Nordic
Studies in Education

Article | Peer-reviewed | Vol. 42, No. 3, 2022, pp. 211–232

Teachers' Expectations and Experiences with Processes of Reform

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ABSTRACT
Since 2005, there have been three ambitious Danish upper-secondary school reforms. These reforms reflect broader international educational reform trends. In this article we apply a mixed methods approach to examine whether and how the role of teachers has changed. The article concludes that teachers encounter increasing complexity and a teaching role characterised by the need to make difficult decisions regarding prioritising tasks that, from a teacher's perspective, all seem essential in order to ensure good teaching, with Bildung as a constant guiding light. We also conclude that reforms may be emotionally exhausting, as they risk undermining or undervaluing the moral purposes of teachers.

Keywords: *reforms, mixed method, teacher experiences, upper secondary school*

Since 2005, teachers in Danish upper secondary STX[1] schools have implemented no fewer than three ambitious reforms, and several other political initiatives, reflecting broader international trends. Sahlberg (2014) speaks of a global education reform movement (GERM). Based on the premise that 'an expanded, state educational system is essential to individual and national progress' (Ramirez & Boli, 1987, p. 14), educational reforms have become cornerstones of educational governance (Winter, 2017;

1 STX is an abbreviation for almen Studenter Examen, that is, 'the Higher General Examination Programme'. It is a three-year upper secondary school programme that focuses on general education.

Manuscript received: 27.08.2021. Manuscript accepted: 28.06.2022.

Citation: Qvortrup, A. & Rasmussen, H. F. (2022). Teachers' expectations and experiences with processes of reform. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 42(3), 211–232. https://doi.org/10.23865/nse.v42.3454

Erikson, 2017). Lindberg and Vanyushun (2013) suggest that because of reforms, the educational system has come to be 'characterized by periods of major changes and periods of minor adjustments that are more stable' (p. 39). The Danish upper secondary school is recognised as a Bildung institution solidly grounded in the German and Scandinavian didactic tradition (Beck & Paulsen, 2016; Krogh, 2003; Nordenbo, 1997). The teacher plans, conducts, and evaluates teaching with reference to the purposes of Bildung, and based on situated judgment (Westbury, 2000, p. 17; Krogh, 2003, p. 24). However, Bildung only constitutes one half of a dual purpose, as upper secondary schools must also certify students for university and college admissions study competences. The balancing and weighting of this dual purpose has been a core constituent element since Danish upper secondary schools were first established in 1814, and remains a strong theme in recent reforms. The same applies to the balance between central decision-making and the autonomy of individual teachers. Previous research suggests that processes of reform reach deeply into the work processes of schools as well as the function and role of teachers (Biesta, 2015; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; März et al., 2013; Luttenberg et al., 2013; Alvunger, 2015; Erlandsson & Karlsson, 2018; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Helstad & Mausethagen, 2019). Helstad and Mausethagen (2019) suggest that the teacher's role has changed from focusing solely on knowledge of the disciplines and teaching, to also encompassing organisational tasks and students' general wellbeing, as reforms have accentuated a focus on school development and student learning. Some studies express concern that teachers are excessively challenged, as they have been asked to implement reforms without being sufficiently involved in decision-making and implementation processes (Luttenberg et al., 2013; Erlandson & Karlsson, 2018; März et al., 2013). Luttenberg and his colleagues (2013) suggest that the 'pressure for change can lead to perceptions of reduced autonomy and teacher discontentment' (p. 290). Teachers struggle to ascribe meaning to reforms as they attempt to connect their own frames of reference to what they identify as the reform's frame of reference: 'The role of such a search for meaning is to maintain a balance between continuity and change in the work of the teacher and a balance between pressure to reform and professional autonomy' (p. 289). März and her colleagues (2013), point out that reforms are not neutral. Erlandson and Karlsson (2018) also emphasise this: 'They are value-laden and informed by specific values and beliefs, claimed to be improvement and brought up to the surface micro-political as well as normative issues concerning power and legitimacy of what are good or better practices' (p. 26). The strong value-ladenness of reforms often arouses ideological reactions in teachers (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). Teachers who find their ideologies inconsistent with a particular reform tend to 'reject it and emote negatively toward the change' (Erlandson & Karlsson, 2018, p. 26). They risk feeling that their interests or inherent values are threatened (Muncey & McQuillian, 1996). This feeling has been found to last a long time, both 'during specific stages of the ongoing reform process' (Luttenberg et al., 2013, p. 305), and long after, as 'the reforms were never completely rejected or accepted' (p. 306). This creates a state of instability that manifests in teachers'

attitudes and commitments related to processes of reform, and challenges teachers' work and lives, forcing them to continuously modify their personal frames of reference (Luttenberg et al., 2013, p. 306). Similarly, Schmidt and Datnow (2005) found that in particular, reforms that impacted educational practices 'yielded differences regarding teacher meaning-making and emotions' (p. 961), and suggested that such reforms have a greater tendency to prompt emotional responses from teachers, ranging from joy, enthusiasm, satisfaction, comfort, trust and confidence, to uncertainty, apathy and stress (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005, p. 961). Their study found that negative feelings were especially strong in the presence of elements of reform characterised by conflict (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005, p. 961). März and her colleagues (2013) suggest that reforms that impact educational practices influences 'teachers' sense of identity and thus deeply affects their working lives' (p. 16). They also speak of 'principled' resistance, when teachers express negative feelings and a reluctance to act in line with a reform because of either a personal or a professional principle, that is, a genuine commitment to a particular normative idea. This personal or professional principle may be informed by organisational, social–professional, cultural–ideological interests, self-understanding or pedagogical knowledge. It has been suggested that reforms force teachers to rethink their professional self-understanding. This may adversely affect their task perception and job motivation. More positively, it may make them reflect on their opportunity to provide good teaching (März et al., 2013, p. 16). Therefore, implementing reforms may depend significantly on the 'congruency of the normative ideas in [teachers] personal interpretative framework on the one hand and those in the rationale underpinning the reform on the other' (März et al., 2013, p. 20). Erlandson and Karlsson (2018) show how reforms may seem paradoxical to teachers, since sometimes they may be seen as beneficial to students, even though they are 'actually bad for the teachers – their working conditions and so on' (p. 34). This means that teachers are under conflicting pressures, due to a contradiction between caring for their students and self-care. Biesta (2015) suggests that teachers' judgment and moral attention in teaching are threatened, since many recent reforms risk shifting schools' and teachers' focuses from students to effects or outcomes. Gewirtz (2002) sees a tendency to pursue budgets rather than social and educational needs, displacing teachers' ethos of care. Elstad (2009) describes a tendency to extend the focus of recent years' reforms to establish social norms that operate through shaming and collegial pressure to improve results. Danish studies have indicated that there is increased pressure on teachers, as some report that reforms affect their professional pride (Zeuner, Frederiksen & Paulsen, 2006). However, Zeuner, Beck, Frederiksen and Paulsen also emphasise that some teachers benefit from their involvement in reform-related decision-making. These conclusions were elaborated and nuanced in 2007, when Zeuner, Beck, Frederiksen and Paulsen made it clear that not all teachers felt ready, professionally and mentally, for the reform processes. Teachers feared that they would be reduced to being 'technicians', that is, having to perform functions governed by an administrative logic that could not be linked to their professional

self-understanding. Some of the teachers felt that they were experiencing an identity crisis that they had not yet managed to resolve, and they mentioned feelings of stress that were associated with a declining confidence in teachers, and increased ministerial control. Zeuner, Beck, Frederiksen and Paulsen (2007) suggest that in the future, teachers will find that maintaining a proper balance between being the teacher of certain subjects and an organisation's employee will be a challenge.

None of the studies mentioned above discusses the premise that Danish upper secondary schools have a strong didactic tradition. However, Beck and Paulsen (2016) do. They suggest a variety of consequences for didactics, following from a greater focus on interdisciplinarity and changes in disciplinary conditions. They observe a shift in power among various groups of teachers, with Social Science teachers gaining power, and Natural Science teachers losing power. They conclude that, despite this, in most cases it is possible for the individual teacher to maintain his or her disciplinary values, and right to base teaching on situated judgment. However, they foresee that this will change, following the most recent reform of 2017, which is not included in their analysis. Thus, in an afterword they suggest that the ground has been prepared for new battles and conflicts concerning the very essence of the upper secondary school. This article addresses the lack of knowledge of the consequences of reform on teachers, as it explores whether and how the teacher's role is changing as a part of ongoing processes of reform. The research question is: *What are Danish upper-secondary school teachers' expectations and experience of the intensified reform efforts of recent years, and how do these efforts influence the teachers' responsibilities?*

We draw on sociological systems theory as it was developed in the 1980s and 1990s by the German sociologist, Niklas Luhmann. Methodologically, the article is based on a mixed-methods approach that includes three types of data: political reform documents, surveys and interviews.

Theoretical framework

Luhmann (1995) suggests that over time, society responds to enhanced complexity through functional differentiation into social societal systems such as politics, economics, law, science and education. Social systems are described as systems based on communication. Psychic systems are another essential type of systems, and are described as systems based on consciousness (thoughts, sensations and imaginations). Both types of systems are functionally closed and self-referential, but they may disturb each other, as both operate in what Luhmann describes as the medium meaning (1997). A disturbance initiated by one system may be reflected in another system if the disturbance contributes to producing meaning in the system, with 'meaning' referring to both sense and nonsense, e.g. that it makes no sense. This concept of meaning refers to the phenomenological idea of intentionality, suggesting that when systems create meaning, experience and expectations play decisive roles (Luhmann, 1995). Experience contributes to some predictability (Luhmann, 1995) and creates expectations by 'distinguishing an indefinite terrain' (Luhmann, 1997, p. 315). Expectations

help to align social and psychic systems with their pasts and to limit their future horizon. They are 'the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed' (Luhmann, 1995, p. 272). In this article, we observe experiences and expectations in various systems, such as the political system, schools (organisational systems) and teachers (psychical systems).

When a school recruits an individual as a teacher, this individual *assumes* the role of teacher. The role offers a new context for experience concerning employment contracts, strategy documents, teaching plans and the teaching environment, which is separate from the person as an individual, although attitudes, values and meaning-production will be closely linked to the individual's horizon of experience (Luhmann 2006). Luhmann (2006) deals extensively with the role of the teacher and is preoccupied with the way in which the teacher – like other professions – is constantly confronted with great unpredictability. Teaching is an autonomous affair that develops its own narrative, and it is completely 'unrealistic to hope that the [teacher] could programme the dynamics of teaching' (Luhmann 2006, p. 182, our translation). One way for teachers to cope with the unpredictability of teaching is to reduce complexity by applying schemes of expectations (Luhmann, 1995). Didactic theories are understood as schemes used by teachers as inspiration for organizing their teaching, as the theories suggest connections between delimited purposes, objectives and efforts. Teachers may use these to reflect on, or adjust their teaching, as they consider what is currently accepted socially as *correct* or *good* teaching. Good teaching in a Bildung-theory sense is not necessarily good teaching if one consults learning-goal-oriented didactics or reform pedagogy. According to Hopmann (2007), the common core of didactic theories is teaching that is committed to using knowledge as a transformative tool for revealing the students' individuality and sociability, in short, the students' Bildung. Hopmann (2007) emphasises that such a concept of teaching requires a considerable amount of autonomy on the part of both the teachers and students, and thus the teacher's role has been said to consist of the responsibilities of an autonomous academic, and the responsibilities of a theorising curriculum developer and a reflective practitioner.

The unpredictability of teaching, and by extension, of schooling in a broader sense, is also used to explain why schools repeatedly make decisions on development projects, for instance, and also why the political system suggests reforms. Both are here observed as hopeful communication, sent with a notion of being able to delineate the unpredictability of education. Here, the concept of decisions regarding decisions is applied to explain the reason for what has been described as ongoing reform efforts (2006). When it comes to *educational* reforms, Luhmann (2006) suggests that a special feature of these is that teachers will often experience these as personal criticism. They set a distinction between the existing and something desired. By doing so, the existing is constructed as outdated and undesirable. Furthermore, the reforms often designate actions for teachers, which according to Luhmann signals a relationship of trust, e.g. a belief in or confidence that teachers will be able to move the existing towards the desired. This leaves teachers in a double bind, a contradictory and conflictual situation.

The situation becomes especially challenging when the intention of reforms is to change the purpose of schooling in relation to the balance between generalisation and specialisation. According to Luhmann, this balance is the most fundamental, irresolvable contradiction in education. On the one hand, education is always 'too general, too theoretical and too distant from practice and does not prepare sufficiently for the special requirements of the individual professions' (2006, p. 149; our translation), but on the other hand, it cannot be too specific and concrete, since it 'must prepare [students] for a yet unknown future' (Luhmann, 2006; our translation).

Despite the intention of reforms, Luhmann and Schorr (1988) remind us that,

> ...change following from reform initiatives, 'will not be what those in favor of reform suspect and fear that it will be – in a rejection of reform. But it will heighten the awareness that much more has changed without reforms or through reactions against reforms, than due to reforms themselves'. (Luhmann & Schorr 1988, p. 390)

In that respect, reforms 'cannot be regarded as forecasting success to any significant degree' (Luhmann, 2006, p. 187; our translation). Thus, Luhmann claims that the realised result of reforms is the emergence of a need for further reforms (p. 187).

Methods and analytical strategy

This article is based on a mixed-methods approach and includes three types of data: 1) the documents for the political agreements on the STX reforms enacted in 2005, 2007 and 2017, 2) data from a survey on teachers' (N = 441) experience of processes of reforms, conducted in October 2017, and 3) data from 16 in-depth interviews with teachers from six upper secondary schools, conducted in March/April 2019. The survey data and interviews were collected as part of a longitudinal, 4-year research project, 'Upper secondary school anno 2020', which, among other things, followed the work of teachers at 48 upper secondary schools with the 2017 reform over a three-year period (Qvortrup, 2020). The University of Southern Denmark was responsible for data collection, and ensured that the processing of personal data was consistent with data protection laws. The legal basis for processing data is the Danish Data Protection Act §10. The authors have translated the data from Danish to English, with a focus on content over language. Our mixed-methods approach is characterised by a 'diversity of views' or 'change in perspective' and 'complementation', reflecting Greene's and Bryman's taxonomies for mixed-methods designs (Greene et al., 1989; Greene, 2007; Bryman, 2006). Regarding the change in perspective, we tried to increase both the breadth and depth of our analyses of teacher experience and expectations by analysing from and moving among various perspectives or paradigms. Regarding complementation, we sought to expand and strengthen our interpretation and its validity by combining various data sources.

The survey data set we analysed consists of responses from 441 teachers (equally distributed between male and female teachers) with between less than 1 year and over

15 years of experience, but with a predominance of experienced teachers, as shown in Table 1. The teachers were asked about their perceptions of the 2017 upper secondary school reform, the reform's specific initiatives and the schools' strategies for implementing reforms.

Table 1: The distribution of respondents according to years of teaching experience.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	< 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15+	Total
N	10	5	7	10	12	27	33	24	16	19	27	23	20	19	16	173	441

The interview data set consisted of 16 interviews with teachers from six schools. The teachers varied in terms of disciplinary areas and years of experience. The interviews focused on the teacher's background (years of experience and place of employment), their understanding of the teaching profession and teacher's role, school organisation and leadership, and reforms and a number of specific reform themes. Interviewees were also encouraged to share any additional perspectives or opinions they had. The interviews were held at the schools and audio-recorded. The complete set of audio data was transcribed, and the two authors jointly and systematically analysed the transcribed interviews. In the analyses, when we refer to the interviews we use the notation (Sx, Ix), with Sx referring to the number (x) of the school (S) and Ix referring to the number (x) of the interview (I) at the given school.

Our analytical approach involves what Bryman (2016) describes as an abductive strategy, where disturbances from various sources are used to suggest further exploration. The survey data were analysed in exploratory and descriptive ways, to develop hypotheses prior to, or to complete the qualitative analysis, respectively. Qualitatively, we coded the documents for the reform in their entirety, using the concepts of intentions and initiatives from systems theory, combined with an analytical focus on teacher responsibilities. When we speak of *intentions*, we refer to expressions of expectations, such as a specified purpose or stated objective in the reform documents, whereas *initiatives* refer to actions that the upper secondary schools are expected to initiate and fulfil, according to the reform documents. Also, the entire interviews were coded. This coding was informed by the research questions, to explore teachers' experiences and expectations of the reform efforts, and possible influences on teacher responsibilities. To develop a basic, shared understanding of the coding processes, and to establish interrater reliability, we did a pilot analysis of two interviews to test the homogeneity and consensus of our coding. After this, coding passed through three iterations. In the first iteration the transcripts were divided between the two authors and coded individually. Each author first employed open coding, systematically identifying units of meaning throughout the interviews. Afterwards, we exchanged material and recoded it, and the two authors cross-checked their coding to check its accuracy. In cases of disagreement, the coding was discussed until we reached a consensus. A second iteration identified patterns among units of meaning and aggregated units of meaning in

clusters. A third iteration sorted the clusters and added names to them. Table 2 presents examples of the identification of coding categories through the three iterations of coding.

Table 2: Examples of identification of coding categories through the three iterations of coding.

FIRST ITERATION: IDENTIFYING UNITS OF MEANING	SECOND ITERATION: AGGREGATING CLUSTERS	THIRD ITERATION: ADDING NAMES
'It is capitalisation. [finance']' (S11, I1) 'You are under more financial pressure and there are fundamental political conditions, and that is that; you must constantly think about making money and constantly think about where there are opportunities for development.' (S5, I4)	'Reforms as New public management'	Teachers' experiences and expectations of the reform in general
'Especially when you have to handle the new reform, for example, then you need some clear answers from above.' (S11,I2)	'Reforms create a demand for clear management.'	
'They have not chosen another line of the reform. They have just chosen to continue along that track.' (S3, I2) 'The reform – that is, it is a bit in line with what I have always done. So I do not think I need to change that much.' (S4, I2)	'The reform is more of what we usually do.'	
'I think I have the wind in my face with the reform [...] I think it's difficult.' (S3, I3) 'When I stand here with first year students after the reform, I have not come as far as I have other years.' (S3, I3) '...politically, we are under tremendous pressure, you know.' (S11, I1) 'You always worry, when a reform is coming up, right?' (S9, I1)	'Opposition to the reform.'	

Reform intentions and initiatives, 2005–2017

In this section we explore upper secondary education as constructed by the reforms. Since the intention of the 2005[2] reform was to develop the concept of Bildung, 'so that it reflects the central themes of the 21st century' (Agreement, 2005, p. 1) and introduce 'new academic standards and relevant skills that match the needs of a knowledge society' (Agreement, 2005, p. 1), upper secondary education is clearly positioned as outdated. One of the initiatives to renew the upper secondary school was to replace the existing course structure with a number of specialised course packages that followed a mandatory half-year preparatory programme. The specialised course packages were argued to better correspond to areas of higher education. In that way, upper secondary

2 'Agreement of 28 May 2003 between the Government (Left and the Conservative People's Party) and the Social Democrats, the Danish People's Party, the Socialist People's Party, the Radical Liberal Party and the Christian People's Party on the reform of upper secondary education' [Aftale af 28. maj 2003 mellem Regeringen (Venstre og Det Konservative Folkeparti) og Socialdemokraterne, Dansk Folkeparti, Socialistisk Folkeparti, Det Radikale Venstre og Kristeligt Folkeparti om reform af de gymnasiale uddannelser'] (hereinafter, 'Agreement 2005').

education was more clearly marked than previously as being not an end or goal in itself but a stepping stone or even a transitional hurdle to higher education.

An overarching intention of the 2007 reform was to strengthen the public sector in general, and to ensure greater coherence among the various state domains. To achieve this, upper secondary schools were turned into self-governing institutions with their own boards. These boards were entrusted with the responsibility for making decisions, for example, concerning student admissions and the range of Specialised Study Areas. Furthermore, the schools went from being financially administered by the state to having their own budgets, as part of a modernised taximeter financing system. The 2007 reform hereby staged the schools as institutions in need of corporate professionalization. On the one hand the schools were appointed a high degree of freedom and independence, but on the other hand the adoption of a distinctive market logic clashed with the history and tradition of STX schools.

The 2017 reform intended to put the various youth education programmes on an equal footing, which challenged the status of the STX-schools as being by far the most common educational programme. Combined with an increased focus on targeting the students' choice of educational programme, it was a clear signal that fewer students had to attend STX. In addition to the risk of undermining the schools' economy, this was a violent attack on the schools' self-narrative. A further significant aspect of this reform was the call for a focus on developing career competencies: 'Career learning must be anchored in daily work with the subjects' (p. 22), so the students will thereby 'gain insight into the application of the subjects in their society [and] gain concrete experience of the subject in practice' (ibid.). This explicit requirement that schools should focus on preparing students for work life might contain the accusation that schools weigh their dual purpose inappropriately, and relates closely to the work of teachers when it states that such a generalised aspect of education should be integrated into the daily work with the subjects, that is, in what was otherwise considered to be the sacred domain of teachers. Related to this, the concept of Bildung is described in broader terms and with a new emphasis, resulting in a dual focus. On the one hand, the reform accentuates the need to strengthen the focus on values such as democracy, equality and fundamental rights, which are well established in Danish upper secondary schools and recognised as core elements of the Danish welfare state. On the other hand, the reform talks about an expanded demand for students to relate critically, independently and responsibly to national, international and technological challenges. This focus is further supported by introducing new competencies to address innovation, digitalisation and globalisation. Once again, there is a demand and expectation that schools better meet societal needs than is currently the case. Finally, we observe how the teacher's role is described in the reforms. The 2005 reform called for the subject curricula to be revised so that they, unlike before, contained centrally-set goals that were 'clear, binding and directly applicable to regulating teaching' (Agreement, 2005, p. 3). The reform also emphasised an increased focus on interdisciplinarity and thus teacher collaboration. Added to this was the requirement for 'increased variety in

working methods, exams and demands for systematic evaluation of student progress and feedback' (Agreement, 2005, p. 3). A number of organisational-level changes to schools were also introduced. The latest reforms are aligned with these changes.

Teachers' perceptions of the reforms and the reform process

The following analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative empirical data. Through qualitative coding, we identified 51 codes that aggregated into 8 clusters in total. Codes and clusters are summarised in table 3.

Table 3: Codes and clusters identified in the analysis of qualitative data.

CONSECUTIVELY NUMBERED CODES (REFERRING TO SECOND ITERATION OF CODING)	CONSECUTIVELY NUMBERED CLUSTERS (REFERRING TO THIRD ITERATION OF CODING)
(1) 'Reforms as New public management' (2) 'Reforms create a demand for clear management' (3) 'The reform is more of what we usually do' (4) 'Opposition to the reform (5) 'The reform puts an end to good development initiatives' (6) 'Reforms as a cause of instability and uncertainty' (7) 'Reforms as leading to bad consciences among teachers' (8) 'Reforms take time' (9) 'Reforms change power structures'	(1) Teachers' experiences and expectations of the reform in general
(10) 'Career skills as disruptive' (11) 'Career skills as a matter of course' (12) 'The study preparation course as superficial' (13) 'The study preparation course as a disappointment' (14) 'The study preparation course as teacher development' (15) 'The study preparation course as depersonalising' (16) 'Specialised study areas as socially differentiating' (17) 'Digitalisation as an outdated focus' (18) 'Digitalisation as an important focus' (19) 'Interdisciplinarity as the subject of disagreements about education' (20) 'Interdisciplinarity as professional development' (21) 'Interdisciplinarity as satisfying' (22) 'The potential of interdisciplinarity destroyed by structural thinking'	(2) Teachers' experiences and expectations of specific reform initiatives
(23) 'Open, democratic reform development processes' (24) 'Closed, not-involving reform implementation processes'	(3) Teachers' experience and expectations of the organisation of work with the reform
(25) 'Pedagogical knowledge as key to being a good teacher' (26) 'Academic breadth and variation as prerequisites for Bildung' (27) 'Involvement and engagement as absolutely crucial' (28) 'Trust as a crucial characteristics of good teaching' (29) 'The good teacher as an authoritative teacher, balancing good relations and high expectations'	(4) Teachers' experiences and expectations of being a teacher
(30) 'Economising (31) 'Time pressure' (32) 'Time pressure as a social construct' (33) 'Sales focus' (34) 'Lack of pedagogical focus' (35) 'Increased complexity' (36) 'Navigating in chaos'	(5) Teachers' experiences and expectations of the Danish upper secondary school in general

CONSECUTIVELY NUMBERED CODES (REFERRING TO SECOND ITERATION OF CODING)	CONSECUTIVELY NUMBERED CLUSTERS (REFERRING TO THIRD ITERATION OF CODING)
(37) 'A tolerant school' (38) 'Caring leadership'	(6) Teachers' experiences and expectations of their schools
(39) 'The school as stretched between opposing forces' (40) 'A lot of wasted time' (41) 'Poor working conditions' (42) 'Lack of concrete expectations'	(7) Teachers' experiences and expectations of their working conditions
(43) 'The question of freedom of method' (44) 'Lost motivation' (45) 'The subject as the core of teacher identity' (46) 'Methodological freedom, but clear expectations regarding results' (47) 'Trust' (48) 'Autonomy and strict control as two sides of the same coin' (49) 'The need for autonomy as old fashioned' (50) 'The causal relationship between autonomy and dedication' (51) 'Autonomy as anarchy'	(8) Teachers' experience and expectations of teachers values

The identified codes and clusters are used to supplement survey data, in order to understand the teachers' experiences and expectations of working with the 2017 reform in the schools. The analysis is presented in eight sections, each addressing a central theme.

Different experiences of demands for change

The survey asked the teachers to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how they expected the 2017 reform to affect the education programme (10 is 'in a very satisfactory direction' and 1 is 'in a totally unsatisfactory direction'). The average score was 5.59, that is, close to the median, leaning towards positive. An immediate interpretation is that teachers find that they do not expect the reform to affect them to any particular extent, that there is no asymmetry between the current school and the reformed school. This interpretation is supported by examples in the qualitative data. One teacher describes the reform as a continuation of the existing situation: 'They have not chosen another line in the reform, they have just chosen to continue along that track' (S3, I3). Another teacher indicates that the reform is in no way radical, though she sees an asymmetrical relation between the intentions of the reform and her colleagues' practice. She says: 'The reform is – that is, it is a bit in line with what I have always done. So I do not think I need to change that much. Some of my colleagues may need to rethink their practices' (S4, I2). According to this teacher, the teaching staff is divided between teachers who are up to date with the intentions of the reforms, and teachers who are not. Thus, in the interviews, we also find teachers, who describe the reform as more radical: 'I think I have the wind in my face with the reform [...] I think it's difficult.' (S3, I3). This disagreement on the radical nature of the reform is confirmed by a closer look at the survey data. Although the average score is close to the median, the distribution of the responses is broad, and covers the entire scale. One of the more sceptical teachers explains that in

her eyes, the logic of the 2017 reform is inhuman: 'We are just humans like everybody else, and we like habits. Our brains are designed to do [...] what we are used to, what we know, what we are good at, and that is what we are challenged by right now, and [...] I sometimes experience an internal conflict' (S5, I5). Referring to the theory section, this example clearly illustrates that educational reforms are often internalised in relation to personal matters. This teacher is not the only one who expects her habits to be challenged by work with the reform (cf. code no. 6, 'Reforms as a source of uncertainty and instability'). Teachers describe two forms of instability that follow from reforms. On the one hand, there is the instability related to the teacher's role as such: 'The role of the upper secondary school teacher has...er...changed from being a very fixed position and job description to being a very changeable thing' (S11, I1). The other is related to the school as a changing organisation, and to teachers being given responsibility but insufficient time to make what they regard as meaningful changes: 'We have also done some development work ... But it's just ... (...) we had these small groups where we tried things out and supervised each other. (...) It's just stopped now, because of the reform. Then there is something else. Then there are new groups...' (S4, I2). They find that reforms interrupt work that needs time to become anchored in the organisation, and for the teachers to recognise it as meaningful. It is well known from previous studies that reforms can provoke such disagreement. As described above, a number of studies find that the value-ladenness of reforms may trigger ideological reactions (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Erlandson & Karlsson, 2018; Muncey & McQuillian, 1996).

Reforms and negative emotions

The previous statement about the human attachment to habits (S5, I5) also relates to a recurring theme in our interviews: When asked about their views on the newest reform, many teachers did not address this specific reform, but the idea of reforms as such. This is discussed in Schmidt and Datnow's work (2005), which indicates that conflicting aspects of reforms risk engendering negative emotions. This is clearly expressed by one teacher who has substantial reservations about reforms: 'You always worry when a reform is coming up, right?' (S9, I1). What is clear in the statement about human habits is that some teachers' reactions stem from their perception of reform as assailing them as individuals and/or at least as teachers. Another teacher says, 'We are also vulnerable. We are also at stake. We stand on a stage every day' (S5, I4). Besides illustrating the personal aspect, this statement and other statements throughout the interviews illustrate how some of the teachers truly find that the teacher's role calls for deep personal involvement. In our interviews, the teachers emphasise not only that they are *vulnerable humans*, but also professionals 'with their heart in the right place' (S3, I1) and are dedicated to their profession, as suggested by code no. 27, 'Involvement and engagement as absolutely crucial', and exemplified by a teacher who emphasises a special aspect of the teacher's role as key to his personal commitment: 'The human relationship is exciting. Relatively quickly you get to see that these students, they move, grow and they take in knowledge. I think it's an

exciting process to be part of' (S3, I2). Another teacher explains that 'a good teacher is someone who can create a space of trust, simply discover how to establish a relationship without it becoming private, but a relationship that makes the student dare to say something and feel recognized' (3, 3). The last teacher speaks of trust as a central aspect of the teaching profession, and according to Luhmann, reforms risk creating feelings of mistrust. Based on our data, there is not only a risk of this between reform and teachers, but also internally in the teachers group, where we found polarisations between those who are up to date and those who are not.

Transformations of the teaching profession

In the previous section, we described how reforms risk creating feelings of mistrust. In our data it is clear that some teachers link this mistrust to an experience that reforms challenge the teaching profession. A number of respondents describe their dedication as related to their responsibility for addressing what we, referring to Luhmann, have suggested calling 'the unpredictability of teaching', as identified by code no. 50, 'The causal relation between autonomy and dedication'. One teacher says that what is 'most important is [that I have enough] time, and second most important – or maybe it is equally important – is freedom and being able to trust that as a teacher with 16 years of experience, I fucking know what I am doing' (S7, I1). This teacher does not acknowledge that there is a need for the changes intended by the reform and sees the reform as a lack of recognition of her work. Although this understanding of the teacher's role is the most prevalent one in our data set, we also find indications of competing perspectives that point in at least two other directions. First, we find teachers who consider the desire for autonomy old-fashioned and belonging to a bygone era, when the upper secondary school teacher's position was in no way like wage labour, as indicated by code no. 49 and this statement: 'The older ones think that management decides too much. I view myself as a wage worker more than the older teachers do' (S7, I3). Second, we find teachers who are positive about the reform initiatives, here exemplified by a teacher's response to the increase in teacher collaboration: 'the way you work as a teacher today, where you collaborate much more with other teachers, I like that. It's not like before, when you were much more alone and took care of your own business' (S7, I4). The value of collaboration is linked to both individual professional development, as exemplified by a teacher explaining that 'In many ways I find it interesting, and it expands my own horizons with regard to the other subjects' (S7, I2), and to the school's common purpose, exemplified by the statement, 'I think it is important for the teaching faculty to acquire an understanding of the subjects and of how to work together' (S3, I3). These teachers perceive teacher collaboration as a productive disruption, and are positive about knowing not only their own subjects, but the students' education as a whole. Related to this, there is a teacher who does not confidently state that she knows what she is doing, but acknowledges that there are always both successes and failures, and that it is good to share both with colleagues: 'Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we do not succeed. And we need to have the

dialogue of both successes and failures' (S5, I4). What preoccupies this teacher is the necessity for an open dialogue among colleagues, an opportunity that has not always existed. Here, the teacher refers to what she considers a problematic aspect of Danish upper secondary schools and the upper secondary teacher profession: 'I often think a problem with upper secondary schools has been that when you closed the classroom door, then you were all alone. There has been a culture of not necessarily sharing either successes or failures, but I think this has changed' (S5, I4). Contrasting with the view of collaboration as source of professional development (cf. code no. 20), we find teachers who are more doubtful. One teacher raises doubts about whether the collaborative work is worth the effort: 'We have been able to do things related to our teaching (...) that have been very beneficial for us. But there has also been a lot of teamwork that we didn't get anything from' (S3, I1). Another reason that teachers are doubtful about the value of collaboration is that it may lead to an inconvenient hierarchy among the teaching faculty, and the role of initiator and driver of teacher collaboration is described as unattractive. A teacher explains that it is 'not the kind of job, people [teachers] are queuing to get' (S11, I1). Another teacher describes this role as unenviable. Taking on this role is 'akin to scoring an own goal. No one would want that' (S7, I2). Also, studies of a Swedish reform found that these roles 'challenge existing collegial structures' (Alvunger, 2015, p. 55) and lead to a 'significant change in [local schools] cultural discourse' (Erlandsson & Karlsson, 2018, p. 33).

Teacher responsibilities

To further understand the reasons behind teachers' assessments of the 2017 reform, we consider their responses to a question concerning what they think are the primary intentions of the reform. In the survey, we asked teachers to select three statements that best match their understanding of the intention of the reform.[3] The two most-chosen statements were, 'to economise' (30 pct. suggest that this is the primary intention) and 'to make upper secondary schools more efficient' (30 pct.). These responses indicate that they expect the reform to be oriented towards an administrative logic that situates the reform's logic as New Public Management thinking, with a focus on efficiency, optimisation and simplification. The two elements of economising and increased efficiency are also found in the interviews. A teacher states that 'It is capitalisation [financial]' (S11, I1). As 'economising' is not an explicit theme of the 2017 reform, it is clear that the teachers are affected by general political attention to – and also perhaps a fear of – economising. This is indicated by one teacher explaining that 'We are in a cost-cutting period, and I've even got the impression that although time is already scarce, I have to do even more tasks' (S7, I2). Another teacher says: 'There is external pressure on us to save money. I call it "saving", not "being more efficient" because... that is nonsense.' (S5, I4). This teacher worries about the consequences of

3 A collaboration of researchers, teacher representatives and an expert group drew up a list of 13 positive and negative statements from which to choose.

economising and about a lack of understanding of what teaching is all about, which is a theme also mentioned by other teachers: 'There is no political or perhaps societal understanding of what essentially underlies this exercise [teaching]. I often think that it's fundamentally weird – that if you were an actor, you would not stand on a stage for 8 hours, right?' (S5, I4). This expressive comparison of the teacher's role with an actor's recurs in the interviews. One teacher, addressing the interviewer directly, explains that, 'You yourself know that if you have been giving a talk or something, how tired you are afterwards, because you really have to be on. We do this 2 to 3 times a day. Every single day' (S7, I1). This figurative illustration of teaching as a performance, being on stage, remembering your lines, interacting with, retaining and entertaining your audience, is quite interesting. The actor, like the teacher, is dedicated and committed, but he also depends on satisfying his audience and thus is not only responsible in the sense of the word 'obligation'. He is also assigned responsibility. According to Luhmann (2006, p. 176), the difference between obligation and responsibility lies in accountability for errors committed while executing a task. A similar indication is found in code no. 33: 'Sales focus'. A teacher experience that 'we must be visible, we must advertise ourselves, we must be present everywhere, so [the students] know who we are and what qualities we have' (S4, I1). This need to attract and retain students challenges the collaboration between teachers and principals: 'In the old days, it was said that principals were, what is it called, I don't remember the word, but it was a Latin word for him being first among equals. That is not the case today. Er...with the latest reforms, our principal has gained more power' (S9, I3). For some, this separation is perceived as being positive: 'it gives me freedom. Then I can concentrate on my professionalism and on my core duties' (S7, I3). Other teachers find that changing leadership has led to a situation where teachers and leaders no longer have the same endeavour and they do not experience getting involved, and as a result lose the desire to take ownership (S5, I4). It is as though the process is self-reinforcing in the sense that a lack of involvement leads to a lack of involvement that leads to a lack of involvement. So, not only do reforms generate their own need for reforms, as Luhmann suggests, but also, a corresponding self-fulfilling accumulation may apparently take form in relation to teachers' involvement. According to some of the teachers interviewed, this lack of involvement leads to frustration: 'I know what the upper secondary school reform is about, and I am in and do understand what is going on, but it annoys me that I am not into the details' (S5, I5). According to several teachers, democratic processes in the organization have also been reduced. One teacher says that the school used to be much more democratically rooted: 'Once [there was] much more democracy. (...) There was vigour and power and billows of stances tipped back and forth. [...] Such battles are no longer fought' (S5, I4).

Organisation of reform work

In the survey, teachers were asked how their schools organise the work with reforms. The work is mostly delegated to ad hoc project teams (47 pct.), already-existing

teacher teams (41 pct.), or to appointed teachers with top qualifications (35 pct.). This means that to a large extent, teachers are entrusted with much of the responsibility for implementing a reform's initiatives and intentions in the everyday work at the schools. One teacher explains that this gives him the sense that his school leaders trust him: 'I feel strongly that I am contributing to the agenda and that I have a say in the decisions. They trust that I take care of my tasks. And I think this is a strength, er... because it feels like there is essential trust and the fundamental belief that I will develop good solutions in various situations' (S11, I2). This teacher likes to be involved in the processes of reforms, and it makes him feel that the school leaders have confidence in him. One gets the feeling that this increases his commitment and enthusiasm. This is similar to Luttenberg and his colleagues' findings (2013) that teachers' experience of ownership and their willingness to overcome any perceived mismatches between the reforms and their own frames of reference are positively linked to the organisation of work with reforms in project teams. Luttenberg et al. (2011) suggest that such mismatches may lead teachers to either distantiate themselves from, or tolerate a reform. The concept of *distantiation* captures teachers' rejection of reforms in favour of their personal frames of reference, whereas *tolerance* characterises instances in which teachers accept the existence of ideas or expectations that do not correlate with what they consider important. The interviews vary in terms of the tolerance or distancing expressed. One teacher expresses tolerance when describing work with reforms as inevitable: 'We have a job to do with the new reform' (S4, I3). Another teacher clearly expresses distancing by describing the 2017 reform as yet another 'annoying thing coming from the ministry' (S7, I1). This teacher notes what may be seen as a consequence of these conditions: 'We are in a place where it is a little harder to achieve solidarity – where you are a little bit isolated (...) You try to get the best you can for yourself, and then it is a little harder to rouse the fighting spirit' (S3, I3).

Increased complexity

Regardless of the experience of what the new tasks mean, there is broad agreement that the complexity of the teacher role has increased (cf. code no. 35): 'It has become more complex to be a teacher in an upper secondary school [...]. To spell it out, previously, you could come in with your bag and a book and just walk into the classroom, say "*hello*" to the students; "*now, let's continue where we left off*". And then afterwards you went to the staff room to drink coffee and chat with your colleagues and then you went home and corrected student assignments, and it just continued like that. Now all teachers must be involved in, and take ownership of school development [...] and this and that' (S9, I3). The teachers describe an increase in complexity that has brought with it an inconvenient pressure: 'And that is a pressure that is difficult to handle as a teacher. Because in general I think teachers are very conscientious. We are the kind of people who have always sat nicely at the table and raised our hands and did what we had to do. And now we just know that there are many forces at work. Because we want to meet the requirements of the curriculum, but at the same time we are aware that we

cannot overwhelm our students. We have to take care of them, and we have to make sure that we raise bottom-line numbers while improving our capacity to improve our students academically.' (S5, I5). This teacher unpacks some of the complexity of the teacher's role, whereas another teacher simply notes, 'You must be able to navigate in chaos' (S11, I1), and explains how he, as one of the faculty's more experienced teachers, has a special responsibility to watch over less experienced colleagues: 'Now I've kind of become a bit of a dinosaur myself, and the dinosaur's role is actually to look out for younger colleagues' (S11, I1). We have gathered such observations into two code, no. 35 – 'Increased complexity' – and no. 36 – 'Navigating in chaos'. Our interviews suggest that for teachers, the increase in complexity is found to be linked to there being less time and energy available to address what they see as core elements, such as developing the academic and pedagogical aspects of teaching.

The caring teacher and Bildung

A recurring concern among teachers is whether they fill the role of relationship-builders, as not only have they been given more administrative tasks as illustrated above, but they also have to deal with a more diverse, and therefore challenging, student body. One teacher says that: 'We have 10 to 15 per cent too many students. They are just not qualified to be here' (S4, I1, 131–132). Another teacher speaks of an internal struggle: 'I have this internal struggle. Sometimes I fall back into habitual thinking about my disciplinary and academic professionalism, and I hear my internal dialogue (...) why are all these students that cannot meet the requirements here?' (S5, I5, 152–164). There are several teachers who experience not being met with understanding and sufficient time/support to solve this task: 'One may say that the good old days have definitively ended. But that was probably it, where you stopped, how can I say this nicely... To get hours for watering the flowers.' (S11, I2). These teachers are negotiating or balancing between being a caring teacher and a nudging teacher, which is found to be a balance that has become more difficult to achieve as the process of reform has proceeded. One teacher explains that he has become so frustrated that he even is considering quitting his teacher position: 'I've really considered just fucking becoming an outdoor teacher [interviewer laughs]. Then you would have the opportunity to work with the students' Bildung and their collaborative skills, their creativity, their academic proficiency in frameworks that are more human' (S5, I5). From this statement it is clear that teachers not only feel that the teaching profession is being challenged, but that this also applies to key values in the Nordic school model, e.g. student-centredness, care and Bildung (Telhaug, Mediås & Aasen, 2006; Hopmann, 2007)

The concept of Bildung

The teachers give Bildung high priority, but this is challenged not only by the changed group of students, but also by the reform's focus on career learning. In the survey, after economising and efficiency, the teachers consider the primary intentions of the 2017 reform to be 'to target student choices of higher education' (28 pct.), 'to unify and give

equal status to the upper secondary school programmes' (25 pct.), and 'strengthen students' career skills' (22 pct.). Many teachers regard the career learning focus as not corresponding to their perception of the main purpose of the upper secondary school. As one teacher states without specifying his/her concept of Bildung: 'General Bildung. I think that is the most important goal' (S4, I3). Another teacher states, 'We have to provide them with some kind of general Bildung, so that it is not just pure academic knowledge' (S4, I1). A third teacher distinguishes between reform elements (career learning, innovation, etc.) and what she considers the main purpose: 'Even though career learning does come into it, and we have to think about innovation and develop products for a market, it is secondary to what they have to learn as human beings' (S3, I3). Another teacher explains that part of the main idea of the upper secondary school is for the students to broaden their horizons. He relates the function of the upper secondary school to widening the focus of todays' students: 'I think it is really important for them to extend their academic range so they have the opportunity to choose something other than what they first thought they would be: a police officer or nurse' (S3, I1) However, there are also teachers who dissociate themselves from the fact that this is a significant change, as we initially saw with the perceptions of the reforms in general. For example, one social studies teacher states, 'To a large extent, I regard social studies as a general education related to being – being a citizen. To be able to live their everyday lives. To be able to navigate life. In this way, it has a lot of career competence in it" (S5, I4). This is the case with many concrete reform themes – some find them very new and revolutionary, whereas others take them more calmly. An example of the latter is one teacher who mentions the reform's focus on digitalisation: 'It's funny with the digitalisation. I just talked to a colleague about it. It is as though it is new, and for me it is certainly not new. I have always used lots of digital tools, ever since I came here 7 or 8 years ago. So for me, it is a little weird that it has become a part of the reform' (S3, I3). Based on the quotes above, one might suggest that the reform has added to what has been pronounced *a crisis* (Hammershøj, 2017) in the relationship between Bildung and education, and this seems to present teachers with a dilemma regarding their responsibility as teachers. On the one hand, they feel responsible in a classic didactic sense, which means that they rely on their beliefs and are steered by values such as civic engagement and social responsibility. One teacher seems to cherish this normative obligation: 'I wouldn't want anyone to come and say you have to do this or that. And that is kind of where we are heading, since we have to cut back, because we have to do things more uniformly. And that's where I am about to drop my jaw, as my level of engagement and motivation relate to my doing what I think is the right thing to do, whereas another teacher does what he or she thinks is right to do. And that is okay, as the idea is for every teacher to take the job to heart' (S3, I1). On the other hand, we have the idea of responsibility, from which this teacher distances herself. This idea is connected to a contractual obligation motivated by duty, and therefore is oriented towards control, rather than trust. That the balance between being responsible and accountable has shifted is expressed by one teacher who suggests

that it means the *Folk High-school* spirit is waning: 'there used to be a kind of Folk High-school spirit here. A spirit of us being a unit, right? But this structure is challenged' (S11, I2). The spirit to which he refers emerged from the Danish tradition of the Grundtvigian Folk High-school which incorporated Protestant values such as charity and humanity, combined with a very democratic teaching faculty, which also extended to teachers' and leaders' joint endeavours, with Bildung as their common guiding light (Haue, 2003). Here, the teacher's role was considered autonomous, and their main responsibility was to the teaching faculty and school leaders. For some teachers, the balance between their normative obligations and responsibilities is deeply challenging.

Concluding remarks

Our investigation of Danish upper secondary school teachers' experience and expectations of reforms and their processes has yielded a number of key findings. First of all, we found that the teachers' expectations of the impact of the reform on the everyday activities at their schools vary considerably, which is also reflected in their varying need for being involved in the work with the reform. This finding aligns with previous studies pointing out that the value-ladenness of reforms evoke disagreements and ideological reactions. A large proportion of the teachers who do not pay much attention to the reforms find it to be consistent with what they have always done, whereas others find they are challenged by reforms. Two aspects that teachers associate with reforms are economising and time optimisation, although these aspects are not specified as intentions of the reforms. Teachers also find that a shortage of time challenges them, when it comes to interpreting and implementing reform initiatives at their schools, where teachers find that neither the necessary time nor the needed patience is available. The teachers find that the reform work needs time for it to constitute an improvement that stabilises and strengthens their school. As suggested by Lindberg and Vanyushun (2013), in order to cope with periods of major changes, there need to be periods of minor adjustments that are more stable. In addition it is important that teachers have time to make sense of the reform, and recognise it as meaningful. We have seen teachers, who have experienced the boundaries of their professional identity as a teacher extended when they have been forced to assume new tasks, left feeling very vulnerable. This feeling of vulnerability has not been described before. The feeling seems to be related to the teachers' role of establishing personal and a professional relationships with their students. They invest themselves in the job. Teachers emphasise that balancing the teacher's roles of being a subject authority and developer, and a human resource when it comes to having and developing a close and productive relationship with students and colleagues is essential. This also goes for teachers' relationships with school leaders. Although engagement in a trustful relationship with leaders is emphasised as an important part of the teacher's role, it is also emphasised that school leadership is different from teaching, and that the two positions can be difficult to combine. Helstad and Mausethagen (2019), Helstad, Bekkelien and Solstad

(2019) and Helstad, Joleik and Klavenes (2019) also point to the difficulty of combining the two positions. Our studies point not only to difficulties but suggest that the two positions can even oppose each other. What a teacher has built up in his or her teaching position may be jeopardised if you join the leaders' office. It emerged that this expectation may relate to changing forms of leadership, where teachers regard leaders, especially principals, as being largely oriented away from the school, whereas they perceive themselves – despite few out-of-school obligations – as oriented towards the schools' internal aspects. Thus, translation work is imposed on teacher, "interpreting and translating in the space between the management-oriented leaders and an already established practice" (Raae, 2016, p. 123). The teachers do not agree on the involvement of teachers in leadership tasks, which is also described as diminishing teachers' willingness to fight for what really matters: *When you are involved in the decision-making processes, you do not have the same position from which – or even right – to criticise decisions.* But this is only one aspect that shows how the complexity that the teacher's role must embrace is perceived as having increased. In line with Helstad and Mausethagen (2019), the study also shows how teachers experience increased complexity and a teaching role characterised by the need to make difficult decisions regarding prioritising tasks that, from a teacher's perspective, all seem essential to ensuring good teaching, with Bildung as a constant guiding light. In the theoretical section of this article, we noted that Luhmann suggests that a special feature of educational reforms is that they tend to personalise problems. That is exactly what we see here, together with reduced solidarity among colleagues. Given that, it is not too much to suggest that the reforms may become ethical dilemmas for teachers, as Crowson suggested (1989). This is worrying when viewed in light of Nias's suggestion (1991) that reforms may be emotionally debilitating when they undermine or undervalue the moral purposes of teachers.

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