above, there are significant differences in the way of approaching the reform, focus and challenge areas, as well as changes in the relation to the teachers. The point of departure for all three leaders was their relative positivity towards the reform. They were all aware of their role as figureheads, that the way they reacted to the implementation, had a contagious effect on the teachers. The school reform itself has not been the issue, the biggest problem has been the work hour regulations, which has caused most implications for both school leaders and indeed the teachers. The leaders have all interpreted the work hour regulations in different ways, which has affected their approach to the implementation.

Clearly, leader B has had the smoothest transition, based on a "golden" deal they had been able to negotiate with the municipality right before the reform was implemented, which hardly

changed the working conditions for the teachers. Leader A had also interpreted the new working hours rather flexibly and expected the teachers to be present at school when it was relevant only. In contradiction, school C's working hours had been decided by the municipality where the teachers had to be present at school all day. Therefore, the approach the leaders are taking is not only based on their own leadership styles, but indeed also by external factors.

## Chapter 7 - Discussion

Throughout the analyses we have argued for, and given examples for why and how these school leaders have different approaches to their tasks and employees. Using the examples and arguments presented in those chapters, we will in the following section put these leaders in contrast to each other by combining the various analyses. The three theories used in this project accompany each other to create an understanding of these schools and why the leaders have the approach to change that they do. The interconnectedness of these theories became clear during the analyses as the same examples were deemed to be the relevant ones when discussing how the differences could be understood. From that basis discussions will be made about the leaders' similarities and differences, and which factors impact these.

Being new to the school and experiencing both economic and personnel issues on top of the introduction of the reform, has had an undisputed effect on Leader A's style of leadership. Personally viewing his job as one of "cleaning up", means that he has a very goal-oriented and authoritarian approach to his employees. This in turn leads him to attempt to create a culture that is very professional and loyal seeing as Leader A is focused on having everyone understand and equally commit to reaching what he views as common goals. Seeing as the issues he was met with became a higher priority for him than the reform itself, his focus has been on straightening out the school rather than changing it to specifically fit the reform. Overall, the changes experienced in this school seem to be very directly influenced and implemented by the leader.

Due to her long history at the school and her belief in the success of the existing management system, Leader B has consciously not changed her way of leading as the external circumstances has not drastically changed. Due to the fact that she knows her employees and the organisation so well, Leader B has been able to delegate responsibility to the teachers, which in turn has created a very trusting and flexible culture. Also actively involving the teachers in the decision making processes and not hiding personal feelings amplifies the mutual trust and creates an added layer of harmony and unity in the culture. Therefore, when dealing with the change, Leader B has maintained the same approach to her leadership, as she feels it is not necessary to make any large alterations to make the reform work at the school, and knows she can rely on the existing culture.

With the school having been threatened with closure, Leader C is also faced with the task of

marketing and developing the school. This makes his leadership style very strategic and goal-oriented and thereby hoping to inspire his employees to challenge themselves and create a culture based on development. The fact that he takes such a visible approach, communicating clearly his visions and goals also makes the culture one of collaboration. The plan with his progressive involvement is to motivate the teachers to collectively reach the strategic goals rather than focus on their individual performance. Therefore, when approaching this change, he consciously makes up his mind of how to tackle the challenge, and uses the strength of his individual employees while at the same time expressing the need for teamwork.

As can be seen through the descriptions of these leaders, their styles and the culture that they create all vary. However, it cannot be said that they are all vastly different seeing as they have had the same principles they have had to implement in the same type of public institutions. But then the question that can be asked is, when there are these similar and somewhat strict guidelines they must follow, then how can they present themselves so differently? This next section will put the three schools in opposition to each other and discuss which factors causes them to have different approaches.

After having analysed Leader A and Leader B, it becomes very clear that they have two very different attitudes towards their own positions and their relations to their employees. However, they both appear to work well with their municipalities and the politicians that manage them. This close relationship has meant for Leader A that he has had a thorough understanding of what is expected of him as a leader in terms of the reform and its changes. It also creates a sense of trust from the municipality that he will lead, in his own way, in accordance with the municipality's desired outcome. Leader B also understands what is expected of her, however she used the close relationship to be able to push her own ideas and methods through. Her main focus has been to gain the best circumstances for her employees. This is because she feels that the way they have been running the school up till now has been the most optimal solution for them. The reason Leader A does not use this relationship in the same way is because he does not have the same relation to his employees, nor feels that the way the school was being run was the most optimal in the first place. His focus is not on the employees' well-being either so much as instead to straighten up the school and make sure it functions optimally in terms of the municipality's goals. Therefore, it is argued that the main difference between the approaches of these two leaders has been the pre-existing culture and internal relations.



Where Leader A and Leader B strongly differs with internal circumstances, Leader B and Leader C differ more in terms of external circumstances. Even though Leader C recently joined the school, in the same way Leader A also did, the internal circumstances for him are vastly different. The situations Leader C came into were more along the lines of Leader B, where the employees had a good, professional relationship with each other and seemed to take care of each other. However, where this set up worked well for Leader B due to their trusting and experimental nature, Leader C felt that the existing community culture was not innovative enough for this school. This is because School C had been threatened with closure, and it had become a necessity to procure more students. Therefore these external threats required Leader C to have a more hands on approach, giving direction and tweak the culture to become more proactively collaborative. The lack of these threats for Leader B meant she did not have to alter the culture, but could rather continue allowing the teachers to participate in the decision making processes. Leader C is also very interested in having this collaboration, and shows this by constantly communicating and ensuring all employees are on the same page. However he has not been interested in their participation in the decision making process, as he is strongly aware of the direction he wants to take in order to make the school thrive. Therefore, this external factor of not having enough appeal has caused Leader C to take a more dominant and decisive approach to leading his employees, as he has a specific goal he deems vital to reach.

In opposition to Leader B, both Leader A and Leader C have recently joined their schools with specific purposes and goals in mind. They have both put themselves in a commander-like role, where neither are particularly interested in having the teachers partake in the their decision-making process. In the two comparisons above, there is a significant factor as to why two different approaches are relevant, whereas in this comparison, it is less obvious to distinguish what particular external factors have impacted their styles. Their strongest similarity is their goal orientation and belief in their own abilities to take charge, mirroring a tendency towards a “private-sector” approach. Yet, their biggest difference is the manner in which they attempt to unite their employees towards their own objectives. Leader A has a very “my way or the highway” approach, expecting the teachers to adjust to his newly introduced culture and the profile of the school, or essentially find themselves a different job. This indicates that the employees that are left are aware of the new circumstance and therefore also accepts his means to the end. Leader C on the other hand uses storytelling to lead the teachers towards the strategic common goal of the school. Contrary to Leader A, Leader C is more interested in

getting to know the teachers individually to access their potential and find a way to make them work more dynamically together. This communication makes the employees understand the necessity of his goals and allows them to be on the same page.

Even though these three schools have had to deal with the same reform, and are part of the same public institution, this discussion has outlined how the changes brought on can be approached in various manners. This discussion has also presented how not only internal or external factors can impact these approaches, but also differences in personal methods. It has therefore been discussed that it is not simply one specific element which causes these leadership styles to differ. The conclusions reached from a combination of the analyses and this discussion will follow in the next section.

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion

The interest of this project has been to understand from a leader's perspective how implementing the same change can be approached differently within the same form of public institution. The new school reform introduced by the Danish government in 2014 has been a prime example of this, as it includes all public schools. However it is key to note that not all schools are the same. They face each their individual challenges, both internally and externally, and all have their different daily managers, where part of their role becomes tackling this task of change implementation. Therefore this project has set out to investigate to what extent does leadership styles differ between public school leaders during an organisational change and why?

After having analysed three different schools in terms of their leader's attitude toward leadership style, the culture this in turn creates and what impact this has on their approach to change, we were able to create a discussion where these three were compared. This gave us an understanding of the extent to which they differ and the reasons behind it.

After undertaking this discussion, it becomes plain that these three leaders differ to a fairly great extent. Leader A has an authoritative approach and has consciously attempted to alter the culture into a professional culture that has made the approach to change quite determined. He has had a very clear vision of the results he wanted, has expressed them and expected the remaining employees to accept and adapt to his way of leading. The reason he has taken this approach is because he was met with a lot more confusion within the school's organisation than originally expected. This created a need for someone to take charge and take this goal oriented attitude, which is exactly what Leader A has done.

On the quite opposite end of the scale, Leader B has made almost no changes when having to implement this new reform partly due to the favourable agreement acquired. This is due to her very involving approach, where she happily delegates responsibility out to the individual teacher. This has in turn maintained a culture of trust and harmony, which has allowed the change to be tackled in a flexible manner where all employees have been included. The reason this appears to have been a successful method for Leader B is based in large part on the culture that was already established along with the favourable agreement that was made with the municipality in terms of her interpretation of the reform. Having this mutual trust already in place, Leader B could count on the teachers to continue working as they always have, while

they could trust her to ensure their best interests.

Finally, Leader C's approach has been very strategic and progressive. This has been due to the fact that the school he entered in to had been threatened with closure. Therefore, one of his primary tasks besides implementing the reform has been to increase the school's appeal to new parents and potential pupils. This external pressure has caused him to be very goal oriented. Because Leader C has wanted to take the approach of lifting the school as a team, he has been highly communicative and informative towards the teachers. However, with his strong goal orientation, it has not been his intention to actually include the teachers in the decision making processes. This has him to create a culture based on development and collaboration to reach his goals.

Therefore, to answer to what extent they differ, enough arguments have been presented to argue that these three schools differ to a large extent in terms of their leadership approaches to change. When investigating the causes of their differences, we found that there was no one specific factor which exclusively set them apart. However, we can conclude that there are a number of factors that all play together to create these different impacts on their approaches. For example, their individual agreements with the municipalities effects their flexibility and work conditions. Other external factors, such as questionable economy and threats of closure, can also effect the leader's priorities and focus. Internally, existing cultures and structures can impact how the leader is able to relate to his employees and delegate responsibility. Along with this, it cannot be denied that a leader's own personality and professional history has a great impact on his own approach to leadership. That there are so many impacting factors that can present themselves in various combinations goes to show that even though working within the same public institution and dealing with the same introduced change, there are countless different approaches when having to implement change in the public schools in Denmark.

## Chapter 9 - Reflections

After delving deeper into this topic and project, it quickly became apparent how many angles or factors there were to this subject, and how many different analyses could be made. The primary extra angle that could have been incorporated, which was in fact also part of our original plan, was that of the teachers' angle. It had been an intention of ours from the beginning to, along with interviewing the school leaders, collect empirical data through focus groups with the teachers. This would have given us an extra layer to analyse from, as we would have been able to understand the implications of the leaders' approaches more thoroughly. Furthermore, it would have given us the opportunity to evaluate the culture in a different way. With our empirical data now, we only understand the culture from the leaders' perspectives and their initiatives. However, with the teachers' input we would have been able to deduce whether or not this was in fact the actual culture at the school. We would also have been able to evaluate whether or not this culture was effective in helping the rest of the employees implement these changes, and not just the leader.

From creating the discussion, it became evident to us that it would be interesting to investigate what would happen if the leaders had been in one of the different schools. This is because each leader seemed to fit the schools they were in and their specific needs. For example, we had an interesting time discussing what would have happened had Leader A been placed in School B. Would his methods and approaches suffice? Would he as a leader have had to change? Or the teachers or culture for that matter? Also considering that both Leader A and C were new to their positions and were taking very active approaches to reaching their goals. It would have been exciting to go back to the schools in for example 5 years to see whether their methods and the new cultures they created had kept. It would of course also have been interesting to return to School B to see if they could still continue to maintain their long standing culture and flexible leadership style, or whether the implications of the reform would have eventually forced them to change their approach.

Even though it was interesting and exciting to view this topic through three different cases, we realised just how unique each school is with each their challenges and circumstances.

Therefore, another approach to this topic would have been to choose only one school and go thoroughly in depth with it. With this approach we would certainly have had to take the teachers' perspective into account and would also have been able to include investigations

into aspects such as the school's structure, their environment and the language and communication used.

In terms of what was actually done for this project, it could also have been relevant to include second hand data in the form of documents issued by the school and its leader. This would have given us perhaps a more objective and official view of what the school and its leader's stance was in terms of how they run the school or how they intended to implement the reform. This could be seen through documents that would have been sent out to the teachers when preparing them for what was about to happen. Other secondary data could have presented itself in the form of government issues about what the direct motives and demands were towards the schools. Had we have had the time it would also have been exciting to go back and investigate some of the theorists that for example Leader C mentioned, or attempted to find some of the letter-to-the-editors that Leader A referred to in his interview. Having a clearer idea of the direction the project would take before conducting the interviews may have led to more specific questions, however it is a catch 22 - we did not know specifically which direction it would take or where the emphasis would lie until we had conducted the interviews. Therefore, if there had been more time, follow up interviews would have been exciting to have had.

However, all in all, this project has conducted the necessary research and analyses in order to answer the research question. Therefore, these speculations of what else could have been done are more bonus ideas of what could have made the project more dynamic having had more time, or different approaches that could have been used.

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