Evolving organizational relationships in the era of accountability

A case study of a senior leadership group in a lower secondary school in Greater Manchester

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Abstract

The case study has explored accountability mechanisms and evolving organizational relationships in a lower secondary school in the Greater Manchester area, U.K. Through a series of six interviews with members of the school's senior leadership group, the study has furthermore focused on revealing which accountability mechanisms might exist within the case school, and how organizational relationships between senior leaders might evolve in the event of intervention by external bodies such as Ofsted.

The study is built on the key theoretical concepts of Weberian bureaucracy, New Public Management and networks. These concepts are linked to internal/external and professional/hierarchical accountability mechanisms. Leadership practice within the school is seen as distributed throughout the various organizational levels.

To acquire insight in these areas a semi-structured interview method was chosen. By studying notes and transcriptions of the six interviews, a theme-oriented coding of the data was conducted which furthermore resulted in a category-based analysis.

The main problem of the research was; **In times of accountability, how do organizational relationships evolve within the senior leadership group at "Middletown College"?**

Key words: organizational relationships, internal accountability, external accountability, professional accountability, hierarchical accountability, governance, distributed leadership, bureaucracy, New Public Management, networks

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Sofiemyr and Tjörn,

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Why accountabilty and evolving organizational relationships?

The quality in outcomes of schools has increasingly become a focus point in the area of education (Hall, 2009, p. 2). This has in Norway for instance been emphasized in national documents such as Whitepaper 31 (St.melding 31, 2007/2008), "Quality in education". Here it is clearly stated that school leaders are held accountable to their schools' outcomes and development to both local authorities, parents, politicians and the rest of the local community (ibid. pp. 44-45). Formal assessments of results are measured in terms of state examinations and national standardized tests, as well as in international studies such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMMS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study).

Even though senior leaders in schools are held personally accountable to their results, which may furthermore have serious consequences if these results are substandard over a period of time, there is research that supports the view that accountability in the context of the Norwegian educational system has hardly yet materialized (Elstad, 2008, p. 233). This is supported by C. Biott et al. (2001), who claim that based on their research, accountability is so far not perceived as a problem in the Norwegian context (ibid., p. 407).

If we look further abroad, it however seems as if accountabilty is a force which for example British school leaders have to take more seriously than their Norwegian colleagues. Schools in Great Britain are held accountable to national inspections by Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), which are conducted every three years. The results of these inspections are published annually on the Internet, and national newspapers have every year ranking lists of the "winners and losers". In many cases, schools that successively receive poor evaluations are forced to shut down, only to reopen under a new name and leadership. Møller (2004) describes accountability of British head teachers in regards to Ofsted inspections, and says; *"As a head teacher in England it's impossible to ignore Ofsted"* (ibid., p. 177).

Through a number of visits in Great Britain, both in England and in Scotland, I have become interested in how the British school systems work, and especially in learning more about

internal and external accountability mechanisms. I have furthermore been intrigued by the way senior leaders and teachers in British schools discuss external interventional bodies such as Ofsted and School Improvement Partners (SIP), and this has motivated me to "dig deeper" so to speak.

Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) obviously plays an important role in the assessment of British schools. Actually how important they are, compared to other external interventional bodies, was for me a question that I wanted to further explore on at least three levels.

First, since the reports of Ofsted inspections are publically accessible through their website (Ofsted, 2010), it was interesting for me as a researcher to study the case school's previous results the past decade. The full rounds of inspection between 2000 and 2009, as well as the recent subject inspection, gave me an impression of what the strengths of the case school were according to the Ofsted reports. Additionally there were obviously a range of challenges that the school had to address, and it would be from a research point of view to attempt to reveal if these issues had actually been addressed by the senior leadership group.

Secondly, it was interesting to me to see how the senior leaders of the school perceived Ofsted, as well as how they thought Ofsted viewed Middletown College.

Finally, I have wanted to explore what defines organizational relationships between senior leaders in the case school, and how these relationships possibly evolve during times of external intervention or in the event of a change in formal leadership.

1.2 Research questions and problem

As mentioned above there were several areas of focus which I wanted to pursue, in the hope of revealing accountability mechanisms and organizational relationships on the professional, managerial and public level within the whole school community. Through preparations for writing this thesis, there were five major questions which I wanted to try to answer through analyzing the data material;

A. *Which accountabilty mechanisms are central in the case school?*
B. *Which role do these accountability mechanisms play for the senior leaders in the case school?*

C. *How does leadership practice take place in the case school?*

D. *To the case school, how important are the Ofsted-reports between 2000 and 2009, and how are they utilized by the senior leadership?*

E. *How do organizational relationships evolve within the senior leadership group in the case school during external intervention?*

Based on the research questions above, the main problem which I have wanted to explore is;

> ***In times of accountability, how do organizational relationships evolve within the senior leadership group at "Middletown College"?***

1.3 Outline of thesis

Before moving on, it is here necessary to present a brief outline of how this thesis is organized. First, I will in chapter 2 give an overview of the theoretical framework which I've chosen to use as "conceptual lenses" when analyzing the case school.

Second, chapter 3 describes the case school in question, in order to give the reader a picture of what type of organization we're dealing with and also which leadership structures exist.

Furthermore I will in chapter 4 present which methods were used in the research, especially focusing on how the data was collected and analyzed.

Fourth, I will in chapter 5 present the most important data, through analysis of transcriptions and notes taken during the interviews.

Finally, chapter 6 will discuss the findings and present some possible conclusions. These conclusions are based on my main impressions through the analysis.

2.0 Theoretical framework

2.1 Brief outline of theoretical concepts

The theoretical focus of my research has been on three levels. I will here give a short presentation of the three major sets of "conceptual lenses" which I have used in the course of analyzing our case school, and which are further explored in the following sections 2.2 - 2.4.

First I have looked at three ideal models of public administration, here represented by a) **Traditional Weberian bureaucracy**, b) **New Public Management** and c) **Networks**. I will discuss these three models mostly through the work of M. Weber (1971), J.P. Olsen (2005), R.A.W. Rhodes (1994) and A.M. Kjær (2004). These ideas are presented in section 2.2.

Secondly, I have looked at two approaches to school development; a) **school improvement** and b) **school effectiveness**, as presented by C. Chapman (2005). I have linked these two approaches to various sets of accountability mechanisms such as a) **internal/external accountability**, b) **professional/hierarchical accountability** as well as the concept of **governance**. In addition to Chapman (2005) I have examined the work of M. Brown (1998), A. Sinclair (1995), C. Abelmann & R. Elmore (1999), Elstad (2008), Birkeland (2008) and finally Møller (2005). This is further presented in section 2.3.

Third, I have in section 2.4 explored leadership practice as being distributed in the organization, to understand how interaction between senior leaders takes place. **Distributed leadership** is briefly discussed through the research of J. Spillane (2004/2006) as well as E. Ottesen & J. Møller (2006).

2.2 Weberian Bureaucracy, New Public Management and Networks

2.2.1 Bureaucracy according to Weber

J. P. Olsen (2005) outlines the main rationale and theoretical concept of bureaucracy, such as claimed by German sociologist M. Weber. According to Olsen (2005, p. 4), there are in the Weberian sense of understanding three main characteristics of bureaucracy; a) first, the term signifies a distinct organizational setting, an office or bureau, b) secondly, it refers to a

professional, full-time administrative staff with life-long employment, and finally c) bureaucracy implies a larger organization and normative structure where government is founded on authority. Thus, organizational relationships of for example professional manner are central to the bureaucracy and to the study of government and leadership structures and practices.

Weber (1971) discusses in one of his major works *"Power and Bureaucracy"* what he refers to as the three pure forms of legitimate rule; a) legal rule, b) traditional rule and c) charismatic rule. Within the limits of my thesis I will not dwell any longer with the two final forms, but it is necessary to briefly take a closer look at Weber's (ibid., pp. 91-104) ideas of legal rule.

Legal rule is rule through power of attorney, in other words through written laws. Furthermore, the purest form of legal rule is bureaucracy. It is however important to point out that even if bureaucracy is technically speaking the purest form, no rule is exclusively bureaucratic (ibid., p. 93). Weber however points out that it is not the civil servant (bureaucrat) himself that is obeyed through his personal rights, rather through his position where a given rule determines who is to be obeyed, as well as to which extent orders are to be followed (ibid., p. 91-92). His powers are limited to his specific area of professional expertise (ibid.) and he can therefore not act as a hero on behalf of his own personal interest or aspirations.

A normative organizational structure implies furthermore that the professional staff, often called civil servants or bureaucrats, performs their designated tasks with a sense of what are correct operating procedures, and what are not. These designated tasks are completed in compliance to a strict set of procedures, or laws, which means that they (in a strict sense) execute their given tasks through a common idea of legal order. As Olsen (2005, p.5) moreover points out, commands and rules are followed because they are given by office-holders as trustees of an impersonal rational-legal order. But how can one ensure that these commands and orders always followed through?

According to Olsen (2005, p. 6), Weber meant that there are two mechanisms that determine a given bureaucrat's willingness to follow rules and regulations; motivation and capacity. Motivation was among other things a result of material incentives which could be attained through life-long service. Secondly, a bureaucrat's capacity to follow these rules and ethical

codes depended on education and experience, as well as support from their formal leader. This leads to ideas of professionalism in a formal sense.

There are however certain "dangers" in a system of purely bureaucratic organizations, such as misuse of power, corruption and that rules/regulations are followed too slavishly (Olsen, 2005, p.8). This has resulted in a massive criticism towards bureaucracy among researchers from the late 1930's and which culminated in the 1970's. Critics have claimed that such a system is too inefficient, expensive and non-flexible (ibid.). As a reform strategy, bureaucratic public administration was to some extent then abandoned, and a more market-oriented system was incorporated in public offices in the 1980's and 1990's. Civilians/citizens were no longer considered as "subjects" in a mere rule-based society, but rather more as "customers" where central and local government delivered specific services. This was the birth of New Public Management.

2.2.2 New Public Management

Public administration has undergone several major transitions the last two centuries, from pre-industrial bureaucracy in the 1800's, via the high-modern society of the 20st century until today's neo-classical and management based leadership where privatization and market competition are important strategies. It seems if there has been a paradigmatic shift in terms of reform strategies from (Weberian) bureaucracy to the above mentioned market oriented organizations (Olsen, 2005, p. 3), however not through replacement as such. It is here however important to point out that paradigmatic changes do not necessarily lead to that for example bureaucracy is replaced by networks or New Public Management (NPM). According to Olsen (2005) they may rather continue to exist side by side, however with varying emphasis. As he furthermore claims; "Several organizational forms co-exist, but the mix changes over time" (ibid., p. 27).

Western countries such as Great Britain and the U.S.A., during conservative government rule, underwent massive political reforms in the 1980's. These reforms lead to a system where public administration was described as "a supermarket delivering a wide variety of public services, disciplined by market competition" (ibid., p.9). R.A.W. Rhodes (1994, p. 144), with reference to Hood (1991), defines the doctrine of New Public Management (NPM) as including seven components; a) hands-on professional management, b) explicit standards and

measures of performance, c) greater emphasis on output control, d) disaggregation of public sector units, e) greater competition in the public sector, f) stress on private sector styles of management and g) greater discipline in resource use.

New Public Management is, as Olsen (2005, p. 9) furthermore points out, characterized through terms such as "value for money", "more for less" and "best practice". A central goal for public authorities was to strive to offer the best possible quality services such as healthcare, education and public transportation for the least amount of cost. As mentioned above, this goal was partly achieved through privatization or at least a closer cooperation between the private and public sectors. Olsen (ibid.) argues that it is necessary for interdependent public and private actors to cooperate, persuade, bargain and build trust. Moreover Olsen (ibid.) claims that it is crucial that they need to join forces in areas such as expertise and financial resources. Rhodes (1994, p. 141) points out the fact that "contracting-out" is one of the major changes of public administration in the U.K., where local government is increasingly adopting an enabling role, where it delivers services through other public and private organizations.

A relevant example of close cooperation between the private and public sectors is within the educational area in Great Britain, where new schools are often financed through a mixture public and private funding, and where the local authorities lease the school premises from a private company. The private company on its side is responsible for the maintenance and management of the school buildings. This system is also characteristic for the case school in Greater Manchester, which is interesting to further explore. However, it is important to point out that the case-school exemplifies reform strategies more in the direction of what has been called as a system of external networking, than a mere NPM-approach. This is further explored in the following section.

2.2.3 Post-New Public Management: Rediscovering bureaucracy or Networking?

Does bureaucracy exclude New Public Management and vice versa? Is bureaucracy an obsolete system of public administration? Has New Public Management failed? These are all questions which might be interesting to follow. Olsen (2005) has explored the possible approach that the system of bureaucracy should be reinstated. It has been concluded, as Olsen

(ibid.) claims, that post-new public administration recognize its own potential and find its own way of changing institutions and organizations (ibid., p. 22). He furthermore claims that part of the advice is to "go back to basics", which may be Weberian bureaucracy (ibid.). If New Public Management has failed, much due to recent market failure in the last two decades, it may be time to look at previous systems of public administration, he claims.

Again, Olsen (ibid., p. 23-27) argues that there are two conclusions which can be drawn; a) it is unlikely that public administration can be ruled by one principle alone, and b) bureaucratic organization is a part of a repertoire of overlapping and co-existing forms in contemporary society, and so are their market-oriented counterparts, or cooperating partners such as Olsen (2005) might have called them. These conclusions are fundamentally important to the analysis.

It seems if there is evidence that I can conclude that it is difficult to argue for either a bureaucratic, rule-driven system or on the other hand a market-oriented system which caters for public needs and demands. It might be fruitful to explore the positive sides of each system, and recognize that neither of the two systems are sufficient as ways of leading to understand today's modern organizations. I could maybe argue, based on the research discussed above, that a certain level of flexibility may be upheld, but certain principles and regulations are needed so that the system doesn't fall apart. As Olsen (2005) ends his paper; *"Rediscovering Weber's analysis of bureaucratic organization enriches our understanding of such questions and of public administration in* general" (ibid., p. 27). Moreover, networking is part of thinking in this complex of change and reform.

2.2.4 Governance in networks according to Kjær

Hence, as far as I understand, Olsen (2005) argues in favor of a third model of public administration, where emphasis is put on other values than those found in traditional bureaucracy and in New Public Management. This brings the focus over to networks in public administration.

A.M. Kjær (2004) discusses the definition of governance, and concludes that in sum "governance refers to something broader than government, and is about steering and the rules of the game" (ibid., p. 7). When it comes to the institutional level, governance can further-

more be defined as "the setting of rules, the application of rules and the enforcement of rules" (ibid., p. 10). Kjær (2004) also claims that these rules need to legitimated, and moreover that this legitimacy can derive from both democratic values as well as from the need for efficiency (ibid., p. 12). Since one of the focus areas in this thesis is accountability, it is interesting to see that Kjær (2004) moreover sees an important link between governance and accountability mechanisms. She says; "Governance has a lot to do with defining mechanisms of accountability" (ibid., p. 12). Before moving over to defining accountability and accountability mechanisms, it's relevant to outline what Kjær (2004) sees as central characteristics of hierarchies, markets and networks.

Kjær (2004) discusses what she sees as a development towards public administration defined by networks, rather than either bureaucratic hierarchies or systems characterized by New Public Management. This supports the findings of Olsen (2005) which are pointed out in the preceding section. She also claims that the increase of networks in policy implementation may be best observed at the local level (ibid., p. 37), which may be relevant to my research study which focuses among other areas on the professional contact between local authorities and the case school. The main concepts of the three ideal models of public administration are then discussed by Kjær (2004), who refers to R.A.W. Rhodes (1999). Each of these systems has certain characteristics or "rules of the game" as Kjær defines them, and these are presented in Table 1 below;

	Hierarchies (Weberian bureaucracy)	Markets (NPM)	Networks (Post-NPM)
Basis of relationship	Employment relationship	Contract and property rights	Resource exchange
Degree of dependence	Dependent	Independent	Interdependant
Means of exchange	Authority	Prices	Trust
Means of conflict	Rules and commands	Haggling and the courts	Diplomacy
Culture	Subordination	Competition	Reciprocity

Table 1: Comparing markets, hierarchies and networks. *Source:* Kjær (2004), p. 42

However, Kjær (2004, pp. 43-44) does also point out that hierarchies and networks may coexist or even overlap each other, which we study closer in the analysis in chapter 5 of this thesis. From my understanding of Kjær (2004) and of Olsen (2005), I assume that networks in local public administration can signify not only external networks between public institutions, but also internally between public administrators in one single institution. Therefore it was interesting to me to see if there was evidence of internal as well as external networks among public administrators in relation to the case school in my study and moreover, how these networks promote what I term evolving organizational relationships. I will now turn to the questions on how such relationships are formed in the new era of accountability and governance.

2.3 Accountability

2.3.1 School effectiveness and school improvement

The British researcher M. Brown (1998) has studied exam results and Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) reports, and she concluded the following;"*The publication of league tables in relation to examination results, whether national or local, can improve the effectiveness of an individual school, by stimulating a useful process.....which leads to a genuine raising of educational standards"* (Brown, 1998, p. 33). Does the publication of league tables improve the effectiveness of schools? It seems if that Brown in her article argues that effective schools lead to improved educational standards. At this point it's therefore necessary to discuss the difference between the school effectiveness and school improvement approaches.

C. Chapman (2005) has examined the parallel development of two approaches to studying school performance; school effectiveness (SE) and school improvement (SI). However, he concludes that these two movements have since the early 1990's converged (Chapman, 2005, p. 6). But what characterizes these two approaches? A commonly used definition of school effectiveness is that an effective school is "one in which pupils progress more than might be expected from consideration of its intake" (ibid., p. 6). Furthermore, school effectiveness focuses on the school as an organization, and is concerned with change in pupil outcomes (ibid., p. 9).

On the other hand the school improvement approach is according to Chapman (2005) commonly used in two ways; a) as a common sense term to describe efforts in making schools a better place for students and b) in a more technical sense to describe the processes that contribute to raising student achievement (Chapman, 2005 p. 7). This approach, focuses more on the school as a social organization and on school processes, and is more concerned with the journey of school improvement than its destination (ibid., p. 9).

Through interviews with members of the senior management level, especially in the aftermath of the two full Ofsted inspections between 2000 and 2009 as well as prior to a new inspection in 2010, it will be interesting to see if there has been a focus on either school effectiveness or on school improvement, or if there is evidence that supports Chapman's (2005, p.6) findings where there have recently been attempts to combine the two traditions. It will also be interesting to see if there is a link between school improvement as well as school effectiveness in conjunction with the organizational systems which were outlined in section 2.1. I will now move on to presenting definitions of accountability, and will furthermore discuss some of the various forms of accountability; internal, external, professional and hierarchical.

2.3.2 Accountability and responsibility

Relating to the three ideal types of public administration, it is interesting to discuss the distinction between responsibility and accountability and the relationships between these concepts. One possibility is to make an analytic distinction, where responsibility refers to institutional and bureaucratic structures/conditions on the one side and accountability to output-oriented management strategies on the other side. The act of delegating *responsibility* to others, and on the other hand to be *held accountable* for output is discussed among others by Afsar et al. (2006, pp. 210-211).

E. Elstad (2008) defines accountability mechanisms as processes which occur when a school is held accountable (Elstad, 2008 p. 211). Mechanisms are according to Elstad (ibid.), with reference to Elster (1999), understood as *"frequently occurring and easily observable causal patterns which are released during generally unknown conditions or with undetermined consequences"*.

Kjær (2004) points out that accountability implies responsibility, and to be accountable is to be held responsible (Kjær, 2004, p. 14). With reference to Day & Klein (1987), Kjær (2004) furthermore claims; *"To talk about responsibility is to define who can call for an account, and who owes a duty of explanation"* (ibid., p. 14).

However, J. Møller says; "*the way in which the term accountability is used internationally, implies more than merely being responsible and taking responsibility. It involves that professionals and professions are accountable for the quality (or lack of) of their performance, and that their performance may be publically documented*" (Møller, 2005, p. 23, author's translation). N. Birkeland (2008) argues on the other hand that accountabilty *"may be understood as a trinity of holistic revision, performance based management and governance"* (Birkeland, 2008, p. 60, author's translation).

Thus, is accountability merely the same as responsibility? Sinclair (1995) points out that there are researchers who claim that accountability should be differentiated as one form of responsibility (ibid., p. 221). There is however research that supports the viewpoint that these terms are not totally synonymous. Afsar et al. (2006) moreover argue that responsibility involves steering through rules and content, and on the other hand that accountability involves steering through results and goals (ibid., p. 210).

In the following sections accountability is understood as something more than just responsibility. Being held accountable has to do with placement of responsibility related to new expectations and demands, formed by administrations and the public. To conclude, S. T. Hopmann (2009) argues that the common core of accountability is; "a slow, but steady transition from what I call 'management of placements' (*Verortung*) towards a *'management of expectations'* (*Vermessung*), by which the ways and means of dealing with 'ill-defined' problems, such as health, education, security, and resurrection, are changed fundamentally" (ibid., p. 422-423). As we will see in sections 2.3.3 – 2.3.7 there are multiple forms of accountability, which together form a basis for our analysis. In the analysis I will furthermore explore which expectations seem to exist within the case school.

2.3.3 Defining accountability: According to Sinclair

Through research which A. Sinclair (1995) based on interviews with fifteen public Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in the Australian state of Victoria, she looked specifically at how they practised accountability. According to Sinclair's research, the concept of accountability *"entails a relationship in which people are required to explain and take responsibility for their actions"* (Sinclair, 1995, p. 220-221). However, she argues that the search for an all-purpose definition of public sector accountability produces a legalistic prescription;

*"in the context of a relationship with an institution or person which or who is in a position to enforce their responsibility by **calling them to account for what they (and/or their subordinates) have or have not done** ... subject to an institution's or a person's oversight, direction or request that they provide information on their action or justify it before a review authority..."*

(Thynne & Goldring, as cited in Sinclair, 1995, p. 221)

Through her findings Sinclair (1995, p. 223) argues furthermore that there exists five major forms of accountability; a) political, b) managerial, c) public, d) professional and e) personal. Within the limits of this thesis all five forms of accountability will not be discussed, but three forms will be focused upon; *managerial, public and professional.* Sinclair, refers to Alford (1992), and claims that managerial accountability *"is seen to focus on monitoring inputs and outputs or outcomes"* (Sinclair, 1995, p. 227). An example of outcomes in the educational field may be the yearly GCSE results of each school, which are scrutinized internally by school management, but as well as externally by parents, press and other bodies. Public accountability *"involves answering, through various mechanisms from newspaper reports to hearings, public concerns about administrative activity"* (ibid., p. 226). A relevant example of this are the Ofsted reports in the U.K. which are publically accessible (Ofsted, 2010) and are therefore interesting for the media to focus on. Finally Sinclair defines professional accountability as *"the sense of duty that one has as a member of a professional or expert group, which in turn occupies a privileged and knowledgeable position in society"* (ibid., p. 229). Relating to my research, a relevant question is in which sense of duty each member of senior leadership within our focus school feels? This will be further explored in chapter 5.

2.3.4 Internal and external accountability

Accountability mechanisms can be either internal or external, or a combination of the both in many cases. Accountability mechanisms are, literally, "*the variety of formal and informal ways by which people in schools gives an account of their actions to someone in a position of formal authority, either internally or externally*" (Abelmann & Elmore, 1999, p. 4).

An example of an internal, informal accountability mechanism is when a school head teacher demands, through verbal communication, that it is expected of a particular teacher to make sure that students respect the school's policy towards punctuality. A more formal approach could however imply that the same head teacher would post each class's punctuality statistics in the corridor for everyone to view.

External accountability mechanisms imply that organizations or bodies outside the school place responsibility on the school through new expectations in order to for example to raise standards. As Abelmann & Elmore (1999) point out, an example of this is when a school governing body administers periodic tests, and uses the results to change the school's curriculum (ibid., p. 4).

This thesis will be focusing on both the internal as well as the external accountability mechanisms within the case study school, primarily to see how organizational relationships evolve in the senior leadership team. These mechanisms are, as we will see, both of formal as well as informal character and play an important role in defining expectations within the organization.

2.3.5 Professional and hierarchical accountability

E. Elstad (2008, pp. 215-222) stresses two separate accountability mechanisms; a) professional accountability and b) hierarchical accountability. I will here give a brief outline of both.

On the one hand it can be interesting in this thesis to look at internal mechanisms, both as professional accountability and in terms of internal accountability. This involves, as I contemplate, how the school's leaders place confidence in the professional feeling of responsibility among their teachers. According to Elstad (2008) there are two characteristics

of professional accountability mechanisms; a) the professional mentality towards ones tasks and b) the fear of future disapproval (ibid., p. 217).

On the other hand it seems to be highly relevant to closely study the external and internal, hierarchical accountability mechanisms in our case school. These mechanisms may be activated when external agencies apply pressure on schools when results are sub-standard in terms of New Public Management. This specific placement of responsibility, may for example take place through local government or a body of school governors. In our case it would for obvious reasons be most interesting to study how the school governors apply pressure on the school's senior leadership team and group, especially on the head teacher level. The head teacher then applies pressure further down in the organization, in order to raise standards up to an acceptable level. The process of managerial strategies, which I've outlined above, is visualized in Figure 1 below;
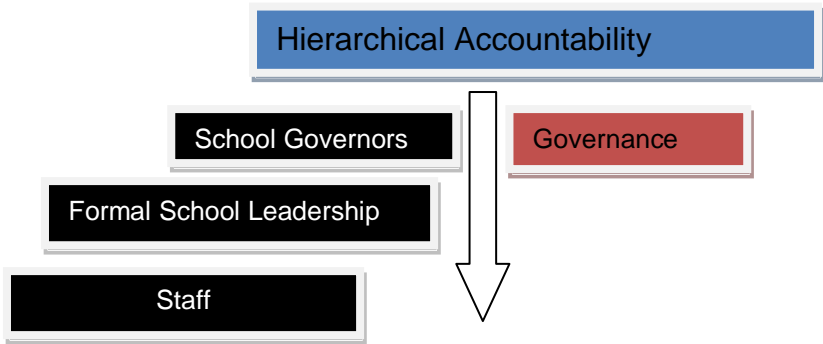
Figure 1: Hierarchical accountability (Hall, 2010)

2.3.6 Accountability and governance: according to Burke

A central theoretical model that may visualize our problem is J. Burkes (In Birkeland, 2008, p.41) accountability triangle. I have however in this thesis chosen to adapt his model to the case school in an attempt to fully capture which mechanisms are activated when results, such as Ofsted results, are sub-standard. I will furthermore focus on the relationship and tension between government and institution, without directly considering the media's role.

The central as well as the local government exercises *governance* and thereby apply pressure on the institution through managerial strategies, in our case a lower secondary school. This process is illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page;
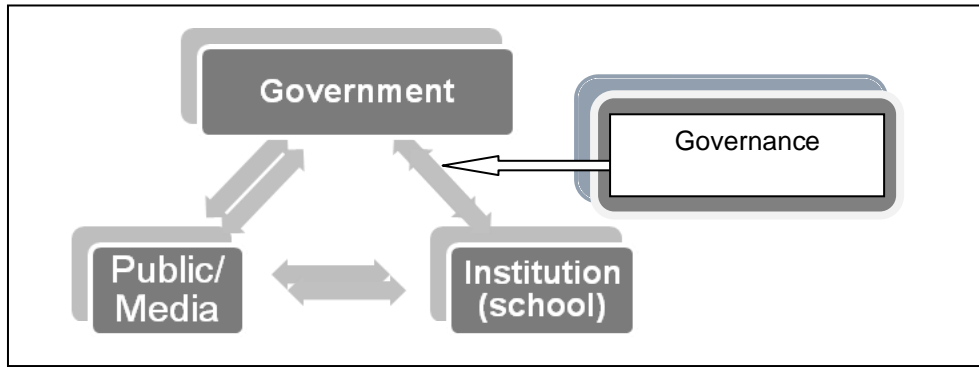
A question that must be fronted is if Burke's understanding of "government" in our case not only includes the central, state level but also is relevant on a regional level, including local government and the school governing body. From my point of view it can be interpreted as if this is relevant on both levels. However, what I have found interesting in our case is the tension that arises between local government and local institution (school), as well as between state level and local institution, through external Ofsted inspections. But also, do the media hold schools accountable to weak or sub-standard results? This may possibly be answered through conducting interviews with several members of the senior management group in the case school.

Birkeland (2008), with reference to Burke (2005), furthermore puts forth what he calls the essential questions concerning accountability; *a) Who is accountable to whom, b) for which purposes, c) to whose advantage, and last but not least d) with which consequences* (Birkeland, 2008, p. 40)? These are all relevant questions which will play an important role in the quest to identify which mechanisms have had an active role in the case school.

I will now look at how leadership practice may be carried out, through the conceptual lens of distributed leadership. As I asked initially; How does leadership practice in the case school occur? This will be discussed in chapter 5 based on analysis of the interview material.

2.4 Distributed leadership

The art of leadership implies making major decisions. Often will these decisions define, not only by formal relationships, but how the staff in an organization perceives their leaders, and

the legacy of a leader may often be based on the outcome of these decisions. Leadership has, in my point of view, traditionally focused on the formal leaders within organizations. However, even if formal leaders are important for the processes and results in schools, there is research that supports the view that leadership also includes situations and social processes which are vital for their possibilities to take action (Ottesen & Møller, 2006, p. 137).

Leadership is furthermore about establishing relations within the organization. I have chosen to focus on the concept of distributed leadership as an analytical tool in this thesis. However, I do see that this borders to the concept of relational leadership. Nevertheless, within the limits of this thesis, I have not chosen to further explore relational leadership as such, but rather concentrate on distributed leadership as presented by Spillane (2004/2006) and Ottesen & Møller (2006).

J. Spillane (2006) discusses the idea of the heroic school leader, where the school's head teacher leads the school as the protagonist, sometimes supported by assistant head teachers and others in formal leadership positions (ibid., p. 5). Even though a strong school leader undoubtedly plays an important part in the development of a school, it is probably not sufficient without other formal or informal leaders taking part in the leadership of the organization. According to Spillane (ibid.) leadership is often a collective rather than an individualistic endeavor (ibid., p. 6). This implies discussing leadership in regards to both structural and situational factors, where ideal organizational forms focus on structures. On the other hand, each individual's comprehension contributes to understand how power is distributed through interaction.

In this thesis I have chosen to mainly focus on to first configure leadership as formed by the organization in terms of bureaucracy, NPM and networking, all advocating ideas of how leadership is structured by the organization. In a distributed perspective, I add one more aspect, namely how leadership is formed by percepted and enacted views. E. Ottesen and J. Møller (2006), refer to Spillane et.al (2004), and claim that leadership is a *practice*, and the challenge is to explore how this practice is *"stretched over"* several leaders, their followers and the material as well as the symbolic artifacts in a specific situation (Ottesen & Møller, 2006, p. 138). Spillane *et.al* (2004) furthermore defines leadership as *"the activities engaged*

in by leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks" (ibid., p. 5)*.* According to Spillane et al. (2004), the perspective of distributed leadership is premised on two assumptions; a) School leadership is best understood through *leadership tasks*, and b) Leadership is distributed over *leaders, followers, and the school's situation* or context (ibid., p. 11). Spillane (2006) has visualized these three final elements through a model which is presented below;
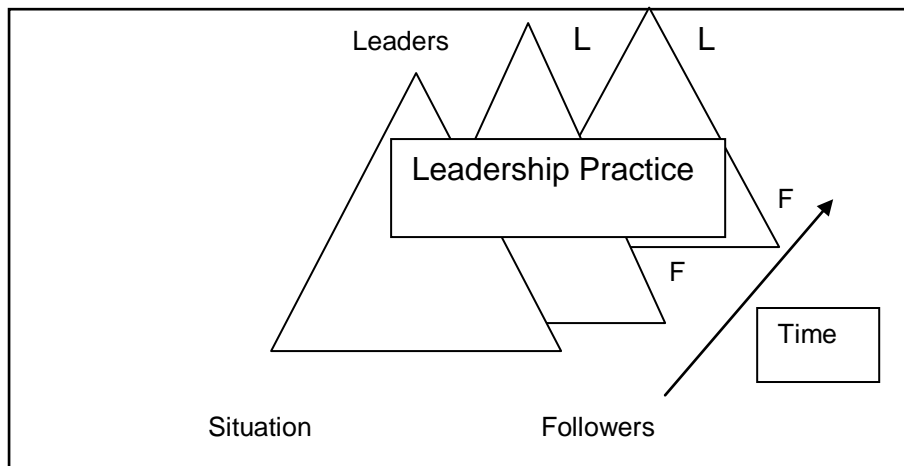
Figure 3: Leadership practice from a Distributed Perspective (Spillane, 2006, p. 3)

It is here important to emphasize that even if my focus has been on the formal **leaders** of the school, their decisions stem from the school's previous or current **situation**, and these decisions have implications on the rest of the school staff (**followers**). I also feel the need to point out that there are a considerable number of informal leaders with our case school, as in any other organization. However, this group of leaders is not in the focus group in my thesis.

Spillane (2006) furthermore points out that distributed leadership is more than shared leadership (ibid., p. 3). He claims that many discussions of this perspective focus on that multiple leaders take responsibility for leadership; that there is a *leader plus other leaders* within the school (ibid.). He moreover argues that this *leader-plus* aspect is not fully sufficient to capture the full complexity of leadership, even though it is essential (ibid.). Finally, I do acknowledge that the concept of distributed leadership has been closely linked to the idea of activity theory, such as discussed by Ottesen & Møller (2006), with reference to Gronn (2002) and Spillane (2004). Within the limits of this thesis I have chosen to not to

further explore activity theory, but I would like to point out what we conceive as the main idea; *leadership is understood as activities* (Ottesen & Møller, 2006, p. 139). However, they do also argue that there are certain challenges in the way which activity theory has been linked to distributed leadership (ibid.).

Leadership practice is in my point of view, *a series of decisions that have been made over time, in interaction with others and moreover, according to organizational forms which are changing over time*. Through my research one of the goals has been to investigate evidence of leadership practice within the case school. In chapter 5 I will present findings, where the interviewees give examples of how leadership practice and decision-making does take place within Middletown College.

2.5 Leadership practice and accountability in Middletown College

Through the research study that was conducted in the case school I have looked at various ways in which leadership is carried out in the decision-making process. How does leadership practice take place in Middletown College?

As mentioned in section 2.2.3 of this thesis, it is however difficult to argue for or against any one of the three systems of public administration; Traditional (Weberian), New Public Management and Networks. My findings possibly suggest, rather than focusing on merely one of these concepts, that many of the major decisions that are made within the school may be colored by all three concepts. This may support Olsen's (2005) findings which are already outlined. This is further explored in the analysis in chapter 5.

As in all educational institutions staff are held accountable for their decisions and actions, whether on the classroom level or among middle and senior leadership. I will in the analysis attempt to reveal which accountability mechanisms exist within the case school, and how some of the senior leaders personally experience being held accountable as well as having major responsibilities which have impact on the students' learning outcomes.

Before presenting our findings, it is however necessary to present an outline of the case school, "Middletown College". Chapter 3 will attempt to give a picture of what type of institution I have chosen to focus on, and how the senior leadership group is organized.

3.0 Case study: a description of "Middletown College"

3. 1 General description of "Middletown College"

The school that was chosen in this particular case study is a relatively large specialist college in the Greater Manchester area in the northwest part of the United Kingdom. The Greater Manchester area is an economically important industrial area, and one of the most densely populated areas in Great Britain.

For research and ethical purposes the case school has been made anonymous, and will in the remaining part of this thesis be referred to as "Middletown College".

It is evident to me that the case school is a school in transition. In recent years it has expanded, a new state-of-the-art building has opened, today catering for more than 1500 students and a staff exceeding 150 people. The school recruits students from a large geographical area, and consists of individuals from all socio-economic groups in society. The vast majority of the student body is from ethnically white, British-born middle class families.

However, it is interesting from a research point of view to understand that a considerable percentage of the students in the case school are from a quite challenged socio-economic part of the municipality. The staff is therefore obligated to meet the academic and social needs of not only students from affluent and middle-class families, but also the needs of those students who are less fortunate.

3. 2 Organizational structure of Middletown College

To fully contemplate how the leaders of the school are interlinked, it is vital to outline the school's organizational structure. Middletown College is by all of the interviewees described as having a predominantly vertical, hierarchical structure, with various levels of management and leadership. Through interviews with members of leadership within the school, it seems that the structure is quite complex and multi-faceted. This is opposed to what can be called a horizontal structure, without a strong influence of hierarchical links. The following

description will focus mostly on explaining the various levels of leadership within the school, and not so much on how groups of students are organized.

Within the limits of this research study it must also be pointed out that it is not feasible to outline all of the various facets of the organization. This research was mainly interested in seeking to unravel the links between the different members of the middle and senior leadership levels, and the description below is therefore by far incomplete and somewhat limited. But it does seem to be a quite sufficient tool in attempting to answer the research questions which have been raised.

On the student level each of the five year groups is organized in a so-called "house", and is lead by a "Head of House". The "Heads of House" are responsible for the monitoring of approximately 300 students, especially concerning attendance, punctuality etc. and they have liaison roles between the parents and school, and between students and middle/senior leadership.

On the instructional level all teachers are organized in separate departments, lead by "Heads of Department". The department heads are responsible for development of a singular subject area, and monitoring the track record of both students and teachers within his/designated area of responsibility. The department heads furthermore work closely with the assistant and deputy head teachers. The Heads of House and the Heads of Department are members of the middle leadership of the school, but have strong links to the senior leadership group.

There are a considerable number of Assistant Head Teachers in our case school. These assistant heads are what seem to be the "backbone" of the leadership structure, and are managing and leading a variety of areas within the school. Many of them are quite young, several in their early and mid-thirties. They act as line managers for a group of subject teachers within a specific department, such as Mathematics, Science, Physical Education and English. Moreover they also have a direct line to the two deputy heads and head teacher. Our study mostly focuses on the senior leadership level of the school, and a predominant number of the interviews were with the Assistant Head Teachers. The Assistant Heads are part of the school's *senior leadership group*.

The senior leadership of our case school is lead by the two deputy head teachers and a head teacher. They are together directly responsible for planning and executing the whole school's

pedagogical and managerial approach. However, due to downsizing of the leadership levels within the school, there have been major changes to the organizational structure of the school. These three senior leaders make up the *senior leadership team* of the school.

Middletown College therefore has what's called a three-tier system in the senior leadership group, consisting of the Head Teacher, the two Deputy Head Teachers and the six Assistant Head Teachers. Last, but not least, it is worth mentioning that the whole school is accountable to an external governing body. This governing body, together with the senior leaders, acts as the schools board, making the top priority decisions in the school's whole interest. The majority of the members of the school's governing body is external, and report to the authorities in the Greater Manchester area.

The figure (Figure 4) below describes the organizational structure of the case school, which is explained in the preceding text;
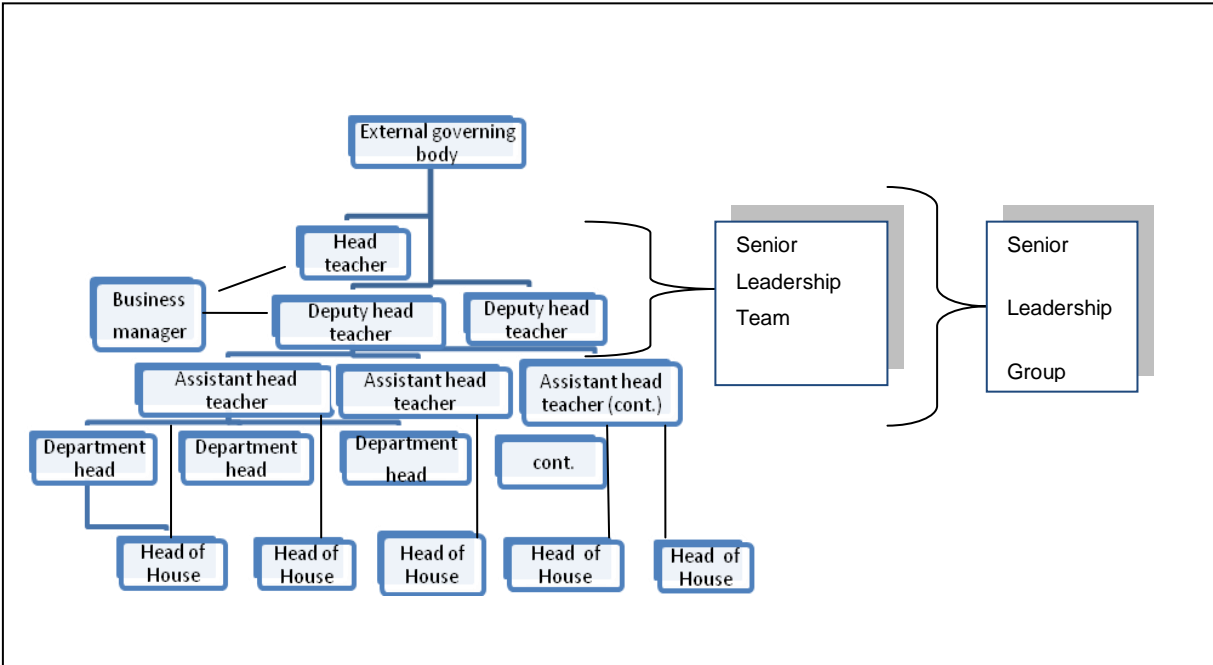
Figure 4: Organizational map of Middletown College (Hall, 2010)

Before presenting the data which was collected through interviews with senior leadership, it is necessary to present and discuss which methodological approach was chosen. Additionally certain questions of verification of the data also arise, and must be addressed. This is covered in the following section.

4.0 Methodological approach

4. 1 Purpose of case study and choice of institution

The purpose of the research was to explore and obtain new knowledge of which internal and external accountability mechanisms exist within British schools, for instance focusing on the Ofsted inspections which are carried out on a regular basis. Furthermore, it was interesting to seek to uncover how the leaders on the middle and especially the senior levels of the school perceived their own roles as formal leaders of the school. Finally it would also be relevant to determine the temporality of the transition and possibility of a shift in relationships before, during and after the course of an Ofsted inspection.

A case study focuses on one single institution (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 117). As basis for a case study, "Middletown College" was chosen for a number of reasons. The school was already familiar to me through previous contact (non-research projects on teacher and leadership level). Since the school was familiar to me, I was confident that there would be general acceptance among staff to engage in an interview situation. Secondly, the school is a quite large, especially compared to most lower and upper secondary schools in Norway. This seemed to open up for a wide range of possible interviewees, on several levels of leadership. Finally, the school was in the process of preparing for an upcoming Ofsted inspection in 2010, which made the timing of the interview process even more interesting. This fact was however not known to me initially, but unraveled in the process of preparing for data collection in the U.K. Even if this was not known at the time, it gave from my point of view an interesting dimension to the whole research project.

Once the case school was determined, there were a number of important ethical questions that surfaced. These questions had to be sorted out before the interview process could be carried out, and it is therefore necessary to briefly outline which guidelines were followed.

4.2 Initial contact and ethical guidelines

Initial contact was made by sending an e-mail directly to the school's head teacher. It outlined the purpose of the planned research that was going to take place, suggestions as to which interview subjects would be relevant and interesting as well as an estimated time frame of the

interview process. Once the head teacher had given his consent, I sent a formal letter by e-mail giving a full description of how the interviews would be conducted (Appendix 2), concerning the following guidelines; a) informed consent of the interviewees, b) guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and c) possible consequences of taking part in the study. These are three of the ethical guidelines that Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p.70-74) recommend all researchers to take in account when planning and conducting field interviews. However, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) also point out the fact that *"issues about who should give the consent might arise"* (ibid. p. 71). Even if the head teacher had already given initial consent, it was however vital to us that all of the interviewees were informed that they could at any given time retract from the research.

Once initial contact was made, I then sent an online application form to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services in Bergen, which was approved once certain amendments were made (Appendix 3).

4. 3 Sampling

The leaders who were going to take part in the study were all members of the case school's middle and senior leadership groups. At first the researcher had planned to include the head teacher, three deputy head teachers, several assistant head teachers, a department head as well as a member of the school's governing body. For various reasons, the actual group of interviewees turned out a bit differently than what was initially planned.

The head teacher was relatively new in the position, since the previous head teacher through many years had recently left the school. The new head teacher was therefore not directly involved in the previous Ofsted inspections. Secondly, the three deputy head teachers were not available at the time of the interviews, due to certain reasons that cannot be enclosed because of the risk of breaching their anonymity. Thirdly, it was not then possible to meet an external member of the school's governing body, even if it was initially suggested. Why, is to this date unknown.

The final group of interviewees consisted therefore of the new Head Teacher, four of the Assistant Head Teachers, a Development Officer and two Heads of House. Both genders were included in the study. A total of seven interviews were conducted, consisting of six individual interviews and one group interview.

The group interview with the two "Heads of House" (I5) has later been omitted from the further analysis. The reason for this is that the main focus, as mentioned above, was on the senior leadership and not on leaders further down in the leadership structure of the school.

4. 4 Categorization of interview questions and interview guide

An interview guide (Appendix 1) was compiled in order to structure questions according to the study's main research focus and purpose, which are already outlined. The questions were divided in five separate categories; a) general information, b) job/organizational/leadership descriptions, c) accountability mechanisms, d) Ofsted inspections and e) relationships to other members of school leadership/management.

The interview guide itself was structured so that it started with relatively open questions concerning general information about each interviewee's job description and leadership role. The interview questions moved on to more specific areas of focus concerning internal and external accountability mechanisms, and ended on a more personal level where the focus was on relationships to colleagues within the school's leadership.

A funnel-shaped approach to the interview situation implies, according to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p. 130), that the purpose is first revealed towards the end of the interview. However, it may seem if such a funnel-shaped interview, moving from open to more personal and direct questions, can be however also be relevant even if the purpose of the interview is revealed at the beginning. It may be a question of establishing a feeling of mutual trust, where the interviewer is open from the start of the interview?

4. 5 Data collection: The semi-structured interview method

The qualitative research interview is an interpersonal situation, which implies a conversation concerning a theme of mutual interest (ibid., p. 123). H. Holter (1996), refers to Mishler (1986), and points out that a qualitative research interview is a conversation led by a common language and by communicative norms (Holter, 1996 p. 16). In-depth interviews, with a relatively small number of interviewees, open up for confidential conversations between two fairly mutual individuals within a set situation. Direct and personal communication between the researcher and the interviewees was considered as especially vital to uncover relationships between leaders within the school. This is the main reason as to why qualitative interview was

chosen as research method, as opposed to other methods such as questionnaires or observation.

The question of exploring the possibility of combining several methods arises, a so-called mixed method approach (ibid., p. 116). But within the limits of this particular study, it was my concern that such an approach would lead to an over-extensive amount of data, which would be too resource-consuming. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) furthermore point out, the researcher must ask himself the following questions; *How much time does the researcher have available for the study? Is there any funding available for assistance* (ibid., p. 112)? Since the study is self-funded, it was therefore out of the question to seek a mixed-method approach.

Upon arrival in the U.K., I was presented a relatively rigid schedule for each of the two days the study lasted. Each of the seven interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one full hour, and were conducted in a secluded and designated room apart from the administration section of the school.

Each interview started with briefing the interviewee(s) about the motivation, focus, purpose and background of the research, and each of them gave consent to digital taping of the interviews.

Additionally, I took notes throughout the interviews. Moreover, they were informed about the ethical sides of participating in the research, especially considering questions considering anonymity and discretion. They were all guaranteed full anonymity and discretion. As mentioned previously, they were also informed that they could at any point retract from the study, without stating any reasons.

The interviews were then conducted using the above mentioned interview guide. However, this research guide was beforehand only considered as a list of suggested questions, not a rigid plan that had to be followed from start to finish. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) it will depend on the particular study whether the questions and their sequence are strictly predetermined and binding on the interviewer, or whether it's up to the interviewer to have a more flexible approach to the interview guide (ibid., p.130). This type of interview is called semi-structured, and allows the researcher to adapt the questions according to the situation, and not least in regards to information that is revealed in course of the interview(s).

It was also considered as highly important to leave space for individual follow-up questions when necessary, in order to uncover interesting information that would otherwise be lost if the researcher stuck to a rigid plan.

Afterwards, the interviewees were separately debriefed. They were informed of how further research, analysis and publishing would be conducted. From an ethical point of view, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p.129) claim that this is highly necessary. They were also informed that the interviews would be transcribed into text, and each transcription would be sent to the respective interviewee, so that he/she could read through it and suggest eventual changes or amendments.

There was also set aside sufficient time after each interview had ended, in order for me to reflect upon the responses, and quickly take additional notes when found necessary. These initial reflections, according to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, pp. 129-130), may provide valuable context for later analysis of transcripts.

4.6 From raw data to written text: The transcription process

After returning to Norway, a considerable amount of time was necessary to transcribe the six interviews with the leaders at Middletown College. The six interviews that were basis for the analysis resulted in more than eighty single-spaced pages of transcriptions, and were fully transcribed into written text.
My notes that were made during the interviews were compared to the written transcriptions, to make sure that all of the initial impressions of the interviewees were included in the analysis. As mentioned above the transcriptions were sent by postal mail to all of the interviewees in the study for comments after they were completed.

4.7 Categorization and coding of written text

Once the transcriptions are complete, there are several possibilities a researcher can choose from when preparing for analyzing data. Since the interview guide was divided into five separate categories, it was obvious to me that the further analysis should concentrate on trying to reveal what the transcribed texts could tell me utilizing these five categories. The interviewees' answers in each of the transcripts needed to be coded, in order for them to be analyzed.

There is according to K. H. Sivesind (1996) a line that can be drawn between what is called theme-oriented coding and variable-oriented coding (ibid., p. 251). Theme-oriented coding implies that the researcher selects certain pieces of the data with more or less clear relevance to the study, and gives each of these pieces a certain code (ibid.). A variable-oriented coding implies that the researcher uses certain codes to mark pieces of text, and that each piece is given a certain value. I chose theme-oriented coding of the data. Each of the interviews was read through several times, and then the relevant pieces of text were manually color-coded using the thirteen categories which are presented in Table 2 below;

A. Description of school	B. Description of own leadership	C. Bureaucracy	D. New Public Management	E. Networks	F. Ofsted's perception of school	N. How organizational relationships evolve according to internal vs. external accountability
H. Internal accountability	I. External accountability	J. Hierarchical accountability	K. Professional accountability	L. Organizational Relationships -professional -managerial -public	M. Obstacles/ Challenging issues	

Table 2: Theme-oriented coding of data (Hall, 2010)

With Kjær's (2004) discussion of the three systems of bureaucracy, NPM and networks (Table 1 in section 2.2.4) fresh in mind, we see that the categories C, D and E above seem to correspond in many ways to the three systems of public administration, at least on the theoretical level. One of the goals of my research has been to see how organizational relationships on the professional, managerial and public level evolve depending on which system they seem to correspond with in the data.

Therefore, as far as I understand theme-oriented coding of data can be used as a basis for what Holter (1996, p. 17) calls category-based analysis. This implies that the researcher finds categories of processes, events or types of behavior that are relevant to the analysis. I have chosen to combine these two methods in order to capture interesting data which can become a basis for further analysis in chapter 5.

4.8 Verification of data

4.8.1 Generalization

A persistent question posed to interview studies is whether the results are generalizable, and a common objection to interview research is that there are too few subjects for the findings to be generalized (Kvale & Brinkman, 2006, p. 261).

For me it was more important to explore what were typical traits of the case school "Middletown College", than attempting to assess if the data from this school could be relevant in regards to similar studies. Even if one cannot rule out other case studies with the same point of focus studies *may* lead to similar conclusions, there is an underlying danger in trying to generalize a case study. One cannot therefore conclude that my findings have implications to the British educational system as whole. However, from my point of view, there is hope that the findings may have added value to this particular area of research. Furthermore, when it comes to the relevance of my study, I am hoping that it may be an addition to the discussion of accountability mechanisms within the Norwegian educational system. This will be further discussed in the concluding discussion in section 6.4.

4.8.2 Validity

Validity refers in ordinary language to the truth, the correctness and the strength of a statement (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 246). Furthermore, in social sciences validity is pertained to whether a method investigates what it hopes to investigate (ibid.). Holter (1996), with reference to Kvale (1987), claims that valid responses in an interview are about asking the right questions (Holter, 1996, p.23). Have I asked the right questions?

S. Larsson (2005) discusses quality criteria in qualitative studies, and presents several criteria of validity; discourse criteria, heuristic value, empirical embedment, consistency and the pragmatic criteria (Larsson, 2005, pp. 26-33). Within the limits of this thesis, I will not fully explore all of these criteria, but will briefly present his conception of empirical embedment. Larsson (2005), refers to Hammersley & Atkinson (1987), and presents the practical approach of triangulation (ibid. p. 29—30). This implies that an empirical study is supported by several sources, and the rationale here is that if different sources harmonize, it could be a sign of

validity (ibid.). The researcher here moves between several sources and compares them in hope of observing concurring data. It was interesting for me in the analysis of the collected data to see if there were signs of coherence between the different interviewees.

Finally it was important to me to ensure the quality of the transcriptions, through listening to them, transcribing and then listening again to them to ensure that all the details were included. Through transcription process the researcher has to transfer oral conversations between the interviewer and each of the interviewees, a process which I found both time-consuming but also highly interesting. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argue that there is no correct answer to the question; "What is the correct valid transcription"? A more fruitful question they claim is; "What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?" (ibid., p. 186).

4.8.3 Reliability

In quantative research a goal might be to replicate data, which can only occur through stability over time. In qualitative research one cannot expect to be able to replicate data, and the goal is therefore to ensure full transparency through a description of all stages of the research.

Reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings, and is often treated in relation to the issue of wether a finding is reproducible at other times by other researchers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 245). Are the findings in section 5 reproducible? Would another researcher, who investigated the same focus areas in Middletown College on a later occasion, using the same interview guide, receive the same answers, and interpret this data in the same way? Even if it cannot be ruled out, it seems hardly likely from my point of view. There are several factors that may have influence on the responses that were collected during my research. One of the important factors may be the fact that the case school was in a period of transition, both regarding the financial situation as well as the changes in the senior leadership team. In a period of stability, the interviewees may have responded differently to the same questions during an interview situation.

K. Ringdal (2007) points out that an assessment of the reliability of qualitative data, such as a semi-structured interview, is actually the researcher's personal reflection of how the data

collection process had been carried out in order to become aware of possible sources of error (Ringdal, 2007, p. 221). Holter (1996) claims on the other hand that the most direct test of reliability is when transcriptions are presented to the interviewees for certification (ibid., p. 22). As pointed out in section 4.6 this was done. I did not receive any feedback from the interviewees, and I have interpreted this that they did now show any concern towards the transcriptions. Does this support Holter's (1996) views on reliability? It is far too early to conclude anything, but it is in my view an interesting thought.

In the following chapter I will now present the data collected through interviews with the six leaders in Middletown College, and will also analyze the material in accordance to the conceptual lenses and research methods discussed above.

5.0 Presentation of data and analysis

As previously mentioned I initially conducted a total of seven interviews with members of the middle and senior leadership of Middletown College, with emphasis on the senior leadership group. One of the interviews was however omitted from further analysis, since I chose not to focus on leadership further down in the "chain of command".

In section 4.4 of this thesis I have already stated the fact that the questions in the interview guide were divided into five separate categories; a) general information, b) job/organizational/ leadership descriptions, c) accountability mechanisms, d) Ofsted inspections and e) relationships to other members of school leadership/management.

Three main areas of interest arise, and the following analysis will especially focus on i) *organization of the decision-making process*, ii) *expectations, conditions and consequences* and finally iii) *evolving organizational relationships*. At this point it is also vital to the understanding of the findings to repeat the theoretical/conceptual lenses of this thesis, which are outlined in chapter 2. On one hand I have looked at the *accountability mechanisms* within Middletown College, and have linked these to expectations, conditions and consequences. On the other hand I meant it would also be interesting to look at the concepts of traditional (Weberian) *bureaucracy, New Public Management* (NPM) and *networks*, and attempt to link these concepts to the decision-making processes within our case school. Finally I have looked at organizational relationships on a leadership level.

The findings from each of the six interviews will be presented individually, and I will also attempt to sum up my impressions in a concluding analysis. Which patterns did I find?

For clarity it's important to point out that central ideas in each of the above mentioned theoretical lenses is briefly outlined in each of the following sections 5.1 to 5.1.9, but will generally not be repeated for each of the following main sections of this analysis (5.2-5.6).

5.1 Interview 1: Assistant Head Teacher (I1)

My first interview that was conducted was with "Jill". Jill is an Assistant Head Teacher in her thirties, and is at the school on a one year residency, partly through a national leadership program.

Jill described Middletown College as *"large, urban mixed and predominately white working class with very few ethnic minority groups"*. She however pointed out that some of the students *"have very low aspirations, and that there is not great parental support"*.

About her arrival at the school she said the following towards the end of the interview; *"On the whole I have been welcomed here. Very much so, by the majority of the staff. It's a pleasant place to work, and the majority of the people that I work with are good people, and I have enjoyed it."* In general she seems quite content with her role in the school, but since she is only at the school for one year, she has a slightly different role than many other of the leaders in the senior leadership group.

5.1.1 The decision-making process

It was vital to the study to uncover what each of the senior leaders meant about their own leadership role in the school. They were asked the following question; **How would you describe your leadership here at the school?** Jill answered; *"It depends on the situation really. Having discussions in groups, and come to a general consensus about what needs to be done. But then ultimately, the responsibility lies with me, so eventually I'll have to make the ultimate decision. But, I wouldn't say particularly authoritative.* Even if she expresses that she's generally content with her tasks, she does on the other hand seem to be a bit critical towards her own role in the school, especially when it comes to the pastoral work connected to such areas as punctuality, attendance and behavior. This seems to be evident in the following; *"To be honest, it's not a role that I'd choose to do. But it's a role that every leaders need to experience, in order to learn the links between pastoral care and learning. I think you have to be an extremely patient person to be able to fill this role, which is something that doesn't come naturally to me"*.

Already at this point it seems if she defines her own role and the leadership structure in the school as quite varied, both when it comes to organizational areas as well as within the

decision-making process. She furthermore told me about the multi-role of the Assistant Head teacher in Middletown; *"Because you have to be you know a counselor, social worker, you know almost a bit of a parenting role occasionally"*.

It's interesting therefore to explore and present the findings in I1 through the conceptual lenses of the three major systems, as will with the other five interviewees.

5.1.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

A normative organizational structure is one of the central traits of bureaucracy (Weber, 1972, pp. 91-93). As pointed out in section 2.2.1, being normative, implies that decision-making within the organization is carried out in compliance to a strict set of legal rules and regulations.

Jill told me about how many decisions are made through a set of strict rules and regulations within the school. According to Kjær (1999, pp. 41-45), one of the important traits of bureaucracy, especially concerning what she calls "means of conflict", are *rules* and *commands as well as subordination* (ibid., p. 42). Additionally there are obviously a wide range of national, regional and local written laws which a school had to abide by. Within the limits of this analysis, it's not feasible to further describe these specific legal aspects.

When a leader in the school makes a decision, there are certain procedures that need to be followed. Jill said the following about these procedures and rules; *"Then you need to able to say 'There are very important systems and protocols in place…what their role is, and what needs to be done.' It's what we've been working on all year, seeing to that protocols are followed"*. She here points out what seems to be a central part of leadership within the school, that "protocols are followed".

In a bureaucratic hierarchy the leadership roles are traditionally tightly defined in an intricate system. The expression "chain of command" is here vital, and in such an organization all decisions are made through certain rights based on the authority of each "office". Through her description of her leadership role, Jill was asked about how she deals with the difficult and multi-faceted tasks. She said; *"Well, we've got a good team of people. With Heads of House, and Assistant Heads of House […] You know if there has been an incident of bullying, they tend to deal with that. If it's not resolved, they will pass it up the chain."* She continued and

explained how she worked closely with the "Heads of House" and family tutors when it came to following students' punctuality. She said; *"there are different levels. [...] if things don't improve after family tutors have talked with them (families), then Head of House will talk to them, and if things don't improve the senior leadership link will be set in"*.

There seems to be, in my view, evidence that there to some extent exists a bureaucratic structure within Middletown College. However, it is also interesting to explore the organization with other conceptual lenses.

5.1.3 Decision-making through NPM

As outlined in section 2.2.2, New Public Management (NPM) has been an important part of Western public service since the last third of the 20th century. One of the seven components of NPM is, according to Rhodes (1994, p. 144), explicit **standards and measures of performance**. An organizational culture characterized by a relatively high level of **competition** is also prominent (Kjær, 1994, p. 28). Olsen (2005, p. 9) also emphasizes the concept of **"best practice"** as vital in organizations which are influenced by this system.

As in all schools, formal results are a central part of academic life at Middletown College. There are also certain standards that must be followed, and both students and staff are measured according to defined criteria. One of Jill's most important tasks is tracking and monitoring students' punctuality and attendance. She said; *"One of the first tasks I had was to improve punctuality at the start of the day. This is a bit of a poisoned chalice I think. Because you're working against so many different factors. And you are also then expecting staff to do the registers properly. I can only work with the data I have got."* One of the most important tasks for the school, and in which they are measured locally and nationally, is to register these two areas. These are two areas that were emphasized in the Ofsted report the school received previously, and in which they had to improve. She also interestingly added; *"And if you are going to improve punctuality, some of the success criteria are actually staff's perceptions that punctuality is improving"*.

Competition within the public sector has also made its way into schools, both between educational institutions and within schools. At leadership level there may be evidence of a certain level of competitiveness between members of the senior leadership team. If it's part of

the organizational culture, it's too early to conclude. But, according to Jill this does take place to some extent. She said; *"At leadership level there is a lot of politics"*.

As mentioned above, best practice is central in NPM (Olsen, 2005, p. 9). Jill mentioned several times during the interview that this is one of the major obstacles in concern to the upcoming Ofsted inspection in 2010. She said; "*In lots of little bits and pieces it's that consistency of good practice which I think is missing. […] Because it's such a big school it's very difficult to ensure that everybody is doing what they should be doing"*. This is not saying that best practice or good practice doesn't take place, just there is according to her a lack of consistency in practice.

5.1.4 Decision-making through networking

In systems where networks are important, there are several characteristics that are relevant in my analysis, and where I seem to find evidence. With reference to Kjær (1999, p. 42) I would like to point out the following; **resource exchange, interdependency, trust, diplomacy and a culture of reciprocity.**

When asked about her own leadership style with regards to an authoritative approach, Jill modifies herself and said; *"you know I like to try to involve everybody that it affects. But obviously, this being a very big school, it does make things quite difficult, so sometimes it's a case of you know, "This is what needs to be done"*. Within networks, interdependency and reciprocity implies that colleagues need to involve each other in decision making. This is an important finding in all of the interviews that were conducted, which will be fully explored in course of this analysis. She furthermore emphasized *trust* as vital to her in organizational relationships, something that will be commented in section 5.1.8.

5.1.5 Expectations and consequences

As in all organizations much is expected of the professional staff, as so in our case school. Jill told us what it was like to be a new senior leader at the school, and of which expectations she met in her new role. Through her ongoing leadership training she has become aware of the wide range of responsibilities a school leader has, and claimed that; "*It is very easy at lower, grass-root level to have these maybe unrealistic expectations of what senior leaders should do. So that's been quite an interesting place to be coming from ....to meet my own*

expectations of what is expected". Here she pointed out the changing roles of going from her former role as one of the teaching staff to becoming a leading teacher.

When it comes to consequences, she was also asked what would happen if she didn't meet these expectations. She answered; *"Well, it hasn't happened yet"*, which we both found quite humorous. However, she also stressed that there are many clear signs of accountability mechanisms within the school, which I will now look examine closer.

5.1.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

As we have seen, Sinclair (1995, pp. 220-221) claims that the concept of accountability *"entails a relationship in which people are required to explain and to take responsibility for their actions"*. These can be both internal and external, either stemming from expectations within the organization from e.g. the head teacher, or externally generated from bodies such as central government, local school authorities or a governing body. Jill seemed to have given me evidence of all of these, and I will now present some examples from the data.

Again she talked about two of her main responsibilities in the school, monitoring attendance and punctuality. She mentioned that they are in the school governor's panels for both attendance and punctuality, meaning that the school's governing body engages in discussing this area of concern. She furthermore told me the following when asked who determines if she is fulfilling her responsibilities and meeting expectations; *Yes, attendance is [...] what the school will rise and fall on. Because if persistent absence is over 5 or 6 percent then it is an issue for the local authority immediately.*   The previous full Ofsted report is also something she mentioned, since these were one of areas where the school scored low. But as she also quickly pointed out; *"We've improved persistent absence, from about [...] between 7 and 8 % this time last year, and it is now 2.9 %."* So, I claim that the school's governing body, the local authorities and Ofsted are all relevant examples of external bodies that hold the school accountable.

When it comes to internal accountability mechanisms, Jill mentioned especially the weekly meeting on Fridays where all the Assistant Head Teachers meet and summarize the figures for punctuality, attendance and behavior. This is what she said about these meetings; *"We discuss what is happening, and how things can be improved, and we do have to answer questions. So*

these are almost weekly accountability meetings". To her these meetings seem to be an important arena in her position in the senior leadership group.

5.1.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and Hierarchical accountability

Sinclair (1995, p. 223) mentions, as we have seen in section 2.3.2, five forms of accountability. One of these is professional accountability. Elstad (2008) claims as we have seen, that there are two characteristics of professional accountability mechanisms; a) the professional mentality towards ones tasks and b) the fear of future disapproval (ibid., p. 217).

Hierarchical accountability can be both external and internal, as far as I understand. These mechanisms, as mentioned in section 2.3.4, may for instance be activated when external bodies such as Ofsted apply pressure on the school's formal leadership, due to areas which they find substandard. The pressure is further put on the other members of the senior leadership group, further spiraling down through the various levels of leadership within the organization.

The examples in the preceding section above can also be placed in within either hierarchical or professional traditions. There is one more example in the data which could highlight what could be understood as professional accountability. Jill told me the following; *"Well, there are accountability procedures for everyone. You have a job description to fulfill. At senior leadership level, to be honest I'm not sure what would happen…".* What she seemed to imply here is that even if she is not aware of the accountability procedures for formal leaders like herself, she stresses that everyone has a job to fulfill. This implicitly means, as I contemplate, that there exists a clear, professional responsibility to fulfill for leaders as well.

Finally she however pointed out the hierarchical leadership structure of the school in conjunction with Ofsted, and said; *"Because we have a three tier system in our leadership, we have less accountability than our deputy heads".*

5.1.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) as an external interventional body has since 1992 been an important part of the evaluation of British schools. P. Early (In Chapman, 2005, p. 41) suggests that there has been very little research addressing

the key question of whether Ofsted has played a significant role in improving or developing schools. However, they are certainly a force to count on, and are taken very seriously by the schools they visit.

Since an upcoming Ofsted inspection was due any time, it was interesting to explore which expectations the senior leadership group had, especially when it came to Ofsted's perception of Middletown College.

Jill told me that she never had at the senior leadership level been through an inspection before, but as a middle leader. When asked about how she thought Ofsted would perceive the school, she said; "*I would say between good and satisfactory. I think we've along way to go before it's outstanding.*" Since the Ofsted framework was quite new, she added; "*It's a bit difficult, since the new framework came in September. So it's a bit difficult to judge, I think with the old framework it would definitely be good.*"

I also asked her what she perceived to be the most challenging issues or obstacles at the school, in light of the upcoming inspection. She was concerned about the size of the school and the consistency of practice, which is mentioned in section 5.1.4. She wasn't either really concerned about the attendance and the punctuality of the students, since it had improved substantially. Lack of parental support and the behavior of a minority of the student body were her greatest concerns, in addition to the school's size and lack of consistent practice. She said; "*It's always the minority of the students that make the impression of the school*".

5.1.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

The final part of the interview with Jill was focused on professional relationships within the senior leadership group. Even if there were some obstacles in regards to the upcoming Ofsted inspection, she said that the whole staff would be working hard to achieve the best possible rating. She said; "*I know when Ofsted is here, the whole school will pull together*" and added; "*I do know that when Ofsted come in, there is that extra effort put into lesson planning*".

She told me that an inspection was always going to be more stressful than the job itself, but that if the school was doing what it's supposed to be doing, it shouldn't be such a huge issue really. But she also said something about her previous school which I found most interesting; "*…you know, there were a lot of things hidden under the carpet. Then it suddenly changed around, and everyone was out in the corridors.*"

When I asked Jill about what she considered to be most important in relationships within the senior leadership group, she answered *"Trust. Trust is the big one. And mutual respect."* She said that it was important to her to feel trust in someone in order to work with them, and to trust that they were in the job for the right reason. She added that mutual respect was linked closely to trust, and emphasized the close co-operation she had with one of the other assistant head teachers. One of the deputy head teachers functioned as her mentor, something which she said she treasured.

Finally I asked her if she thought these relationships would change during the course of an Ofsted inspection. She said; *"I think that the people you are close to, either personally or professionally, I hope would get stronger in that situation. ...anyone that I wouldn't get so along with, then I expect and hope everyone will pull together. I hope that things like this will put people closer together and do make teams better."* According to Jill, these relationships will evolve, as the bonds will become stronger.

5.2 Interview 2: Development Manager (I2)

The second interview that was conducted was with "Sharon". Sharon is a Development Manager at the school, and is in her thirties. She is not officially a part of the school's senior leadership group, but it was however interesting to get insight from one of the middle leaders that are directly involved in many of the processes at Middletown College. She works with school development programs within the school's specialty, both internally and externally with private and public partners across the region.

She described the school as a good school, even if there are some challenges. She said this about the school; *I would say that the majority of young people enjoy school, from what you see of them. I think the staff work well for the students, and ultimately they want the best for the young people."*

5.2.1 The decision-making process

I initially asked Sharon what a typical day for her at school involved, and she quickly said; *"A*

typical day? Gosh, I don't have a typical day." Her job involves multiple meetings with external partners, and described one of the important tasks as; *"...it's talking to people isn't it? Just communication I guess".* She makes most of her decisions in conjunction with these meetings, and it seems important to her to build good relationships with other members of staff, as well as external partners.

5.2.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

Sharon told me of a few situations when executive decisions were made that suggest that there is systemic evidence of hierarchical, bureaucratic processes within the school. Since she is not directly a part of the senior leadership group she may not have the same "hands-on" experience as the other interviewees, but gave me what we believe is interesting information from a different point of view.

When it comes to decision-making process within the school, she reported towards the end of the interview that that many of the decisions obviously take place at meetings between members of the school's senior management (leadership) group. She said; *"I see senior management quite often talking to each other and they do have regular meetings, but obviously you don't know the effect of those meetings."* Is this possibly due to the fact she feels relatively left out when it comes to taking part in this process? In regards to what she told us, there seems to be evidence of a hierarchical culture where the level of *subordination* is quite strong. Subordination is one of the characteristics of Weberian bureaucracy according to Kjær (1999, p. 42).

However, it's important to point out she did give me the impression that she has a good working relationship with the senior leadership group, which I'll study more closely in section 5.2.9.

5.2.3 Decision-making through NPM

I have previously pointed out that the idea of "good practice" or "best practice" is central in systems characterized by NPM (Olsen, 2005, p. 9). When talking about what was expected of Jill in her job, she said that these expectations were important to her co-operation with other schools because; *"you can utilize that as good practice across to your other schools as well".*

When asked about challenging issues in the case school, she furthermore pointed out that consistent practice and a full school approach was something "crucial" and that it had to be looked at more closely by the schools leadership. She said; *"So it's consistent systems really. That has a huge impact on things, not just with the things that are flagged up by Ofsted, but a consistent approach and all the staff following up on the consistent approach. That's around school uniforms and not tolerating earrings and chewing gum…even those basic things…".* This was also an area that her colleague (I1) emphasized in the preceding interview. I consider "consistent practice" to be synonymous to "good" or "best practice".

5.2.4 Decision-making through networking

Based on the interview with Sharon, there seems to be evidence that supports a growing culture of networking in our case school. She pointed out the fact that the school was in a time of transition, since the new head teacher had come into the school relatively recently. She said this about the new head teacher (I3); *"He's very approachable, and he's is prepared to listen to the staff".* She continued and said; *"He (the head teacher) wants them (the governing body) to ask the right questions, to make sure the decision that they make is the right one for the school",* and added *"there needs to be that sort of challenging supportive environment".* This suggests that there is a quite open environment at the school, and from what I understand what Kjær (1999, p. 42) would call a "culture of reciprocity".

I would also like to emphasize Sharon's description of her close co-operation with her line manager (I7), who she meets with on a regular basis. On the whole, there is a well-developed system of meetings, both formal and informal at the school. She said this about her line-manager, *"I guess from my point of view I find this more a bit of more of a coaching role. A listener more than a direct line manager".* She continued about how she experienced his coaching role; *"… it's more of a questioned-coaching…to think about you know all the various, different outcomes that could possibly happen".* She concluded by saying; *"It's quite a two-way thing as opposed to a…"do this do that"…".*

5.2.5 Expectations and consequences

The interview with Sharon then glided over to questions about what was expected of her in her job, and which accountability mechanisms she saw within Middletown. She told me the

following about the general expectations in her job as Development Manager; *"The expectations in terms of what I actually have to deliver are delivered nationally rather than delivered locally. So it's a point of putting national expectations into a local context in a way."* This brings me to believe that accountability mechanisms which are local in the school may stem from expectations that are established more on a central, national level.

5.2.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

Sharon mentioned that when it comes to internal expectations she says that on a daily basis her line manager is the one that assesses her work. But she also pointed out that ultimately she is accountable to the head teacher.

She furthermore mentioned the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the school evaluation forms as being important documents that steer much of the school's processes. She had recently been involved with some of the process of reviewing these documents. The point of this revision, she explained, was to see if *"that's an accurate reflection of the school, and that it embeds some of the key things that we do".* However, even if these documents were developed internally, they were open to scrutiny from external bodies such as Ofsted; *"...you know OFSTED can pick that data up…",* she said.

Moreover, in her own job as development manager she told me that she had a substantial economic responsibility towards the funding that the school received from a national trust. She described it as *"a substantial amount of money that comes into the school and accountability of that".* She also shared how she was responsible for the additional annual 300.000 GPD that the school received for the government to operate the school's specialist partnership, on top of what comes from the trust fund. As she put it; *"...a quite hefty financial responsibility".*

Finally, as another example of what I understand as an external accountability mechanism, she explained to me that the school's staff was responsible of filling out a yearly, national survey which every school in the U.K. has to complete. She made me again aware of that *"there are impacts in terms of Ofsted picking up data and things like that, so it's very important…and that it has to be signed off by the head teacher, who has to able to say; Yeah, it's correct. The information that we submitted is correct".*

5.2.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and Hierarchical accountability

In section 5.2.2 I have already outlined bureaucratic decision making, based on Sharon's experiences, in what may seem as a partially hierarchical organization. Therefore I would like to deeper explore some examples of what we perceive to be professional accountability mechanisms within Middletown College.

Internal, professional accountability, we've seen, has to do with each member of staffs' sense of responsibility. I asked Sharon how she knew what was expected of her in her job, and she said; "*I think, well a lot of it comes from your own self, your own motivation in terms of what you want to achieve and if you want to hit the targets. It's sort of intrinsic in a way; the work you are going to put in, is what you are going to get out I guess*". It seems even clearer that her own sense of responsibility is evident when she added; "*...if something's asked of me to do, I will do the best I possibly can*". She emphasized here that what motivates her to do a good job, is that she wants to achieve the targets that are set. But not only is she driven from her own sense of responsibility, but also what's expected of her further up in "the chain of command".

5.2.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

Towards the end of the interview Sharon was asked how she thought Ofsted perceived the school, in light of the upcoming inspection. After thinking over the question she said; "*I think when you come into the school...the vibe is a quite good feeling when you walk through the front door I think*". She also believed that Ofsted would see a school that is fairly calm, and that has a "*feel of a working environment really*". But added that this is different during break time, just like in any other school she believed.

The only obstacle she mentioned is again the lack of a consistent system of communication with students. I therefore ask, do all the staff react in the same consistent way to areas such as student punctuality?

Her general opinion of Ofsted is that their role is to improve the school further, and that their feedback is utilized as best possible. However, she claimed that; "*One of the problems with Ofsted is, that they only see a snapshot the school. You know, and this is generic comment, not just to Middletown [...] do they actually see the school as it's run and working, or do they*

see what you want them to see"? Here she seems at first to be a bit skeptical towards external intervention, but finally said; *"But I think there's got to be value in terms of someone coming in and looking on it from a different point of view and…you know "take off those rose-tinted spectacles" a little bit and see what they see for its own sake."*

5.2.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

The final area of the interview with Sharon, was what she believed to be most vital in relations between leaders in the school, both in middle and senior leadership. She stressed the importance of upholding a professional relationship *"to make sure there's that the jigsaw is put together in the right way, and that what you're aiming for is that those people are working together and that it's fairly seamless aren't you? But it takes a lot of work."* She furthermore said that she felt that she could approach any member of senior leadership and run things by them, since there was such *"a fairly open door policy",* as she put it.

When I asked her if she believed that these relationships would change in any way in the course of an Ofsted inspection, she gave the following answer; *"I think at that time, everyone wants the best for the school. Whether the relationships change purposely, I don't know. You've got a heightened sense of stress in that time haven't you? To be honest I'd like to think that it wouldn't change, but I think it does. It's a subconscious thing that relationships change, because you're quite focused […] because you want the school to do as best they possibly can."* It seems, from my point of view, that what Sharon means is that these relationships might change, either negatively or positively, because the whole school is so focused on the Ofsted inspection.

5.3 Interview 3: Head Teacher (I3)

"William" is the head teacher at Middletown College and is relatively new to the post. He has previously been acting head teacher and deputy head teacher at other schools, and has more than 20 years of leadership experience. When he took on the new position, he was aware that one of his most important tasks was to turn around a negative budget situation that the school was in, which turned out to be even more serious than he had anticipated.

William was on a tight schedule, so the interview was a bit shorter than with the other members of staff. However, his insight turned out to be most interesting and helpful in the further analysis.

5.3.1 The decision-making process

I asked him to describe his job and his leadership role in the school, and I quickly understood that he had a new approach to leadership, which the staff at the time were not used to. He described it like this; "*It's a case of saying; out of adversity you've got to look for opportunities to try and win people around. This adversity has given me the opportunity. Time will tell to win staff around. I try to find myself to be approachable all right? I don't like the situation of this office. In terms of actually being able to get to this office, you've got to get through potentially three locked doors.*" Being approachable was to us clearly his main leadership "mantra", and stands out in the further analysis of the interview with him.

5.3.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

Even though my main impression is that the head teacher has a relatively "open-door policy", he is obviously aware that in eventually all major decisions will land on his desk. There is in a way a natural culture of subordination, but I feel that this may be more due to the "inherited" organizational leadership of the school, more than the leadership role that he takes. However, he did point out; "*The ultimate arbitrator is me. So, in this current situation, there have been things where they've advised me to in one direction, and most of them I've gone for. But others where I've said; No, I'm doing what I want to do*".

Based on feedback he received from members of the senior leadership group through a staff survey, he had the impression that "*the leadership group, the bigger one, felt that the leadership team were making the decisions, and they were sort of like; Nod, yeah, go*". This also supports, from my point of view, that there does exist a certain level of subordination within the school.

5.3.3 Decision-making through NPM

I also asked William about his responsibilities at the school, and what would happen if he didn't step up to those challenges. He told me that there were clear economic incentives attached to his performance as a leader of the school. His performance was measured on an

annual basis, with set performance targets that he was obligated to meet. He put it like this; "*If the governors don't feel that I'm making my performance targets, you know, the performance related pay…my pay stays the same. It doesn't go up*". I do see that there is in this case a crossover between NPM and external accountability, which we will be covering below in section 5.3.6.

5.3.4 Decision-making through Networking

It is relatively clear to me that the greatest change in the leadership of Middletown College was the increasing emphasis on leading the school through networking, both internally and externally. Even if it might be too early to jump to conclusions, the interviewees that I had talked to until now, were all conclusive in their assessment of the new head teacher.

When William was asked what his first major task as head teacher, he said; "*I would feel that over the course of the three months I've been here, so far I've made my number one priority to try and get the trust of the staff and make sure that they were supportive of me.*" It seems evident to us that the matter of trust is very important to him, which is a central characteristic of modern networks (Kjær, 1999).

William initially ran an online survey among the whole staff, the students, the governing body and the parents. He wanted to find out what was working at the school, and getting first-hand information on what they believed to be important areas of improvement. He received more than 150 responses, and said; "*I responded (back) to them all personally*". He said that feedback was vital to him in the decision-making process, and added; "*You're making them feel like part of the decision-making process*" however, "*consultation does not have to mean capitulation*".

Finally I asked him what made him take a communicative approach to the new job, he answered; "*That's me as a person… […]… if you ask people, you're making them feel valued because they're being part of the organization*".

5.3.5 Expectations and consequences

I then asked William the following question; **As head teacher, what are you responsible for here in the school?** He answered quickly*; "That's an easy question. Just everything, full stop. Because ultimately, the responsibility lies with me."*

He also said that the prime role as a head teacher was to look after the staff and the students' well being. He said; *"In the greater sense, if staff, you know, are unhappy in school, they're not going to perform well in the classroom. All right? If the pupils are unhappy, they are not"*.

5.3.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

When the new head teacher took on his new position, he quickly understood that he had become responsible to a wide range of both internal and external factors. He said; *"I'm having external factors saying to me that you've got to resolve that issue and you've got to resolve that situation, which I wasn't expecting to come with the job. But you've got to look for opportunities out of that"*. He also interestingly added; *"the lights will go out if you don't move quick enough."*

He gave me several examples of external accountability mechanisms. However, as him being the ultimate leader of the school, I need to point out that the interview did not much focus on internal mechanisms.

The foremost formal body that he is accountable to is the school governors, since they are directly his employer. He felt that he had a good working relationship with them, but he did express that the governing body needed to be even more capable of *"asking the difficult questions"* as he put it.

In many ways, he gave me the impression that in the daily leadership of the school, the local authorities were important partners in working towards developing the school in a positive direction. He told me that the School Improvement Partner (SIP) visited the school three to four times per year, and that they as an external accountability body were becoming more important. He put it like this; *"The School Improvement Partner is becoming increasingly important in the accountabilty trail. […]…they're getting increasingly more power. And also you know, that will grow in the future. So the relationship with the SIP is essential. Because they're the ones that are in 3-4 times a year, set business, based on a whole range of targets like attendance, like academic achievement, behavior etc."* From what I understand, it seems if the SIP may be strengthening its role, possibly at the cost of Ofsted. However, it may be too drastic to make that conclusion at this point.

He also briefly mentioned the National Professional Qualification for Headship as giving direction as to what is expected of head teachers, which are national standards.

5.3.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and hierarchical accountability

Again, as being on top executive of the school, William did not speak much about internal, hierarchical accountability mechanisms. But as I have already mentioned there are several external factors above him in the hierarchy which he has to take in account.

Professionally, there were some areas which he told me about. This was especially when it came to what he believed to be important in his own leadership role when meeting daily expectations. He said this about his own personal sense of responsibility; *I think you've got to go by your own lead, about what you think as a person is right and wrong. And that gives you the expectations. [..] You go by you own moral compass; what you think is right for you, and what you think is right for me.*

5.3.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

Another important external body for Middletown College is obviously Ofsted. William said this about Ofsted; "*I actually personally like external verification. […] I don't dislike it. It's like exam results. I think, it's too heavy-handed. I like the idea of moving to the SIP partner. And having a better relationship with someone that knows you more intimately.*" Again it seems if he feels that the School Improvement Partner plays a more central role in the school's development, even if he doesn't rule off the importance of Ofsted. He claimed that one of the problems with Ofsted is that they don't take in account the local circumstances, which the SIP evidently does.

In conjunction to the upcoming inspection, I asked him what his feelings were towards it. He mentioned that the staff morale was currently challenged, due to financial issues resulting in downsizing of staff. However on the other hand an inspection is positive because it would give him an external measure. He added; "*I've changed hopefully a fair few number of things in here... […]...But it's not directly attributable to me.* He stated the fact that the situation the school was in, might not be directly due to him personally, rather the former leadership of the school and other circumstances which were out of his control.

When asked about which obstacles and challenges he saw in the school, he mentioned three issues; first behavior among students in communal areas, secondly poor turnout and support from parents and finally that staff were used to working in a particular way.

5.3.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

Towards the end of the interview William was asked about relations within senior leadership. He told me that the senior leaders were not used to being involved enough in the decision-making process. He said; *"The opening meeting was that ice-breaker, saying; Right, now we work together"*.

He again mentioned trust as being vital in organizational relationships, as well as innovativeness and openness. I rounded off by asking him if he thought these relationships would change in the course of an inspection. To this he said; *"No. I don't personally think that might change. If you start changing, and you're different than what you are as a person, you can't maintain it. You have to be your own person."* He also interestingly added; *"You can't put on an act and be different. Because eventually the mask will crack, and you'll be spotted."*

5.4 Interview 5: Assistant Head Teacher (I5)

"Nicole" is an Assistant Head Teacher in her early thirties. In spite of her young age, she had risen through the ranks as Head of Department, and was now in her second year as Assistant Head Teacher.

She described her current role as leading and managing the same department she had been head, and she was also responsible for one of the whole school programs. She said this about her role in senior leadership; *"I suppose, as an assistant head teacher, to play a role in the leadership of the whole school, whether that be in the […] department, you know, or things outside my direct remit. To contribute to the discussion about how we take the school forward, and also to lead staff and lead them to take the school forward."*

She considered Middletown College to be a school *"where the teachers have some good relationships with some challenging students, and I think there's some pockets of really good*

team work amongst members of staff". She also emphasized the school as having a significant number of students who are willing to learn, and who want to progress.

5.4.1 The decision-making process

Nicole was asked about her own leadership role, and said that she thought it was important for her to lead by example. She said; *"I wouldn't ask people to do things that I wasn't willing to do myself. And I think I try to see peoples as individuals, and treat them as individuals."*

In regards to her leadership, she also pointed out that she expected a lot of the teams that she lead, and that she had a positive approach to her job. She said; *"I don't ask to move mountains, but I do expect a lot from them. Just to be realistic in what we can achieve".*

5.4.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

In a traditional bureaucratic system roles are as we have seen characterized by subordination means of conflict or confrontation are defined by rules and commands (Kjær, 1999, p.42). I asked Nicole about how she monitored that her staff were doing what was expected of them. She said that every ten lessons they had an assessment of the students, and received comments from their teachers. These marks were given centrally to the Department Head, who imported in all the results on the computer net. They could then see who had handed in their results. This may be interpreted as evidence of rigid bureaucratic structure in the organization.

5.4.3 Decision-making through NPM

Even if this seemed to be relatively bureaucratic routine, it could also be interpreted as signs of a system where certain measureable standards were desirable. She said; "They *know the standard, what they have to do. We also look at their class's data, what their targets are, what their current attainment is, and we ask them to look at any students they're concerned about."*

Nicole also said the following about her role as Assistant Head; *"Ensuring that we've maintained and improved on current standards, managing staff in that department so that they feel supported and challenged."* Again we see that standardization is an important part of the quality management system of the school.

5.4.4 Decision-making through Networking

Middletown is a school in transition, which Nicole also pointed out several times. She said that the new Head Teacher (I3) operated very differently than the previous head, and that he was very strong on staff relationships, also within the senior leadership group. She said that until the new head arrived, *"the leadership team was quite distant to the staff"*.

As mentioned above there are in some areas what may seem as quite bureaucratic, but on the other hand it can also be seen as building on strong networks. She told me the following; *"I think one of the most important things about leadership is knowing when to collaborate with people and when to be democratic, and when to know that you have to make the decision, and I think that's something that I do as a leader."* On one hand, as I understand, she sees that there is a need to be rigid in the decision-making process, but also that there is a strong need to co-operate within the school in order to reach common goals such as student achievement.

5.4.5 Expectations and consequences

Nicole had already in section 5.4.1 given me an impression of what she was accountable for in the school. Even though, I asked her if she knew what was expected of her in her job. She told me that there was a job description, but other than that she said it was difficult to know what was expected of her. She said; *"It hasn't been made clear to me what is expected of me, apart from on the job role (description) really"*.

When asked about what would happen if she didn't meet those expectations, she told me; *"I don't know. Good question really. I've never been in that position actually."* However, it became clearer to me when she elaborated, and brought the interview over to areas of internal and external accountability.

5.4.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

The closest person to assess if Nicole was performing in her job as Assistant Head Teacher was her line manager, one of the deputy heads. She said that they had weekly, one-hour long meetings, where they discussed how things were going, and what she'd been doing the past week. She did then reveal; *"I imagine that in that meeting, if things were not going well, I would be challenged"*.

I also asked her what would happen if a teacher in the department she led was not meeting his/her expectations. She said that during the assessment meetings, if a teacher had failed to complete their work, they would be given a week's extension to get the marking up to date. If they didn't follow up, they would be given a formal warning, and then finally go up to the deputy head if necessary. This could maybe be linked with the bureaucratic system covered in section 5.4.2.

When it came to external accountabilty mechanisms, she mentioned that she thought they had improved the past year in grasping national agendas, and seeing to that those filtered through the organization. She meant that this stemmed from the new leadership team which she considered to be more effectively led than previously. She also added that they as a school were challenged once a year by the governing body.

5.4.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and hierarchical accountability

We have seen that, according to Nicole, there seems to exist systems of hierarchical accountability within the school. Even though there seems to have been a certain leveling of rigid structures, the three-tier system within the senior leadership group leads to a subordinate culture.

Professionally speaking, she gave me the impression that she felt personal responsibility towards improving student attainment and learning within her department. In the previous full school inspection, one of the areas where Ofsted noted they needed improvement was the department where she was head. The school had recently received on a later occasion a single-subject inspection in that exact department, and her team had luckily shown considerable progress. She said; "*I did read that (report), and it reminded me of the great work we've done as a team. Yeah, I feel that I've really made a contribution to the improvement of Middletown, and that makes me proud*".

5.4.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

In regards to Ofsted I asked her about how Nicole believed they perceived the school. She was convinced that they saw the school as an improving institution, and that they were really addressing underachievement in several subjects such as Maths. She added that they would probably see that Middletown College had made a serious attempt to address some of the

targets that were set in the previous inspections. *"What do I think they will say?"* she asked me, and she answered; *"I think we'll get a Good….scrape a Good"*.

According to her there were some major obstacles that might get in way of a fair assessment. She mentioned student attendance as something that needed to be improved. She also meant that student behavior in the classrooms was good across the board, but was concerned about their behavior in the corridors. The final challenge, as she saw it, was that Ofsted might comment on the Science and Technology department, which she meant needed attention.

To me she seemed quite positive towards Ofsted, and pointed out that they had given the school some specific targets to work towards. She said; "*...it's given us a purpose; we've had to improve! And it's been **the** driving force for a lot of change in this school"*.

5.4.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

She was asked what was most important to her in professional relations within the senior leadership group. She told me that she would emphasize three areas; trust, team work and honesty. She said that this had been highlighted to her in the current situation with financial issues the school had to face. She said that *"providing that you were honest and that you trusted each other, you could as a team get through anything together"*.

If she thought that relationships would change in the course of an Ofsted inspection, she said that in her past experience that Ofsted would bring together the school as an organization. She referred again to the recent single-subject inspection. She put it this way; "*…we had some serious challenges. But, it galvanized the team, and we did work together effectively"*. She concluded; "*... I do think that this school is good at pulling together, [...] that the leadership team is good at pulling together when the pressure is on.   So for me, even though every teacher naturally dreads Ofsted, I've always found it a time when you realize how good your colleagues are."*

5.5 Interview 6: Assistant Head Teacher (I6)

The next interviewee was "Robert". Robert is also an Assistant Head Teacher, around forty years old, and has broader leadership experience than many of his peers. Prior to his position

at Middletown, he led the Upper School in his previous job, and has a total of more than fifteen years of teaching experience.

He initially told me about the transformation from the role as teacher to the role as leader, but that his current classroom teaching post however was larger than in his previous school. He seemed rather satisfied with it, and gave me the impression that he wouldn't do without meeting the students in the classroom on a regular basis.

Robert described Middletown as a very large school, and his experience a lively and friendly school. He also mentioned that the students were more suspicious than he had previously encountered. He was told at the start of his career in Middletown that he had to win the trust of the students, but was however a bit critical. He said; "*So the emphasis seems to be at the moment here, that the students want you to win them over, but we do need to start working on the idea of the students winning the staff over. Winning people over, that's a really important skill…*".

5.5.1 The decision-making process

As mentioned above, Robert was well aware of the balance between being a part of the senior leadership group, and the role of being a classroom teacher. He expressed, from what I can interpret from the interview, that he felt that the balance was actually not an easy one at first. He said; "*But I realized very quickly, two-three weeks into it, a very big school, that what I had to get right first was the first job, which is teaching [...] because how the students would direct to me outside, would probably be based on what they tell their friends of how I teach them in class*". It seems to me that based on what Robert revealed, in order to gain the trust of the students as a leader, he had to prove himself in the classroom as a teacher. He added; "*It becomes slightly a bit unnerving, because you come in as an assistant head teacher, but you hadn't earned any of that reputation amongst any of the students in the school, and any of the staff possibly*".

From what I understand from the interview, I learned that Robert, more than the other senior teachers I had interviewed, was as much aware of his role as teacher as of his role as being part of the senior leadership group. He felt that how the students perceived him as a leader was based upon how the students experienced him in the classroom.

5.5.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

During the interview Robert expressed that he felt that there were major differences in how he experienced his current leadership role compared to in his previous school. He told me that one of the major differences was that there were held far less meetings in his previous school, but there was more writing of formal reports. He moreover said that he meant that the weekly reports he had received as line manager previously were very helpful, and that he in many ways missed them. He put it this way; *"It was really good because it gave you the headlines, and you always knew what was happening at a glance. You were never out of the loop. Here they tend to do that in meetings…"*. Maybe this is evidence of a culture of networking, more than of bureaucracy? This will be further discussed in section 5.5.4.

5.5.3 Decision-making through New Public Management

As many of his peers, Robert mentioned during the interview the system of performance management targets (PMT's) that were set every year in October. He said however that the yearly meetings where he and his line manager, one of the deputy heads, went through the past and new targets was more of a discussion than measuring defined targets.

Furthermore he gave me the impression that he was quite critical of the whole idea of performance management, and meant the system was quite rigid and lacked flexibility. He elaborated; "*You've got to look at the context. And sometimes, something might be started, and needs further development, so you can't really do it within a year. That's where PMT slightly falls down.*" From what I can interpret here, he means that there is a discrepancy between performance management and which targets can actually be reached.

He also mentioned that there were certain economic incentives attached to his performance as part of the senior leader group. He meant that technically the PMT's were tied to his incremental pay for the year, but he added that it wasn't as far as he perceived as tied down as people think. Maybe the economic consequences were not as formalized as I was initially brought to believe?

5.5.4 Decision-making through networking

I have already mentioned the widespread use of informal and formal meetings Robert had

experienced in Middletown. He said that he was really looking forward to co-operating with the new head teacher (I3), because he had learned a lot from his previous senior leaders. He was surprised with the open, consultative approach the new head teacher had. He said; *"I didn't know that you could actually run a school and be as consultative in an open way as the current head teacher is. And still have your principles and know what you want."* In his first year in Middletown, he furthermore expressed that he had felt a bit frustrated, since he had experienced the previous head teacher to be a bit indecisive, since he on several occasions had established a "working-party" when minor issues were to be decided upon. Does this imply that the former leadership of Middletown wasn't as bureaucratic as my initial impression maybe suggested?

Another example of the new head teacher's consultative approach was the fact that he had listened a lot to what parents, staff and students were concerned about in regards to the school's development, and how the school could be improved. Robert put it like this; *"Straight away that was an eye-opener to me, because he was getting to know how many parents were actually interested, what staff were interested, what kind of ideas are out there?"*

Robert gave me a third example of the new head teacher's consultative approach, and talked about how he had at an early stage experienced receiving feedback on his ideas on several occasions; *"You know, he is very quick to come back and say; I've heard that about this, that sounds really good."* However, he modified himself in a way by smiling and interestingly adding; *"It's reminding you of […] what's important in your job is often what the head teacher says is important in your job."*

5.5.5 Expectations and consequences

I also asked Robert of how he knew what was expected of him, and he answered that many of his responsibilities were outlined in the job description. He also again mentioned feedback from his line- manager, one of the deputy heads, as well as the weekly meetings and performance management targets. All of these have been covered in the preceding sections.

When I asked him about what the consequences would be if he didn't meet those expectations he answered briefly; *"Thankfully I've not been in that position."*

5.5.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

Internally, Robert mentioned a wide range of accountability mechanisms within the school. First he pointed out the weekly meetings as an arena where all of the assistant head teachers and the "Heads of House" attended. Here he as a senior leader received feedback on issues such as behavior, attendance and punctuality. Secondly he told me about the responsibility he had for following up the mentor program within the school, which had to do with observing and mentoring new teachers or students teachers within the school. He felt that he should have devoted more time to this task, since he felt it was of upmost importance. He said; "*I wish I had more time to focus on it*". Thirdly, he said that he met with his line-manager once every week. His line-manager, a deputy head, would meet to go through what was happening at the moment. Finally he mentioned that he on a regular basis observed teachers in the classroom. He said; "*I think they would view my role as being a point of seeing what goes on in the classroom*".

When it came to external pressures to perform as a school, he pointed out especially two challenges. First, he referred to the current situation the school was in financially, and meant that the media and parents would react if there were any dramatic organizational or budget changes the following weeks. The second external issue he mentioned was that the local authorities had come in and evaluated the mentor program that he was responsible for, and had given him positive feedback on the school's progress in this area.

5.5.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and hierarchical accountability

Even if Robert pointed out that he had weekly meetings with his line-manager, he was also gave me the impression that he also had a sense of professionalism in regards of assessing his own work. He put it this way; "*Personally, you know, I evaluate what I'm doing all the time.*"

When he started as Assistant Head Teacher, he felt quite welcomed and described it as *"not too uncomfortable fitting in"*. However, he looked back and added that in his first year he had a feeling that "*there was almost the idea that your opinion would be welcomed and your input is important, but the decisions were probably made by somebody else*". This could possibly be evidence of relatively strongly developed hierarchical structures within Middletown College, as well as a certain level of subordination. This may be supported by

something else he said about how decisions were made within senior leadership of the school under the previous head teacher. He claimed to have experienced presenting new ideas within the leadership group, only to observe that a "working party" was established to explore those ideas, which himself was not directly a part of. He put it this way; "… (you) *kind of come forward with a new idea, based on your experience, why you were hired, based on your work in the school, but it would almost be stalled in a way; Because we need to be sure that we consulted in certain people. So the working party was not necessarily to take your work away, but it more along the lines of; Well let's see what other people think now."*

I see here that the bureaucratic idea of decision-making, outlined in section 5.5.2, seems to link up with many of the hierarchical impressions I now have discussed. This may be due to that bureaucracies, according to Kjær (1999, p. 42-43) have a well-developed authoritative means of exchange.

5.5.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

When it came to Ofsted, Robert's initial view was the following; "*Ofsted are being criticized at lot at the moment with this new regime of; it's not about how much progress necessarily, it's about; Are the students getting grades, results, qualifications that are going to help them in the next age?"* From what I understand it seems if he believes Ofsted to be too much focused on results, more than the actual quality of the processes in classrooms.

He said that if Ofsted came in tomorrow, the financial situation that the school was in at the time "*might cloud everything else that the school has done, which would be a shame."* I asked him how he thought Ofsted would perceive Middletown College, and he said they would see the school as progressing, and that they would see the school as being a good school with some outstanding features.

He furthermore told me about some of the obstacles as he saw it of getting a fair assessment during the inspection, and he mentioned three issues that concerned him apart from the current financial situation; the massive size of the school, low staff morale as well as major design flaws such as the previously mentioned double doors. He said; *"I think the design could let us down on a practical basis".* Another example of this was the fact that the communal areas in the school were either very cold in the winter or very warm during the summer. He said that the Ofsted inspectors might be concerned that the school had a strict

policy when it came to school uniforms, which was in his opinion not adapted to certain climatic challenges of the building.

5.5.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

Robert meant that even if staff morale at the time was quite low, due to the financial situation and redundancies, they would pull together during an upcoming inspection. He claimed; "*…the amount of progress schools make using the good will of staff, students, parents etc., is amazing. Good will is so important. Good will is free, you don't pay for it*". He had experienced this in his former school, and also pointed out that once Ofsted arrive, you will a leader realized how everything in the school is interlinked.

I finally asked him if he would be personally disappointed if the upcoming inspection resulted in a "Satisfactory" rating. He put it like this; "*Satisfactory would be disappointing in terms of what we've led the students, the staff and the parents to believe.*" I again sensed him to be quite concerned and critical towards Ofsted as an external interventional body as it was currently organized.

5.6 Interview 7: Assistant Head Teacher (I7)

My final interview was with another Assistant Head Teacher, by the name of "Gregory". Gregory is in his late thirties, and has several years of experience at Middletown College as both a teacher and as a senior leader. However, Gregory is in the process of considering new job possibilities outside the school, but plans to continue as a senior leader in the region.

He described the school as an institution with excellent facilities and equipment, such as the ICT-department (Information and Communication Technology) which he considers as "*second to none*". He furthermore pointed out that the school was going through a turbulent time the next couple of years, and believed that many of the schools at the moment in the Greater Manchester area were shutting down and reopening under different names. The competition between schools in the region was considerable, and also meant that unless the school was careful the next few years, student admissions to Middletown could decline while other, new schools were opened.

5.6.1 The decision-making process

Gregory mentioned several of his "generic duties" such as break duties, but quickly moved on to what he thought were his most important tasks as a middle leader. He told me about his work as line manager of one of the major departments in the school, and hoped that the ethos of his department was something that *"filtered through every part of the school to raise attainment"*.

I asked him to describe the leadership of the school in general, as well as his own leadership. He said this about the middle leadership of the school; *"I think there's some really strong middle leaders who are visionary. I also think there are some middle leaders who are at their limit of their professional capacity for whatever reason."* Obviously he seems a bit critical towards some members the middle leadership, such as certain Heads of Department, whom he regards to be somewhat "substandard".

He then commented on his own leadership; *"My leadership has evolved I would argue. I do like getting things done there and then. I'm very dynamic on that front, and when things need get doing, let's get it done".* He continued about the fact that his leadership the past year had evolved, from a job where he had to make quick decisions, to a new role where he had to put more emphasis on planning. He said it like this; *"I listen more, think more, and then decide. (I'm) a bit more reflective on my leadership than I used to be".*

5.6.2 Decision-making through bureaucracy

During the interview Gregory did not give me many examples of bureaucratic leadership within the school, but as I have previously mentioned there may be a fine line between bureaucracy leadership and hierarchical accountability structures, which we will further explore in section 5.6.7.

However he did tell me about some formal procedures which were applied when strategies such as coaching and professional development for underachieving teaching staff failed. He said; *"… if the issues are addressable through support, coaching, training, professional development in whatever their needs are. If that's tried and doesn't work, and they're not engaging, then obviously you've got to start looking at the formal procedures that are in place. Because the statement I always fall back on is you know; you're letting the students down".* From my interpretation of what he here told us, it's possible to see a link between

governance through networking and a more rigid and formal approach characterized by bureaucratic, formal procedures.

5.6.3 Decision-making through NPM

Gregory, like many of the other interviewees, talked about the system of performance management targets (PFT's). I asked how his line manager, a Deputy Head Teacher, determined if he was meeting expectations. He said that the three PFT's that were set in October every year were important benchmarks of how he was performing. He said; *"You're given three targets (PFT's) at the start of the year, in October. And you're judged against those targets the following year. So, that is the hard benchmark"*.

I then asked him if he felt that the PFT's were important. He said that they had in his opinion become less important over the past, but that senior leadership had tightened up on it this year. However he believed that these targets needed to be utilized actively and measured throughout the year, not once yearly. He said; *"What is highlighted to me is that if you're going to have these targets, they just can't be put in a file, put in a cupboard, and pulled out again 10 months later. There's got to be system where they're referred to on a monthly basis, to make sure that they're not forgotten, and people are working towards them. Because those PFTs are based on the whole school target. So if you've got 190 adults working towards the whole school target, you're going to get there."* For me it was interesting to listen to his viewpoints and that he saw a link between the individual PFT's and what the targets of the whole organization were. He also briefly mentioned that a poor assessment towards his PFT's could affect his pay award the following year, but did not seem very anxious about it.

5.6.4 Decision-making through Networking

Gregory also shared his views of the new leadership at the school, and told me that the new head teacher had worked very hard towards rebuilding the trust of the staff. Gregory characterized him as being very open and honest about most things, and valued that the head teacher listened to staff and requested feedback before making many of his decisions.

When describing his own leadership style, he told me that he was *"a firm believer in coaching and supporting first, not the big stick! "* He pointed out to me that there last year had been some issues with a couple of the teachers that he line manager to. They were underachieving and didn't meet up to the expectations that senior leadership had to them. He said that instead

of implementing formal procedures he used a strategy of counseling. He described the counseling meetings like this; *"The first two or three meetings we didn't talk about anything really, I just tried to understand them as people, and how they tick."*

As mentioned in section 5.6.2 there seems to be a link between a structure characterized by hierarchical bureaucracy and one that is more in the direction of networking between public administrators within the organization.

5.6.5 Expectations and consequences

Gregory was asked about how he knew what was expected of him in his job, and he said that many of his duties were outlined in his job description. He said that a list of responsibilities was given to him at the beginning of the year, that he was expected to meet those expectations, and was held accountable if he failed towards them.

5.6.6 Expectations and consequences: Internal and external accountability

During the interview he gave me multiple examples of both internal and external accountability mechanisms, and I will here only refer to a few of them.

First Gregory talked about the weekly meetings that he had with his line manager, one of the three (now two) deputy heads. He told me about the content of these weekly meetings, *"I meet with her once a week, and she questions me over, you know, x, y and z. I question the people I line manage. So it comes from the top as it were...".* To me, this may be an example of evidence that there are links between internal and hierarchical accountability mechanisms within Middletown College. I then asked him if these meetings were important to him, which he refused. I followed up and urged him to elaborate, and he said; *"Because I don't feel I'm challenged enough on that front".* He then interestingly added; *"It's more of a news report, like; This is what you've done this week […] …it makes you feel good about yourself. But, I could do it with my eyes shut. And I want to be stretched as well. You know, mentally."*

Secondly he told me about his obligations as a classroom teacher within his area of specialty, and he said he was accountable for the classes he taught, and that he was judged against his students' GCSE-exam results. As a senior teacher he additionally felt that he was accountable for the well-being and attainment of the whole student body. Just as the rest of the senior management group, he also felt that he was accountable for all the staff's well-being, not only

the staff that he line managed. He also mentioned areas such as Health and Safety and child protection as areas he felt responsibility towards.

Finally he mentioned that he had recently been told by the head teacher that he had address the substandard level of punctuality in the school, and that he had been given four weeks to improve this area. He said it had been a tremendous effort, but that the numbers had improved considerably.

Gregory said that there could be professional or personal reasons for a teacher, or a senior leader, not to have reached certain expectations. These reasons, he said, had to be fully justifiable but had to be presented to the external, governing body for evaluation. A consequence however, could be that your pay could be held back for a time.

5.6.7 Conditions and consequences: Professional and hierarchical accountability

Professionally speaking, Gregory thought it was important to him to lead by example. He believed that if he showed personal responsibility in regards to everyday routine tasks within the school, others would follow his example. During lunch break, I saw an example of this. He helped out the students during the clean-up, and said during the interview; "*I do it because I think we're all responsible for it. The second reason is that I ask someone to clean up if I'm not going t clean up myself. I believe in modeling what you expect*".

He also thought all the teaching staff should have high aspirations for themselves and the students as well, He said; "*It really, really winds me up when I hear staff saying; Well, that's all that class is going to get! You know, I want to scream…*".

Based on the analysis of the interview with Gregory, he didn't reveal much evidence of hierarchical accountability mechanisms within Middletown College. He did however comment somewhat on the leadership structure of the school, and pointed out that he felt that "*there's talent from the bottom of leadership, up to the senior level. I think we contemplate each other well, but I also feel that there is still a lack of trust across the leadership network. And that is going to take a long time to break, and that's from the previous regime*". Even though he meant there was a relatively clear hierarchy within the school, he said that the lack of trust was inheritance from the previous leadership. As I have pointed out in section 5.6.4, the new head teacher put considerable effort into winning back that trust.

5.6.8 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

Gregory had, as one of the two assistant head teachers I interviewed, experienced the previous full Ofsted inspection.

I asked him if he thought the inspection had generated school effectiveness and improvement in Middletown College, and he said he thought it had. However, he claimed that the inspections were *"a game you're playing as well",* and added that *"Everyone knows that once you get that Ofsted call, it's not a true picture of the school".*

He questioned the system of a two-day notice, and wished that Ofsted just showed up on a thirty-minute warning. He said; *"I think it's drove up the schools' standards, but if they want a true picture of secondary education in England, then they literally need to turn up. And that would give you true pictures of the school".*

Even though he seemed quite skeptical towards Ofsted as an external interventional body, he did point out that he had an interesting experience during the previous full round of inspection. He told me that he had been interviewed by the leading inspector, which he called *"a big learning curve".*

I furthermore asked him about the obstacles in regards to the upcoming inspection and he pointed out that the main challenges were student behavior, which Ofsted defined as "low-level behavior", as well as some of the architectural features of the new school. He added that he thought some of these architectural challenges could have been avoided if the staff and leaders of the school had been consulted more in the planning of the new building.

5.6.9 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

Finally Gregory was asked about relations during the course of an Ofsted inspection. As mentioned above he had been through the previous full inspection, and I asked him how the staff had responded to it. He said; *"They were coming in on the following Monday and Tuesday. School was open on the Saturday and the Sunday, and the staff car park was rammed. Everyone rose to the challenge. They had the staff on the corridors supervising the students. No one was off sick. Everyone came in. You know, it's funny in times of crisis how much you all bond and how much people generally care."* He said that there was *"a bit of a siege mentality then".*

This told me much about how colleagues seem to bond when they are collectively challenged. We went on and asked of what he considered to be important in organizational relationships. He emphasized five areas of importance; confidentiality, humor, support, equal core values and trust.

He moreover said that during an Ofsted inspection that confidentiality would be *"of paramount importance"* as he put it and added; *"because we're not going to reveal anything to Ofsted that we didn't want to".* He concluded by telling me; "*I think it bonds you more as a team. Trust would be there more, because we're all in it together."*

6.0 Bringing it all together: Discussion and conclusions

The final chapter of this thesis will concentrate on presenting some of the common findings in the material, as well as cautiously drawing some conclusions. I will however also critically look at the research process, to see if there are any weaknesses which might have influence on the data material and outcomes.

I have looked at various forms of accountability mechanisms which might exist within the case school, through the "conceptual lenses" of Weberian bureaucracy, New Public Management and networks. Furthermore, leadership practice in the school has been viewed as being distributed across the school leadership, especially focusing on the senior leadership group. Finally, it was vital to the study to examine the possibility of changes in organizational relationships during the course of external intervention such as Ofsted.

6.1 Core values

From what I understand through the analysis of interviews with six members of leadership, Middletown College is an institution in transformation. Moving from the old site to a new state-of-the-art building has been of great importance for the school, assembling close to 1500 students and a staff exceeding 150 employees. However, even if there seems to be some turbulence in terms of settling in, there are some common core values which seem to be shared among the leaders I interviewed. The school seems to focus on the teaching and learning process, which means the pedagogical staff and leadership are predominately student-focused and thrive to raise achievement as well as the progress and outcomes of all students. Being a specialist college, the school's area of specialism seems to filter through the various departments in the school, and this "ethos" is visually displayed throughout the school. They are moreover seeking to maintain a consistency in practice, with a focus not only on quality teaching, but also "generic" areas such as punctuality, attendance and behavior.

6.2 Decision-making, expectations and consequences: accountability in an organization of bureaucracy, markets and networks

Since the new head teacher had arrived, there seems to have been some major changes in the leadership practice at the school. The new head teacher initially sought out to acquire information on how the school community perceived Middletown College, and what they believed needed to be done on order to get the school "back on the right track". Based on what all the leaders in the interview claimed, this seems to me as a new approach to leadership in the school. This is through a fairly open-door policy, where the senior leader listens more than merely presenting the answers and solutions in regards to the school's challenges.

Even if there have been changes in leadership practice, there might be evidence of several systems of decision-making within the school, either bureaucratic, market-driven or one of networking. As Olsen (2005) points out; *a) it is unlikely that public administration can be ruled by one principle alone, and b) bureaucratic organization is a part of a repertoire of co-existing forms in contemporary society*. Hence, from what I understand of Olsen (2005), it is unlikely to be able to conclude that there exists one dominant system in regards to the case school. However, there seems to be evidence of characteristics of all three systems within the school, especially taking in account the multiple forms of accountability which are pointed out by the leaders I interviewed. For example, all of the leaders with exception of the head teacher pointed out the performance management targets (PMT) which were individually set every year, and can be defined as measurable standards which are frequent in systems characterized by New Public Management (Rhodes, 1994). They did mostly however question the whole system of PMT's, and several seemed to be critical since they meant this system was both rigid and inflexible. Furthermore several of the leaders also pointed out that there were clear economic incentives attached to their performance as leaders of the school. However, there were variations in how anxious about they were they were of economic sanctions.

As we have seen, Kjær (2004) discusses a development towards public administration defined more by networks than of bureaucracy or market-oriented systems. Networks are

characterized by interdependency, trust, diplomacy and resource exchange. In regards to internal and external leadership practice, all the interviewed leaders of the school seem to express that decision-making has increasingly taken place along the lines of network-building, more than merely through subordination as well as rules and commands. However, it is again necessary emphasize that decisions are not made in accordance to one single system alone.

There seems to be evidence of a wide range of accountability mechanisms within Middletown College. These are characterized by both being internal and external, as well as professional and hierarchical. Internally, all of the interviewees emphasized the weekly meetings on Fridays within the senior leadership group as being an important arena where they were challenged in regards to areas such as punctuality and attendance. Furthermore, the four assistant head teachers mentioned that further weekly meetings with their line managers were of great importance, where they would be challenged if they were underperforming.

Externally, the interviewees expressed evidence of many forms of accountability. Since the school was currently in a financially challenging period, they felt that the scrutinizing eyes of the public as well as external bodies were focusing on them. Some mentioned national agendas as being important, as well as cooperation with external partners they were accountable to. Based on the data, it does not seem if the governing body plays as much of an active role as I had presumed. This is from my viewpoint an important finding. The local authorities however, represented by the School Improvement Partner (SIP), visited the school quarterly every year and were regarded to be a vital external interventional body, even if the emphasis on this area does vary between the leaders I interviewed.

6.3 Expectations and obstacles: Ofsted

Every three years the school is targeted by Ofsted. The school was in the process of preparing for an upcoming full inspection, in hope of improving results compared to the outcome of the previous inspection process. Based on all of the six interviews, Ofsted is an external interventional body that is taken seriously by the leadership group. The leaders I interviewed seemed relatively positive towards these inspections, and appreciated the idea of Ofsted as a formal verification of the quality of Middletown College as a learning institution. However, all on the other hand questioned the new system of inspections, where Ofsted intervened for two days with a notice of at least 48 hours. It seems if several did not believe that this form of

intervention would give a true picture of the school, and as one of the interviewees put it; *"One of the problems with Ofsted is that they only see a snapshot of the school"* (I2). Furthermore, it seemed if some of them were afraid of the fact that an external body such as Ofsted doesn't take in account the local circumstances, even if this does vary among the interviewees.

There were a number of challenges in regards to receiving a fair assessment in the upcoming inspection. The size of the school, as well as some of the architectural features, are of concern to several of the leaders in the study. Furthermore several of them mention student behavior of a minority of the students as challenging, especially in the corridors. Even if punctuality and attendance had substantially improved the past years, it was still a considerable concern to them. However, this does vary.

Several expressed that Ofsted had in the previous inspections given the school specific targets to work towards, something that they felt the school had in many ways addressed. They all believed that the Ofsted would view Middletown College as an improving school, with some outstanding features. I would here add that they all furthermore believed that they would get a better evaluation than they did as a result of the previous inspection. This was unanimous.

6.4 Relationships and outcomes during Ofsted

One of the research questions which I sought out to answer was; *How do organizational relationships evolve within the senior leadership group in the case school during external intervention?* First I asked the leaders what was most important to them in their relationships to fellow school leaders, and the one element which they all unanimously stressed was trust. They meant that in the course of an external intervention such as Ofsted trust would be vital to the outcome of the evaluation. Additionally they pointed out that team work, confidentiality and the presence of equal core values as being important to relationships within the leadership group. Which elements they stressed did however vary.

As an alternative scope for analysis I have pointed out that the concept of relational leadership could have been chosen, either in addition to or as an alternative approach. But as mentioned, I have however chosen to follow the idea of leadership as being distributed throughout the organization. Furthermore, through this distribution, there arise certain expectations in regards

to the roles that senior leaders fill. Through interaction between senior leaders within the school, leadership practice takes place according to certain "rules of the game" as Kjær (2004) refers to them.

Secondly, I asked how they believed leadership relations would evolve during the course of an external intervention such as Ofsted. For me I was intrigued by what seems to be interesting findings. All except one of the interviewees claimed that relationships would in fact change during an inspection process, where a stressful environment would lead to a strengthening of the ties between members of the school's senior leadership group. As one of the assistant head teachers who had experienced the previous inspections representatively said; *"I think that the school is good at pulling together, and that the leadership team is good at pulling together when the pressure is on"* (I5). But, what is furthermore interesting I believe is the totally different answer which the head teacher gave. He had obviously understood the question in a way that differed from the other five interviewees and said; *"No, I don't think they will change"* and added; *"You can't put on an act and be different. Because eventually the mask will crack, and you'll be spotted"* (I4). From what I understand, the interviewee's individual perception of the question asked during an interview situation will be of vital importance to the response you receive. Is this a challenge to the semi-structured interview method? Nevertheless, the head teacher does point out an important side of relationships in a professional environment; playing the role as a professional, senior leader.

6.5 Accountability mechanisms in Norway

As mentioned in the introduction, accountability in the context of the Norwegian educational system has hardly yet materialized (Elstad, 2008). Most municipalities in Norway have now what are called two-level administrations, also in the educational area. This implies that there is in most cases a direct link between the municipalities' local authorities and each individual head teacher. Each head teacher is moreover accountable towards the financial as well as the pedagogical results of their school. If lack of compliance to demands from central and local authorities leads to severe consequences, is hard to assess from my point of view. However, there seems to be an increasing development towards a system of formal supervisions of schools in each of the countries nineteen counties. Whitepaper no. 31 (2007-2008), "Quality in education", does point out that the central government wishes to increasingly follow up

local authorities through supervision and guidance (Sivesind, 2009). This *may* lead to an increase in pressure on senior school leaders from their local authorities.

If this eventually results in a system of national and local external interventional bodies such as in the U.K., seems to be unlikely to me, but an interesting thought. Time will tell.

6.6 The experiences of a novice researcher

There are strengths and weaknesses of using a semi-structured research method. One of the major strengths as I see it is closeness to the interviewees. Vital to this method is the interaction that takes place between the researcher and those who are interviewed. Open ended questions result in a wide array of responses. This results in a richness of data, but does on the other hand imply that the researcher has a difficult (but not impossible) task in organizing and comparing data for further analysis. An interesting question that arises is; *Would I have received different answers if I had for example interviewed the remaining members of the senior leadership group?* I may only speculate, but one cannot rule out this possibility.

I mentioned initially in the acknowledgement that the journey had been rugged but at the same time a tremendous learning experience for me, both as a school leader and a teacher. For me the key tool in leading others is building relations to colleagues, either in the senior leadership group or the teaching staff, and this has become more evident to me through working with my research data. Through the interview process as well as listening and transcribing the material, I have reflected upon my own leadership practice, and have acquired several new ideas. However, to quote one of the assistant head teachers (I1) whom I interviewed; *"It is quite a difficult job I think. Especially, it's not like a factory turning out goods. It's people you're dealing with. Very unpredictable"*.

Epilogue:

Middletown College was during the spring of 2010 again targeted by Ofsted, and went through a new, full inspection. I'm satisfied to see on the school's website that they did progress compared to the previous inspection, which seems to tell me that they are a school on the right track towards meeting goals and expectations. It will furthermore be interesting for me to follow them in the future.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Formal letter to case school

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Appendix 3: Registration: Norwegian Social Science Data Services

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RESEARCH STUDY: ACCOUNTABILITY IN SCHOOLS THROUGH OFSTED

Dear Mr.

As mentioned previously I am a part-time student at the Institute for Teacher Education and School Development at the University of Oslo. As part of my studies I am interested in writing a thesis on how British schools are made accountable as a result of external intervention, more specifically how they evolve, improve and become more effective through OFSTED inspections.

My preliminary research focus is; "How do leadership relations between the headmaster, assistant headmasters and an external governal body evolve? A case study of a lower secondary school in Greater Manchester".

It would be, as outlined through e-mail, highly relevant for me to conduct a case study at
since you have undergone several stages of OFSTED inspections during the last ten years. Since I have been at   on two occasions previously, I feel that I have a reasonable understanding of your organisation.

In order to find evidence that can support my research focus, I would be interested in conducting interviews with all members of senior management, more specifically yourself and your assistant headteachers. Additionally it would be relevant to interview the
department, since the most recent OFSTED subject survey in   focused specifically on   If possible, it would also be interesting to interview one external member of the school governing body. Each separate interview is estimated to take about one hour.

All of the informants, as well as   , are of course ensured full confidentiality and anonymity. My tutor and professor at the University of Oslo, Dr. Kirsten Sivesind, is fully informed concerning all steps of this project.

I will be arriving   on the   2010, and wish to conduct interviews on the
        March. I hope that these dates are still suitable and fit in with the school's plans.

I am looking forward to coming to   again, and learning even more about the school as an
organisation.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey Brooks Hall
M.A. student/Deputy Headteacher
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Jeffrey.Brooks.Hall@oppegard.kommune.no

Copy: Dr. Kirsten Sivesind, Associate Professor, The University of Oslo

	Introduction:	
	• Purpose • Motivation • Research focus • Research principles	

Category:	Main questions:	Follow-up questions:

1. **General information**	Please state the following;
	
	   i. gender
	   ii. occupation
	   iii. age
	   iv. educational background
		a. Other relevant information?

2. **Job/organisation description and leadership**	a. How would you describe your job b. How did you get into your current job? b. How would you describe your school? c. Describe your leadership at the school .d. How do you know what is expected of you in your job?	a. Would you like to elaborate?
3. Accountability mechanisms	a. As a head teacher/assistant head teacher/department head/school governor, what are you responsible for? b. Who determines whether you're fulfilling your responsibilities and meeting expectations? c. What happens if you don't meet these expectations? d. What do you expect subordinates (e.g. teachers) to be responsible for in your school? e. Do your subordinates (e.g. teachers) know what is expected of them, and what happens if they do not meet these expectations?	a. Would you like to elaborate?

4. OFSTED	a. How do you think external intervention bodies such as OFSTED perceives your school? b. How did you personally experience the recent OFSTED inspection (s) and following report (s)? c. How have your subordinates responded to the OFSTED inspection process? d. What do you perceive to be the most challenging internal issues according to OFSTED, and what obstacles do you see? e. How do you as a leader ensure that the recommendations in OFSTED reports are followed up? f. Has OFSTED generated school effectiveness and improvement in your school? If so, in which ways?	a. Would you like to elaborate? b. Other ways in which OFSTED has made impact in your school?
5. Relationships	a. What is important to you in organizational relationships on leadership level? b. How would you describe your relationship to your fellow colleagues in senior school leadership? c. Would you say that these relationships changed during/after the OFSTED inspection process? If so, in which way(s)?	a. Would you like to elaborate?

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Kirsten Sivesind
Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleutvikling
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1099 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Vår dato: 24.03.2010	Vår ref: 23827 / 2 / AH	Deres dato:	Deres ref:

KVITTERING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 19.02.2010. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 23.03.2010. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

23827	*Hvordan utformes ledelsesrelasjoner i samspillet mellom rektor, assisterende rektorer og et eksternt skolestyre? En casestudie av en lower secondary school i Greater Manchester*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Kirsten Sivesind*
Student	*Jeffrey Hall*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, vedlagte prosjektvurdering - kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven/-helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.11.2010, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Åsne Halskau

Kontaktperson: Åsne Halskau tlf: 55 58 89 26
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

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