



The Well-Being of Teachers

Work Environment at Mariendal Friskole, a Self-Governing Primary School

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Abstract

In recent years the public school system of Denmark has been subject to a large number of reforms from the governmental level that, among other things, have diminished the autonomy of a number of schools to make private decisions on how to organize and prioritize. It seems large numbers of teachers are unhappy with the current conditions of their workplace, and a relatively high number of teachers are becoming seriously ill due to what seems to be a poor work environment. Based on qualitative interview data, primary and second-hand data, and a hermeneutic framework, the authors set out to investigate the functionalities and dysfunctionalities of the structure of a free school, more specifically, Mariendal Friskole. The school lies in the heart of Copenhagen, and have not been subject to the reforms. The authors investigate the particular way of organizing at Mariendal Friskole in relation to particular aspects of the work environment such as leadership, meaningfulness, habits and predictability, and social support, etc. Hereafter, they move on to speculate on what practical problems and conflicts might surface if one wanted to implement the specific structural model of Mariendal Friskole to other schools within the public school system. The authors conclude that one encounters specific problems in attempting to scale some aspects of the structural conditions that make room for the work environment for teachers of a free school, while others can, principally, be scaled less problematically.

Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	4
Problem statement	6
Method	7
Case choice and delimitation	7
A structural focus	7
Methodological approach	8
Gathering data: Interview process	10
Analysis of interview data: Thematic analysis	12
Collection of second-hand data	14
Power analysis.....	15
Semantic analysis	15
Discussion of work environment	16
Speculation on scalability	17
The case of investigation: Mariendal Friskole	18
The idea of free schools.....	18
History	18
Economy	19
Parents	19
Mariendal Friskole	20
Life Perspective	20
Expectation of involvement from parents	21
Formalized Set of Values	22
Theory	25
Direct power.....	27
Indirect power	28
Conscientious controlling power	30
Institutional power.....	31
Power analysis.....	34
Direct power.....	34
Indirect power	37
Conscientious controlling power	42
Institutional power.....	44
Part conclusions on power analysis	49
Semantic analysis	51

Part conclusions on semantic analysis	54
Discussion of work environment	55
Leadership and influence.....	55
Values, habits, and predictability.....	62
Purpose and meaningfulness	68
Social support.....	73
Concluding remarks	79
Speculation on scalability.....	81
Autonomy of teachers	82
A Set of Values	82
The size of a school.....	83
Student selection process.....	84
The communal intimacy of the teacher group	85
Final remarks on scalability.....	86
Further Investigations.....	88
List of Literature	89
Books	89
Academic articles	90
Websites	91
List of appendices.....	95

Introduction

Our interest within the specific topic of the work environment for teachers blossomed as we noticed how it seemed like all changes within the public school system always aimed at improving the conditions of the children, whether this being social, academically, or otherwise. No matter if it was politicians, members of the teacher union, or someone else commenting on this topic in public, we noticed a clear tendency, if nothing else, to legitimize structural actions on the basis of the wellbeing of children of the public school, and almost never on considerations of the work environment of teachers at public schools.

The understanding of this observation can be met through a perspective of political strategy, as, since there are more parents than teachers in our society and everyone got one vote, politicians are understandably motivated to focus on the darlings of the parents rather than the conditions of teachers. It seems legitimacy and support for politicians are easier to attain through the aspiration for the wellbeing and development of children than considerations of the work environment of teachers. The question of the work environment of teachers as a topic that had possibly lacked the focus it deserved began, hereby, to be at the forefront of our minds.

Certain unnerving developments have served to validate our fear that work environment truly has been an underappreciated topic of concern within the public school system. For instance, from 2005 to 2012, the number of teachers on invalidity pension rose from 765 to 2435. While a large portion of those does return to the workforce at some point, the fact that they got there in the first place is a troublesome sign to us. (Lauritsen, 2013) A large portion of teachers feel unable to do their job properly because of the structural organizing, they are unsure about when they have done enough to satisfy the expectations put upon them, and a lot of them experience the workload as being so intense that they have to make compromises in their private lives in order to make things work. (Schäfer, 2018) We believe these are worrying signs, and solutions need to be figured out and implemented to better this problem of the work environment for teachers.

As mentioned in the beginning, during the last couple of decades the public school system in Denmark has undergone many and massive reforms and changes in regulation. (Andreasen, 2014) We might say that the public school system has been in a constant state of attempted development forced from a governmental level. Many of these reforms have not been fully implemented yet, and some even

suggest that upwards of six reforms are still in the process of being implemented. (Andreasen, 2015) Within this, there has been a general tendency towards a limitation of autonomy of individual schools to tailor their practices as they please and find suiting to a situation. This has been done by imposing, not only specific goals and results that schools must strive to achieve, but, to some degree, also specific methods and practices to use for schools in attempting to achieve these goals and results. (Christensen, 2016)

We are interested in the effects of these impositions on the leaders and teachers of the schools. But, instead of investigating what the potential effects of the current state of the public schools are, we have chosen a different, yet informative path. The handling of the leadership in the public schools have been constrained to be within the direction set out from a governmental level, but what about the, somewhat, unconstrained leaders within the Danish free schools then? As a counter-narrative to the ways in which the public schools of Denmark are run, we want to explore how a free school, which has a larger degree of autonomy to tailor their organization, chooses to do so. The free school we have chosen to investigate within this matter is Mariendal Friskole (MF), which is a rather small school located in the heart of Copenhagen.

This thesis will start out by outlining our methodological considerations for this thesis. Following will be, first a description of the idea of Danish free schools, and, of course, MF as a specific organization. Hereafter, our theoretical lenses will be presented, specifically, the theory of power by Søren Christensen and Poul Erik Daugaard Jensen (2011), which we will use to explore the power structures within the work environment of MF. On the basis of this analysis, we will discuss the functionalities and dysfunctions that we may observe at MF with relation to specific themes within the topic of the work environment. Finally, we will proceed to speculate whether the specific work environment we find to be the reality at MF is scalable to encompass other parts of the Danish school system.

Our hope is that this investigation will contribute with knowledge specific to the organizing of schools with regards to work environment for teachers that can serve as inspiration for those in positions of power within the school system. We hope that we can also shed light on what practices are easily, and what to be aware of if a replication is carried out. We hope, furthermore, that we will shed light on the particular ramifications of working with a Set of Values within a school or the entire school system in relation to the particular challenges that teachers and schools face in contemporary society.

Problem statement

In recent years, a lively public and academic discussion on the work environment and conditions of teachers in Denmark has ensued. We wish to contribute to this discussion by investigating the work environment of one school in particular. The school we have chosen to investigate is a free school in Copenhagen, Mariendal Friskole. Free schools are interesting to investigate because they have a larger degree of autonomy in terms of the ways they choose to organize, and, thereby, divergence can be expected from the norm of folk schools. Through the use of interviews with teachers and management at Mariendal Friskole, we try to map the structural power relations at the school. Using this as the bedrock, we will discuss our findings with regards to the broader literature on specific themes within the topic of the work environment. Hereby, we wish to contribute with insights to the discussion on how it may or may not be fruitful to organize teachers in one way or another. So, our guiding question is what are the opportunities and pitfalls in a specific way of organizing the work environment at the self-governing school, Mariendal Friskole. We are especially interested in the themes of leadership, autonomy, social support, meaningfulness, and, generally, the well-being of the employee.

Method

Case choice and delimitation

We choose to investigate the work environment for teachers within the Danish school systems by investigating a Danish free school. We want to investigate how a school with the freedom to develop its work environment on its own terms actually set out to do so. As the debate on the Folk School Reform in Denmark 2014 has shown a multitude of positive and negative experiences, we wish to examine how a school that is not obliged to follow the reform organizes itself, and how this is brought through on an everyday level. We are not under the illusion that by doing this we can solve problems regarding the Folk School Reform for teachers' work environment entirely, but we wish to add nuances to the discussion on plural ways of organizing the work environment for teachers within schools in Denmark in 2018.

This means that we are not examining how any organizing of school are supporting the knowledge or formation of children, but, rather, we are examining how it is contributing to the work environment of teachers. The actual unfolding of formation of students is not interesting in this investigation. Instead, as noted, the experience of the work environment from the teachers' perspectives are interesting, and, in addition, the actual unfolding of organizing and leadership comes into the objectives of the case too. As mentioned in the introduction, there seems to be a large emphasis on the children within the schools. In our view, this seems to be at the expense of the conditions of the teachers. We consider this investigation an attempt at rebalancing the scale.

A structural focus

The reason we have chosen to make a structural analysis is that there are things that cannot be left for the individuals to resolve or better at a workplace. Instead, structures seem to frame the options for individuals to seize. The assumptions underpinning our thesis is, that there are certain specific challenges and opportunities relating to specific professions, specific organizational structures, and ways of engaging with and practicing leadership at a workplace. It is these structures that we want to investigate, rather than what individual employees can engender. We hope that we can shed some light on the particular problems, which may call for a broader resolution of restructuring within parts of the school system.

We choose to do a structural analysis, not because there are no personal circumstances that might affect the psychological work-environment, but, exactly as, in terms of stress as an issue within the topic of work-environment, there are numerous personal and psychological issues that would then be relevant to investigate. Some studies suggest that individual emotional intelligence have a role to play in perceived levels of stress, (Newton et al., 2016) others call for the building of resilient employees to better be able to cope with adversity in the workplace to better work-environments, (Jackson et. al., 2007) etc.

We are not under the illusion that these perspectives are without relevancy, though, in terms of potentially bettering work-environments generally. What we do say, however, is that different structural landscapes provide unique challenges that should be taken seriously and which the personal coping perspectives fail to recognize as fundamental to deal with. Another way of putting this point is that not every problem is a self-management problem solely; rather, self-managing employees exists within a structural landscape that affects their possibilities to act. This landscape is for the leadership of an organization to develop, and, hereafter, their development of the structural landscape of the workplace will affect the work environment for employees. It is this landscape at Mariendal Friskole we wish to examine in order to contribute to the discussion of the work environment for teachers.

Methodological approach

Our primary source of empirical material for analysis is interviews with teachers and other key staff at MF. We choose this approach because we want an insight into the practical reality of the school. Our understanding is that power is, among other things, a phenomenon that manifests itself in the experiences of the individual. As we wish to develop insight into the structure of the work environment at Mariendal Friskole, interviewing the teachers individually can be a useful way of gaining insights into the relationship between the structure and the individuals. (Kruuse, 1999) This has certain consequences for the way in which we view organizations. Rather than understanding organizations as, for instance, simply a legal construct, organizations are understood as a social space that is, at least, partly, governed by certain structural elements.

Our argument is that by interviewing staff and leaders at MF, thereby gaining insights into their experiences and understanding of the reality at the school, that we can map these structural elements of the work environment. While it would be possible to make parts of the analysis on the basis of

formulated material and reflections on the website of MF, we find it necessary to verify and expand on the narratives we find there through interviews of the teachers. We wish to explore how the abstract formulations of the school actually work out and manifest itself within the teachers of the school, and, thereby, in the work environment.

Consequently, our fundamental approach has its roots in the hermeneutic tradition. Hermeneutics stress the fact of situatedness; that all humans are situated within a specific time period, and have specific personal histories that shape them and their understanding of a phenomenon. Within a hermeneutic perspective it is not possible to describe a phenomenon objectively, rather, the account will always be influenced by the preconceptions of the describers. Therefore, we do not claim to provide one ultimate or forever true account of what is going on at MF, as, in this investigation, we will be limited both by our own horizon of experience and knowledge as well as the horizon of the interviewees of the investigation. (Gadamer, 2007)

Furthermore, since the reality is in a constant change and the moods of interviewees might be different from day to day, it will be difficult to replicate this paper completely. The point of neutral observation does not exist within this perspective because interpretation is a fundamental principle from which we cannot escape. This is true both in relation to the choices made before, during, and after interviews but also in relation to our discussion. As such, the best thing to do is to attempt to notice how and when our own subjectivity comes into play, account for this, and be ready to challenge our own presuppositions. (Gadamer, 2007) We have subjected ourselves to an idea of letting the better argument win, in the hopes that this will alleviate the effect of our own biases on our investigation.

Gathering data: Interview process

As mentioned, our case of study is a free school of Copenhagen, Mariendal Friskole [MF], where we had the chance to interview five members of the organization in total. The five members that we interviewed at MF were the Head of the School, who also functions as a teacher, and four teachers, one of whom functions as the Deputy Head as well. We found it relevant to get insights from the leadership of the organization to get an understanding of the structure of the school as a workplace. We have done this in order to understand why the organization is functioning as it is, not only how. Importantly, the managerial level at MF does not only serve managerial functions, it is *de facto* also a part of the group of teachers, and as such, members of leadership teach classes and courses at the school. (Head of School, 12)

Who we came to interview was in part decided by the Head of School, with whom our contact to the school was established and maintained, and partly by the teachers themselves. The principal explained the group of teachers about the purpose and theme of our thesis and then asked if anyone was *not* interested in being interviewed. A few of the teachers were not interested and he then chose four teachers from the remaining group of volunteers for us to interview. (Deputy Head, 24)

Arguably, any process of interviewee selection comes with its own potential pitfalls which are worth paying attention to. The process we endured could have out-selected those teachers that might be less enthusiastic about the workplace or only selected those teachers who had the surplus energy to spend time on being interviewed about such matter. For several reasons, however, we find that these concerns are not relevant in this case. First, while we did find a remarkable similarity on certain points amongst the teachers, we also found important differences between the interviewees that negate this concern. For instance, while some teachers on their own account had not experienced stress and believed themselves to be incapable of becoming chronically stressed, (Deputy Head, 21) others had struggled with what they perceived to be stress in other workplaces, (Teacher B, 11) or are attempting to balance a stressful situation in the private life. (Teacher A, 14).

Furthermore, our interviewees did not seem fearful of, or particularly attentive to, not being critical of practices at the school because they had already expressed critical concerns to the management of the school. (Teacher A, 9; Deputy Head, 23) Whether by sheer accident or intentional volition on the part of the Head of the School, it is clear to us that the specific process of selection has, if not presented us with a nuanced gaze into MF, at least not been a hindrance to it. Nevertheless, the selection process

was not processed by our lead, and can, therefore, be a critical point on the interview subjects of the case, as the interviewees are elected from within and not by us.

We might, also, ask if the numbers of people we have interviewed have been sufficient to get a nuanced understanding of the work environment and its structures at MF. At a certain point, though, interviewing more people in any organization will be subject to diminishing returns in relation to the knowledge one gains from it. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) We argue, though, that, having interviewed the five employees of MF, we have struck a reasonable compromise between access to insight into the work environment of the school and resource constraints naturally on our investigation. Especially as, at MF, only twelve teachers are in all in function, which leaves us to have interviewed more than 40 % of the teaching staff, which we believe is a sufficient number of teachers. Furthermore, it is our understanding that, if we were to interview more teachers of the school it would not disturb the overarching narrative that we face, through anecdotes and experiences could merely have exemplified the narrative differently.

On the actual practice of the interviews, these were semi-structured beforehand. As such we had created an interview guide (Appendix A) based on the research question of interest. The interview guide served less as a rigid structure of the interview and more as a form of a checklist that enabled us to make sure we touched upon all relevant topics. This was done to try to maintain a certain level of comfortability and natural dynamic throughout the interview to simulate an everyday relaxed conversation in the hopes that this would stimulate the interviewees to talk openly and honestly about their experiences of the work environment at the school. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) The first couple of minutes are essential in trying to establish this aforementioned space and for this reason we began by briefly setting the stage in terms of the reason why we wanted to do the interviews and explained to them that they were not obliged to answer any questions if they did not want to, and, therefore, could pass any questions. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

When preparing the interview guide, and during the interviews, we were aware of formulating our questions in a manner that would not lend itself to misunderstanding. As such we focused on formulating the questions in a colloquial manner and charged with as little theoretical baggage as possible. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) We did this for the considerations described above about the dynamic of the interview, but also because we wanted to try to avoid framing the interview in a particular theoretical light instead of letting the interviewees reflect and respond through their own vocabulary.

To extend on this point we formulated most of our questions when changing from one topic to another in an open manner that would allow the interviewee to fill in the meaning in the manner they regarded to be fitting due to their perspective. After the initial question, we would then ask for more concrete and practical questions relating either to the points the interviewee raised or redirect the interview back on track if it had gone astray. There is no clear-cut way of doing interviews to always get the best results because it is not possible to create sufficiently complex methodological rules. Interviewing is therefore often understood as a craft of sorts where the expertise of the craftsman in using their personal judgment is expected. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009)

Analysis of interview data: Thematic analysis

We have chosen to use a thematic analysis to structure our interview data because we find it to be an elegant yet effective approach to structuring data. Thematic analysis as a method is a flexible and adaptable one, and, as contrary to many other methods of data analysis, it is not intrinsically connected to any particular theoretical framework. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Contrary to other analytical strategies, a certain amount of judgment can be applied in remolding the analytical structure to best suit the specific topics of investigation and meta-theoretical approach. Rather than using the entire template structure of thematic analysis, we choose to draw inspiration from it as a way of structuring our interview data.

Because we are not using a completely standard way of analyzing our data, there is a high demand on the thoroughness with which we explain and apply our approach. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) The flexibility of the method does not, however, imply that one can simply do an ad hoc analysis of the interview material. It implies that the structure that one chooses to use for analyzing one's data is moldable yet structured. If it is not structured in some way, one invites the critique of 'anything goes'. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Therefore, the following will be unfolded an account of our process of data analysis. Our process can be divided into four different stages.

The first stage is the process of *transcription*. We choose to transcribe our interviews because it is a prerequisite for utilizing a thematic strategy of analysis, (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as well as for the overall convenience of working with text. We realize that an interview in transcribed form is an impoverished version of the actual interview. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) We do, however, find that text versions of interviews lend themselves to more thorough, comprehensive and systematic analysis, which is why we choose to do so. Should any doubts arise to the actual meaning of certain phrases in

our transcribed material, we can always listen to the audio versions of the interviews again. Furthermore, since we are not performing any language-based analysis we took the liberty of cleaning up the interviews by leaving out any non-lexical conversation sounds, and filler words uttered by our interviewees.

The second stage is the process of *coding*. The main decision to be made when deciding how to code is whether or not to use deductive or inductive codes. That is to say, let the codes spring forth from the interview material or establish codes on the basis of one's theoretical approach. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) One of the points of Braun and Clarke is that it is naive to believe that the researcher can be completely impartial in the analytical process and, thereby, rely on a completely inductive process. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) We embraced this in our analytical process by letting the codes primarily stem from our theoretical understanding, but, also, to some extent inductively. At this point in time we were already committed to certain questions that we wanted answers to from the research investigation and interview material, and since we have not been committed to providing an account of the entire interview material, the deductive leanings were warranted. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Part of making an analysis is to disregard certain aspects of one's data material, (Braun & Clarke, 2006) we did, however, worry that the explicit theoretical lenses might be too limiting, and for this reason we also established codes that seemed particularly prevalent in the interview material, but which did not directly relate to our research agenda. We did this to ensure that we would not miss any essential narratives in our interview material that could potentially be relevant. We ended up with a large number of coded utterances, which showed to be the main themes of the views of our interviewees. Some utterances only had one code attached to it while most utterances had multiple codes attached to it. This accumulation served as the foundation for the next step in the process.

The third stage is the process of *assembling themes* across the coded data. Although a quantitative approach to establishing themes does not necessarily capture the relevance of a certain theme in relation to our research question, (Braun & Clarke, 2006) we, nevertheless, started by counting the prevalence of different codes in our interview material. We did this for the primary purpose of gaining better familiarity with our interview material. This allowed us to observe whether we had effectively produced different codes with some similarity in its content of meaning, and, upon reinvestigation into the utterances, a large number of codes were rewritten and synthesized.

The second part of assembling themes bears some similarity to the interview situation: It requires the individual judgment of the assembler, and rigid rules do not work to benefit this part of the process.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006) One instance of this was when dealing with two particular codes, for instance, *Communication* and *student-learning*. While quite a substantial amount of utterances was coded using these two codes, our judgment was that these codes were not substantially relevant enough to the overall research question, for them to become themes, compared with other themes. Because most utterances are coded in multiple ways, this does not, however, mean that relevant utterances were disregarded since they could show up, and did show up, relevant to other themes. This process left us with four themes that we found particularly relevant to our research question. These are *Leadership*, *the Set of Values*, *Parents*, and *The Role as a Teacher at MF Specifically*.

The fourth stage in this process is a form of *review process* of the themes. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) In this stage of the process, we read through all the coded utterances within all four main themes to find and ensure both internal cohesion within a theme and external cohesion with other themes. We wanted to know if, when, and how different interviewees might potentially provide contradictory viewpoints to one another both within and between themes. Any data-set will, though, contain internal contradictions in some way, (Braun & Clarke, 89) and as such, when confronted with contradictions or conflicting views, we asked ourselves why this might be so, and how this might be relevant to the arguments we are making.

On a final note, we would like to point out, that our interviews were conducted in Danish. Therefore, we have translated the interviews from Danish in the transcription to English in the final product for use in our investigation. In our translation of the utterances of interviewees, we have focused on maintaining the meaning of the utterances at the expense of the specific way in which something was formulated.

Collection of second-hand data

We have collected a relevant amount and substance of second-hand data from several web pages, which have served to base our knowledge upon the school system of Denmark relevant to our investigation. These, we address in the List of References. Besides this, we have collected data from the Head of School of MF, which is shown in our Appendix: An account of absence due to sickness throughout the entire 2017 on the teachers of the school, and an email we received from the Head of School on the topic of the Set of Values.

Power analysis

We set out to analyze, through a theory of power relations, the structural conditions of a teacher at MF. In doing this, aspects will naturally emerge in the analysis, as we lay ground of the analysis on the six dimensions of power by Søren Christensen & Poul Erik Daugaard Jensen (2011). It is, in our understanding, interesting to witness the invisible and visible power structures in an organization when trying to determine how a work environment is functioning. When analyzing with these dimensions of power, we will witness aspects that help us to understand the structures and the work environment.

We have chosen this theory of power because it provides a differentiated approach to talking about power and influence within a work environment. We are interested in both understanding how the teachers themselves are able to influence the work environment, but also how the teachers are influenced through leadership within this environment. As there is not just one way of exerting influence or power, and because these different ways of exerting influence come with different implications, we found it necessary to utilize a differentiated perspective on power, to exert the least amount of theoretical violence on our interview data.

We did not, however, operationalize two of the concepts of power within the theory because of methodological limitations to our investigation. This concerns the dimensions of *Power in a Garbage Can-Situation* and *Relational Power*. In order to investigate power through these dimensions, it is our understanding that we had to do observation-based studies, rather than qualitative interviews. Therefore, we have not included these dimensions in our investigation

Semantic analysis

For the purpose of investigating the point that there is quite a large degree of institutional power lurking in the background at MF, we wish to provide an analysis of a particular document. The document is the result of a theme day at MF where the experience of the values of the school was the topic. The end product of this day, an update to the Set of Values is partially produced by students in different age-groups at the school, and partially the teachers and the Head of School at MF. This we do, also, to make clear what is referred to by interviewees of this investigations when pointing at the Set of Values at MF.

We have fronted the document of the Set of Values of MF by doing a semantic analysis on its substance. This means that we have set out to understand what narratives, metaphors, analogies, themes, (Alvesson & Skjöldberg, 2009) etc. that are shared among the three different groups of participants and the parents and teachers that, preliminarily, has formulated an existing Set of Values. Hereby, we wish to investigate any internal coherence between key stakeholders of the school, by investigation how the words structure themselves around each other; How the values through words are talked about and, hereby, brought forth. (Sørensen, 2014)

In our investigation, the Set of Values has an internal dialogue, so to speak, between the key stakeholders of MF. These groups of stakeholders describe the values at MF from their own point of view by using narratives, metaphors, and themes to support their experiences. This methodology is to be seen as similar to collecting measurable data in a quantitative investigation. (Alvesson & Skjöldberg, 2009) We rely on a realistic approach that makes it possible for us, through the Set of Values, to get a view on the reality of the work environment for teachers at MF.

We regard such representations of reality to be valid, and, hereby, we wish to disregard any problem between language and reality. (Alvesson & Skjöldberg, 2009) Nevertheless, it is possible to question this practice, as reality must always be represented by words. The formulated Set of Values is published by the Head of School, which, in the end, leaves the Head of School as the messenger of the message of the groups of participants at the theme day. To some extent, he can angle, twist or bend the words of the participants without us knowing.

Except for the group of eldest students, the teachers have encapsulated the messages of the students in brief statements, in example, the teachers of the 'Grønne and Blå Springere' [The 0-2nd grade] have written down their students' perspectives. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 3) The Head of School is, though, very explicit that for the eldest group of participants on the theme day have made their contribution entirely on their own throughout the process. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 4)

Discussion of work environment

Having investigated the work environment from a power perspective, we set out to discuss our findings from numerous perspectives on the work environment. Our findings from the power- and semantic analysis serve as the foundation for discussing the work environment for teachers at MF. We are not under the illusion that, in the end, we will have found the philosopher's stone, although

we hope to have contributed with insight into the discussion on work environment for teachers. We regard theory both on and off specific school theory to be relevant, as work environment, in general, can be subject to a multitude of perspectives regarding everything from emotional and social support, meaningfulness, and purpose, to organizational practice, leadership, and anxiety, etc. In choosing the particular themes that serve as the foundation of our discussion, we have taken inspiration from the investigation on the work environment in public schools by Svend Kreiner and Jill Mehlbye (1997).

Speculation on scalability

Finally, we have considered whether the structural upbringing of the work environment for teachers at MF is, to some extent, replicable at other institutions of school. We wish to speculate on such scalability if anyone should find the observations discussed in this investigation inspirational to apply to at other institutions or have any such wonders. Especially, the applicability of leadership, autonomy, habits & predictability, meaningfulness, and social support is being heuristically discussed, and we do stress that, here, we do not present a new investigation on this matter, which, otherwise, would be suiting if wanted to consider an actual replication of the observations of our investigation further on.

The case of investigation: Mariendal Friskole

The idea of free schools

As we produce our investigation within work environment in an organization in the reign of free schools in Denmark, it is relevant to know what free schools are and what the term “free school” is concerned about. Therefore, this part of the investigation will focus on free schools, facts, elements, and history in order to introduce relevant knowledge for this investigation. The importance of this is due to the fact that the circumstances and frames around any kind of leadership practice are influencing the handling of the exertion of leadership.

History

On this matter, free schools are founded on certain thoughts and ideas, which, throughout history, have developed from specific and bound dogmas into, generally, well-driven organizations. They are, thereby, largely self-governing. Danish free schools had its beginning in 1852 where Chresten Kold, a seminal figure for the initiative, founded Dalby Friskole on Fyn. (Fussingø-egnens Friskole, n.d.) This was possible, as, in Denmark, no one is forced to pick a certain school for their child, although we have a duty to make them undergo some kind of teaching. For free schools, though, one demand is included: The teaching must, at a minimum, be on level with the teachings of the public schools, (Undervisningsministeriet¹, n.d.) which is in the Danish *Grundlov* as §76 (Grundloven, n.d.). The practice of school is, simply, a duty for children to undergo for at least ten years.

The free school tradition is, as mentioned, an old tradition which is founded upon the initiative by the Christian, Chresten Kold. Worth noticing, the Danish figure, N.F.S. Grundtvig plays a fundamental role in the idea of free schools. (Dansk Friskoleforening, n.d.) Fundamentally, free schools are not obliged to evaluate students in grades but can choose themselves how to increase their knowledge and foster their formation and potential. (Grundtvigskforum, n.d.) The cause of the free schools is, all in all, defined by the hinterland, the parents and the circle of initiators, while, too, the employees of the school is perceived as an influential part of this popular movement of free schools. Among practices, religion, storytelling, history, and singing has been fundamental to free school life and teachings. In Denmark, different free schools has risen since the beginning in 1852, herein, *Grundtvig-Koldske* and different sorts of, in example, *Rudolf Steiner-*, *Islamic-*, or *Scientology-*

inspired school are versions of free schools in Denmark founded on either religious, ideological, or philosophical ideas rather than governmental practice. (Grundtvigskforum, n.d.)

Economy

Far the most children and their parents pick a public school, but in the year of 2015/2016 around 110.000 children were enrolled at a free school at one of the around 550 free schools in Denmark. (Grundtvigskforum, n.d.) The economic structure, which the free schools are supported by, is divided between the parents of the students, the municipality, and the state. In average, every student must be supported economically by its family or so with an average of 13.800 kr. per year depending on the level set by the Board of Directors at the specific free school. The municipality and the state together then supports free schools altogether with around 46.000 kr. per year per child. (Dansk Friskoleforening, n.d.) This may vary from year to year depending on the size of the school, geographical location, and the ages of the students. In all, the free schools get income from others than the municipality and the state surmounting to approximately one-third of the total expenditure of running a free school. Besides, every year, through the National Budget Act, the state grants money to certain parents who want their children to study at a free school. This amount covers, in general, 30 % of the total price per year per student.

Parents

Furthermore, generally, at free schools, it is the parents who take care of maintenance in order to save expenses for the specific free school. This is very characteristic for the notion of a free school; The parents are, and ought to be, very supportive of the specific free school and its values and operations. In fact, it is normally a circle of parents who wish to foster a certain development of ideas in a school, who start and develop a free school. These, too, choose who sits on the Board of Directors, (Dansk Friskoleforening, n.d.) and often, it is among themselves they pick. (Undervisningsministeriet2, n.d.) At any free school, the parents must be knowing of, and accept, the value foundation and direction upon which the free school is administered. This includes, for example, the Set of Values of the specific school. (Undervisningsministeriet2, n.d.) At the same time, it is the responsibility of the parents to make sure that one supervisor or a few control the regular operation of the free school;

among this, the level of the students, the substance of the teaching, etc., but they choose largely themselves the way of doing it. (Retsinformation, n.d.)

Mariendal Friskole

Hereby, we wish to move on by outlining the specific attributes of the free school of the investigation, Mariendal Friskole. Themes like history and parents are, of course, of relevance, but, also, ideas like age integration and traditions are noticeable, while philosophy and creativity is a driving force of this free school.

Mariendal Friskole is a free school placed in the heart of Copenhagen in Vesterbro. It was founded in 1981 by a group of teachers and parents that broke out from another school in Copenhagen. (Mariendal Friskole1, n.d.) The school is a member of Dansk Friskoleforening. It focuses on the ability to be able to integrate age differences, meaning that it is not entirely divided in year by year classes, but structured, rather, as classes intertwined between both one year older and one year younger students. The school currently have around 125 students, which seem to be the favorable number of students, and 12 teachers, although this may vary from time to time. The school exerts final exams according to the tests of the public schools in Denmark. (Mariendal Friskole2, n.d.)

Life Perspective

The life perspective of the school is that every human being is born unique. (Mariendal Friskole3, n.d.) The school is highly inspired by Grundtvig, although it does not define itself as a Grundtvig-Koldsk free school. The communal spirit is of great focus by the whole practice of the school in its everyday being, and, so, it is, rather than individually living, in the relationship with others that true and fully living is practiced. Hereby, the school wishes to develop “the whole human being”: Both the social skills, the musical skills, bodily skills, and literary skills. (Mariendal Friskole4, n.d.)

The school has joint meetings every morning with all students and teachers gathered, it has storytelling as a foundation in the courses, and holds philosophy as a monumental practice to mint the school in all its activities. Since 1992, all classes on every level at Mariendal Friskole has had philosophy. Ideally, the school wants philosophy to be a part of all its courses. Philosophy is, too, a schematized course instead of the teaching of Christianity, in order to include value questions in the

teaching, strengthen the community at the school, and, clearly, to firmly establish the characterization of the school as a creativity and reflexivity focused school. (Mariendal Friskole4, n.d.)

Mariendal Friskole offers parents with children having a disability a place at their school in the Special Class. (Mariendal Friskole5, n.d.) These are, along with the lines of everyone else, a part of all the school's everyday activities, for example, the morning meetings, the camps, the teachings, etc. It is the vision of the school to let all the students take advantage of the way of being together with everyone in spite of disabilities, and, thereby, develop an acknowledging view upon and from everyone. Of course, some of the disabled needs special treatment, but this, too, is a part of the vision and philosophy of the school, exactly, that each person is, of course, unique, but cannot and is not an island for itself, and therefore must treat and help people accordingly. (Mariendal Friskole3, n.d.)

Another foundational element within the life perspective of Mariendal Friskole is the idea of age integration. This means that a class is constructed with students of several ages, and at Mariendal Friskole this, generally, means from two ages. For example, 8th and 9th grade have classes together. At other times, a part of the 8th graders are together with the 7th graders. This means, for Mariendal Friskole students, that they learn how to engage with interchangeably older and younger co-students. (Mariendal Friskole6, n.d.) In all, it is a shared consideration of the parents and the teachers to decide whether the student should follow the older group for a period or the younger group for a period, although the teacher and the school have the final responsibility. (Mariendal Friskole6, n.d.)

Expectation of involvement from parents

It is expected that there is a high level of cooperation with parents of students, in example, that parents take part in the traditions of the school, and in keeping an eye with and running the maintenance. For example, they can support its child and, hence, the student and the school, by taking part in the two annual parental group meetings, the joint parental meeting for the whole school, and the Annual General Meeting. (Mariendal Friskole7, n.d.) Too, they can participate in or arrange the two annual school parties, the annual excursion for students, parents, and teachers, or take initiative to spontaneously arranged excursions. Otherwise, there is a monthly parental school cleaning, and, furthermore, work weekends, where any special skills of parents can be helpful to supplement the teachers'. Proactive parental participation supports the community, which too creates room for mutual influencing.

From third grade, the school has schematized student meetings for each student, in order to account for the student's happiness, the teaching from the student's perspective, and the student's view upon the co-students. (Mariendal Friskole4, n.d.) The student will, too, get feedback from the teacher upon these matters in order to co-develop mutually. Furthermore, each year two school-home meetings are held. The cooperation and communication between the home of the student, the parents, and the school and the teachers are of high focus, and its maintenance is both run schematized but can, too, be more spontaneous if a challenge is occurring, or some kind of shared supervision is needed. Mariendal Friskole is well-equipped with traditions and 'ways-of-doings-things', For example, a yearly camp for the entire school, several excursions, the *horse-foal scheme*, in which every new student gets an older student as a mentor, Friday cleanings, parties, etc. (Mariendal Friskole4, n.d.) It is these activities and traditions for which it is expected that the parents actively take part in loyally.

Formalized Set of Values

At Mariendal Friskole, a Set of Values is a constitutional factor at the school. In 2010, again, the Set of Values was the subject of reconsideration at a thematic *day-of-Values*, 24th of June. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 3) During that day, philosophy was a main driver of the reconsideration, and as the subject was the Set of Values which the students had to investigate from their current perspectives. Every third year, according to the current Set of Values, this is a practice of Mariendal Friskole, in other words, an established tradition in order to found the notion of personal ownership of the Core Values, and to settle on preferred behavior and promising structures that effectuate the Core Values in everyday life. In other words, to have these as motivating actors in their actions and activities.

Concretely, the Set of Values is written in the Set of Values which can be found on the website of Mariendal Friskole. The set is divided into five parts: *The Bag*, "Rygsækken", which is the Core Values seen from the view of the youngest students, from the youngest grade up until 2nd grade, *The House of Values*, "Værdihuset", which is the Core Values seen from the view of the students from 3rd grade until 5th grade, and *The Big Consultation Round*, "Den Store Høringsrunde", which is the Core Values seen from the perspectives of the oldest students from 6th grade until 9th grade. Besides, The Core Values are, too, written from the perspectives of the staff, including the teachers, and the parents of the students, here, called *Life Competency*, "Livskompetence", while the set is finalized with everyday stories upon the matter, "Hverdagshistorier", in order to show how the Core Values are brought to life in the school. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 2)

At the Value day, it was clear that the discussion of values was not an entirely bold thing to do, at least not for the youngest student, (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 5) but all groups ended up with well-thought and reflected argumentations of values at Mariendal Friskole. For the school, the point of the Value day brought to life through practicing philosophy, was to fundamentally make the students understand that the discussion only of values is helpful and valuable in itself. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 8) In practice, it was quickly clear that terms like “community”, “respect”, “traditions”, and “comfort” were highly appreciated values of Mariendal Friskole throughout all the groups. The oldest students articulated that it is all about the community in cooperation with the respect of every individual at the same time. You become a “Mariendaler”. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 10)

Philosophy, throughout the whole school, is, too, a well-established practice, and, hereby, a core part of the Set of Values at Mariendal Friskole. Every class practices it from the youngest up until the oldest, (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 11) in which a whole hour is dedicated to practicing the idea of contemplation and concentration upon a specific theme every week. It is the idea for the students to develop individual consideration skills and, hereby, identify and understand the surrounding world and their own. Next to this, the joint morning meetings work well in order to summon the whole school and share a deeper understanding and knowledge of their co-students through the practice of philosophy, music, play, and storytelling. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 12) Comfort is developed from here, too, as a long recess is next before class teaching, a recess where the oldest and the youngest all play together developing, hereby, trust and comfort.

At Mariendal Friskole, too, is *Rødeklassen*, ”The Class of Reds”, consisting of disabled children. The oldest students at the school formulate this class as an institution at Mariendal Friskole which found a “fundamental respect for other people independent of age, intelligence, cultural background and social or physical abilities.” (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 12) Hereby, the community can grow bigger than its parts, and create something entirely unique, according to the oldest students. The parents and the staff is of the opinion that the Core Values Set must be evaluated, discussed and criticized in order to proceed the development and the school to be shaped but without forgetting the essence of Mariendal Friskole:

“(…) both before, now and later we have and must work ambitiously and focused for the shared goal of effectuating the Core Values that shines brightly as a lantern in the destined.” (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 13)

In their words, this is called *Life Competency*. It consists of four values: *Community, Trust and Equality, Development, and Professionalism*. The four values mentioned above is the four legs in the chair of Life Competency which, again, is “the establishment of skills that make the student able to act and develop, not only on the work market but in every aspect of life.” (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 15) At the same time, this is, too, the overall framework for all the interests of the school to found its work with the school upon.

Respect and trustworthiness is founding of *trust and equality*, which, for Mariendal Friskole, is necessary in order to develop well-being. This, too, goes for parents, that must be aware of the community independent of their own well-being, so it will not lead to cultural clashes but, instead, trust and respect in the cultural meeting. For example, they can, too, participate proactively in the annual camp for the entire school or in “*Fake-Teacher*”-day, where parents operate as teachers, which will develop the thought and purpose of it, that it is not only the child that takes part in Mariendal Friskole but the whole family. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 16)

Everyone must act with tolerance and understanding of the fact that not everyone has the same abilities to lift responsibilities, etc. Hereby, the community becomes valuable to everyone, and not only for the strongest. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 16) Independent thereof, but at the same time mutually benefitting, it is the ambition of the school to evoke the professionalism of dialogue and the ability to stand critically towards the surroundings in an ethical way. Philosophy helps to formulate difficult feelings and understandings, and, too, in order to work creatively, inspire to idea generation, and project-oriented work. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 16)

The ability of the school to integrate and reconsider its Core Values Set should not be seen as an idea of the school having to always fit the modern times. Instead, the school is always obliged to react upon modern times. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010, 17) But any development of the school must start out from the roots of the school, in other words, The Core Values Set, consisting, as mentioned, of philosophy, community, traditions, and the ideas of trust, respect, and professionalism, all developed from history in the beginning of Mariendal Friskole in 1981, and still mutually reframed and made current for and between teachers, staff, parents, and student through the *Core Values-day* every third year.

Theory

In addressing the functionalities and dysfunctionalities of the organizational structure at Mariendal Friskole, we will analyze the power relationship between the teachers and the surroundings in their work relations. By this, we wish to embrace the different ways in which power is fostered and nurtured, as we see this as a substantial part of the teachers work health. In order to analyze the power relationship at the chosen schools, we will use the framework of Søren Christensen & Poul Erik Daugaard Jensen, which we will now explain in the upcoming section.

The power relations at any organization, among other entities, are, according to Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, not able to be restrained or even prohibited. Power, instead, is a necessary premise for any organization to withstand its evolution and development, although it is fundamentally necessary to avoid power to be kept and retained within the holds of a few as this increases the risk of fraud or misuse of power. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) If no one, though, reaches out for the power to decide, etc., for example, create initiatives, upstand a role or function, or take charge of an entire department, an organization will miss direction, and, thereby, not withstand its life, in order words, stop to exist. Hereby, to conclude, every living organization is entrenched in power relations. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Power relations are, too, inescapable, as it is unrecognizable to imagine social systems that exist, exactly, without a mutually influential relationship.

In order to put through the will of oneself in a power relationship is consisting of multiple variables, which determines, or at least, influences the process of the relationship. For example, today, communicative skills, dynamical position, knowledge, and status, are among the resources that eventually co-determine how power is distributed. These resources can to some extent be said to consist of capital, property and formal position, although these are not the main focus of today's relations, where power in a deeper extent is negotiated in the dynamic relationship, not regarding these earlier static values. Today, it is, rather, the dynamics within the negotiation of a relationship that seems to influence the exchange of power. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011)

If to phrase power in one quote, according to Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, power is all the phenomena that either retain or alter constructed relations or structures. As constructed is meant what is built, created, up brought, by human beings. They describe that the power phenomenon can be divided into three groups: *Substantial*, *relational*, and *institutional* power phenomenon. (Christensen

& Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 14) A substantial phenomenon, as characteristics of the personas that exist within the power relations co-determine the power relationship. A relational phenomenon, as mutual infliction between individuals within a power relation co-develop the power relation through transactional behavior. And, an institutional phenomenon, as, on the short run, rules, laws, norms, routines, and instructs determine the possible behavior of the actors by setting up the frame for these to operate within.

This ideational concept of power and the phenomenon within are not to be seen as hierarchic dimensions, where one is entitled a certain amount of focus over another. Instead, it is the specific situation that determines what kind of power phenomenon that is to be given access to the analysis. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Also, it is not very relevant to talk about only one phenomenon existing, while leaving out the rest. The substantial focus is not a very dynamic focus, although it serves to show that personalized characteristics or roles may influence a power negotiation, as we never react without awareness of each other. At the same time, though, the transactions within a power relation may destabilize the relation for a while, giving room for altering the power relations. The institutional phenomenon of power is recognizing the playground within which the relationship is existing, developing, and negotiated.

In carrying out an analysis of the power relationship at, for example, an organization, multiple power dimensions are at stake, according to Christensen & Daugaard Jensen. Before examining the relevant dimension for this subject, we will, briefly, outline the six dimensions and their fundamental characteristics. Along these six dimensions, power relations negotiated at or within an organization is possible to be analyzed, as the 'result', what is shown, of a power struggle can be decided along these dimension. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 19) All six can supplement each other in an analysis, although, in specific situations, some dimensions are more properly suited for the analysis than others are. They can function, sort of, as a checklist in order to lay bare what possibilities leadership has according to the current power relationship situation.

The six dimensions are, briefly, these: 1) *Direct power*, the power that is directly connected to the actual decision arenas in every organization. 2) *Indirect power*, the power that is deciding what is relevant for the actual decision arena, and, afterward, how a decision is carried out; implemented and effectuated, in other words, power at the entrance and the exit of the decision arena. 3) *Conscientious controlling power*, the power that seeks to inflict or influence certain actors into getting a specific conception of certain issues or ideals. 4) *Power in a 'garbage-can'-situation*, a power that is hardly

recognizable due to the immense number of actors and problems, and the little connection between decision arenas and solutions. 5) *Institutional power*, a power where actors 'step aside', while rules, habits, norms, and/or routines controls the power relationship. 6) *Relational power*, where power is communicatively negotiated as in a game through the certain transactions within a relationship, which can influence roles and conceptions of the actors and dynamically open up for new stages. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 19)

According to Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, power relationships are enormously important to be aware of, but, especially the power that is thriving in a steady environment, almost in all silence, is interesting. Power can, as it is prescribed in the institutional perspective, be almost invisible, but still effective, as it is engrained in the structure of an organization, but, also, in the conscientious controlling perspective, where it is engrained directly in between individuals. In these, power does not seem to get as much focus as, for example, in the specific decision arenas, but exactly, therefore, it is even more important to become aware of them. Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Power is therefore not always something that is “noisy” or provoking. As we will show, instead, power can be the driver for the fact that actually some questions are never even raised, and are therefore setting the frames for which possible action is outlined. This important aspect of power will be dealt with further on in this project.

Direct power

When investigating power at an organization, looking at the concept of direct power will tell you something about who is in charge as the interests that will get satisfied are often the interests of those who are in power. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Analyzing direct power is to understand and cope with power as a battlefield consisting of different actors with different interests and power resources. This battlefield is in practice the decision process, and it consists itself of the activities that are being carried out from a case is being raised informal or formal until the same case is being decided upon. This dimension of power is not about the activities until the case is raised, or the activities from after a case has been decided upon. In all, it is important to hold in mind that this dimension is a model of reality which is way more complex than can be served justice theoretically, but theoretical concepts like decision process, arenas, and interests can potentially raise awareness of the power relationship in this situation.

When reaching for influence, every actor within an organization can do its part. (Christensen & Dugaard Jensen, 2011) This is to be seen in the idea that power is not only in the room of the directors, but also other places, as the decision arena is not set in stone but, rather, fluid, or, at least, flexible. In an analysis of direct power, though, the decision arena must be fixed, although it can be variable from time to time; a board meeting, project meeting, department meeting, or even at the dinner table at a family house. What is demanded of an analysis of direct power in an organization is, instead, that the actors engaging in the meeting can be determined and defined. Also, it must be possible to define the actual time frame of the meeting of analyzing power as a direct power relationship. Too, the actual case being raised must be possible to define concretely, to analyze the power relations around it.

In the end, any decision process can become engrained in a power mashup, which, for example, leaves it unclear, somewhat, what has actually been determined. An unclear decision can, at worst, leave the recipient confused about the core of the decision opening up for personal conclusion or interpretations. (Christensen & Dugaard Jensen, 2011) This leaves the determination of the power relationship unclear, too, when analyzing the matter. Still, in the analysis of direct power, it is of importance to be very detail oriented, as decisions may become that ambiguous that they are not clearly received, which leaves, exactly, room for interpretation. And some recipients might like that as it leaves room for freedom. Some of the involved actors might have set out beforehand to make the most unclear decision as possible in order to gain the freedom to act approximately afterward.

Finally, what can disturb the power analysis on direct power cases, is if one actor owes another actor from beforehand. For example, if X owes Y a favor from years ago, which is now to be given back, or if X wants to restrain some of his power in order to favor Y so that X will benefit from this in the future. (Christensen & Dugaard Jensen, 2011, 33) This is to some extent a natural strategic consideration for the involved actors and leaves the decision process open as, again, a battlefield. On the other side, it becomes difficult to determine soberly the power relationship from a distance, as such favors or power self-restraints are, to some extent, carried out in the shadows. Such circumstances open up for a broader analysis of the power relationship, which we will get back to.

Indirect power

Indirect power is another dimension of power which Christensen & Dugaard Jensen produces tools for analysis. It is, also, here, important to keep in mind that the models proposed are artificial models

of reality which can be used to clarify reality but, to some extent, not making reality entirely transparent.

This model contributes to the analysis tools by focusing on other parts of the decision process than those traditionally inscribed in decision making. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Indirect power is about, more or less, being able to get problems or questions on the agenda before entering the decision arena, and, also, having the ability (or not) to carry out the decisions in a specific way when the decision has been made. Here, an agenda model is interesting. For example, to understand why some problems get on the agenda and some do not, and why some problems get carried out in specific ways, or, actually, never gets carried out. Analyzing indirect power provides two filters for the analysis to be aware of: *Filter 1*, which is about the choice of decision arena and regulation of problem, and *Filter 2*, which is about implementation process of decision.

Filter 1 entails the decision arena to be chosen but is primarily always regulated itself by the characterization of the organizational practice. If the organization is highly regulated, the decision arena is often chosen already, for example, laws regulate deciding on the yearly budget. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Less regulated organizations, even informal organizations, possible arenas are available as candidates, so the opportunity of actors to decide on the decision arena is connected with the characterization of the organization. The capacity, too, of the decision arena can be at stake, for example, over how long time a decision can be discussed can be increased or decreased. The influence on this filter is conditioned by what actors are involved, and the ability to form this filter resembles indirect power. Also, in the end, upon the actual formulation of a problem for the agenda is at stake, and the proper formulation might grant access, where the wrong formulation can deny access.

Filter 2 is focused on the other ‘end’ of the process of raising decisions, more exactly the implementation of the decisions made. Within the analysis of direct power, it is taken for granted that decision is actually carried out rather 1-to-1, but in the analysis of indirect power this assumption is terminated, due to, primarily, two reasons. First, decision-makers can purposely decide to leave the interpretation of a decision in the hands of a recipient with the responsibility of the activities. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Either because what is at stake can be left for the actors to manage no matter how they do it, or that making the decision is a symbol of power, which is sufficient for the decision makers’ agenda, or that the decision makers believe that those carrying out the decision are closer to the activities the decision touches upon, which demands some freedom for

implementation. Second, the actors carrying out the decision can see some beneficial characteristics from a mere unclear decision that can be open for interpretation as it leaves room for the actors to shape and influence the implementation – a larger influence than they have on the decision making.

To influence either the agenda for the decision arenas or the implementation process afterward, several tools for seeking influence can be beneficial: *Provocation* on behalf of a specific issue might gain attention through, for example, the media, or *demonstrating strength* through a group that is raising a shared message. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 56) On the other hand, it is possible, also, to inhibit or delay a process by *discretization* of specific actors, *destroying unity* by dividing actors supportive of a case, or *stranglehold* a case by giving in on some parts but not the main ones. These strategies focus on the actors, while other strategies focus on material substance. *Symbolic acknowledgment*, where you acknowledge only to ignore it, or *accepting harmless parts* of a problem, and, hereby, misdirect attention from the main problem. *Dilatory*, too, is a strategy of use, setting up committees, commissions, etc., or *symbol malfunctioning* in order to mislead the understanding of a problem.

Conscientious controlling power

Conscientious Controlling Power, the third dimension of power, is a determination of power expressed ‘invisibly’. Different from direct and indirect power, you cannot, in the same way, determine conscientious controlling power strictly. Conscientious Controlling Power is, instead, defined to be activities where conscientious influencing methods are enforced from A to B. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011)

In concrete, this power dimension is about the idea that, by following your *experienced interests*, in reality, one might counter one’s *real interests*. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 59) Actors do not experience the actual influence they are enrolled in, hereby, making it *invisible* or *hidden*, and making them supportive of interests that are actually not their own. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 63) The counterparts that exceed this hidden power can get actors to act according to ideals or invisibly let them make preferable decisions. Conscientious Controlling Power is about presenting interpretations of a complexed reality making it obvious for recipients to pick the ‘right’ behavior, take the ‘right’ decisions, etc., without difficult controversies to attain longed for consequences. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 77)

What are now actual methods, so to speak, of conscientious controlling power? First of all, it is important to consider power to reign by groups of people and not only from certain individual actors. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Second, such power can reign in order to prevent issues from accessing aforementioned decision arenas. Third, an actor can possibly alter the preferences of another actor into wishes for actions, longings, goals, or ideals. An example is, of course, one might say, the conscientious controlling power that parents exerts upon their children as a fundamental element in proper parenting. Another is religious sects or political parties/arenas. There are activities or actions herein that are simply not doable or considerable of the individuals. In the end, through influencing experienced interests one can prevent issues to be raised or conflicts to arise by raising the proper mentality of the individual.

This sort of power, elegantly preventing conflicts from arising, is, according to Steven Lukes, a British sociologist, the most effective and hidden use of power at all. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) It is his theory, exactly, that the most important part of the usage of power is the hidden power which contributes to the lack of conscience of *real interests*. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 63) This power does not have to effectuate actions or activities, but can mainly consist of preventing actions or activities. For Lukes, in order to find out an individual's *real interests*, he must abandon all strings attached. Alan Bradshaw criticizes Lukes' in that one cannot imagine any situation where an actor is cut-off from every structural influence and condition, which makes it difficult to analyze interests to be *experienced* or *real*. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 70) Here, Christensen & Daugaard Jensen relies on Isaac Balbus' differentiation of interests, *a distinction between* interest of *and* interest in something. In other words, when analyzing this power dimension, we can acknowledge that people do not have to experience an interest in something, although they have an interest in it.

Institutional power

To understand the power of the institutional frames, it is important to recognize and underline initially that it is not, simply, the literal laws or regulations that are meant to serve foremost this kind of power. As we will come back to, these are rather supportive of what institutional power is actually thriving on. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Instead, the core of institutional power is of a mental character. The power is shown in the shapes of how reality is imagined. When imaginations of reality are taken for granted, and not critically supervised, institutional power is shaped. Such power is,

therefore, the invisible forms of what is allowed and what is not allowed, also, what is doable and what is not. These 'ground rules' are, then, possibly supported by literal laws and regulations.

The institutional frames are, therefore, also not set up by rules and laws initially, but are, rather, formed by relevant actors who through their actions and activities have established and developed these norms, which continuously regulate the same and ongoing activities by actors of the institution. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) These frames are hereby, reproduced on the long run, as they are – on the short run – taken for granted by actors independent of their actions. The more institutionalized these frames are, the less questioned they are, which gives them the advantage of being automatized within the institution. Through this, the interests of relevant actors can be shaped through an invisible regulation.

The institutional characteristics have the advantage for the organization that they certificate its values and living and hereby creates stability and safety for its people. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) Institutional power reduces insecurity and complexity, and, thereby, contributes to deal with situations or challenges that may be difficult to deal with. In practice, these determinations of the organizational living set up the framework for its constituents and different parties to work within. It is important to keep in mind that this dimension of power, *the institutional dimension*, does not remove the other five dimensions, but, instead, supplement them, which means that the institutional power-analysis demands other analysis of power to be made. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011, 100) The institutional power regulates automatically the actor-oriented power dimensions, but it does not explain power in an organization alone.

At the same time, such accepted imaginations of reality which shapes the institutional power within an organization might be of certain danger for itself, and possibly its surroundings, as it, first of all, may become a boundary for its own development, but, also, if the institutional power lacks the competency to reflectively question itself throughout its ongoing development. (Christensen & Daugaard Jensen, 2011) In this way, certain historical perspectives might thrive on in the future without relevance as they might be unproductive in certain aspects, or valuably questionable. Institutional power has the potential to decide what is able to be questioned in an organization, in other words, it decides what is of interest to the organization and what is not. Exactly so, is it, too, possible for actors within an organization to confront the institutional frames, and in the actual confrontation, it becomes possible to witness what is conceivable to alter for changes to happen if needed.

The shaping of institutional norms, regulations, culture, habits, and routines are what set up the members of the organization to feel and act comfortable and safe. If accepted as a reality, and a wanted reality, they provide the members with, first of all, a feeling of belonging, but, too, a reduced landscape of complexity within decision making. (Christensen & Dugaard Jensen, 2011) In other words, they provide an institutionalized vocabulary of actions and opinions to be carried out within the organizational praxis. By this, it grants a good overview and security in order to carry out assignments, actions, and activities, as you can always be sure to act within the frames of the established norms and routines. (Ibid, 102) At the same time, it is important to be aware that they only provide a certain perspective of the reality, which it highlights and support by carrying it out, possibly, unreflected and in an ongoing manner. Here, it is interesting to investigate, *what* kind of questions are not possible to ask within the organization thriving on strong institutional power. (Christensen & Dugaard Jensen, 2011, 102)

Power analysis

We will utilize the theory of power to shed some light on the different mechanisms and functions of power at MF. We have chosen to structure the analysis according to the theoretical conceptions of Christensen and Daugaard Jensen.

Direct power

At MF, direct power, or the access towards decision arenas in order to influence decisions or make decisions, is attainable to some extent for teachers. This means that teachers do have access to decision arenas every week.

For instance, the Tuesday Meetings in the Staffroom involving every teacher along with the Head of School and the Deputy Head is a good example of the influence a teacher at MF has. These meetings circle around, generally, the topic of “students”, where every teacher has the possibility of highlighting a vision, a struggle, or related things. (Deputy Head, 7)

Decisions on students at the Tuesday Meetings are evolved through a progressive discussion at the meeting where the Head of School, for example, always asks the teachers for their perspective on any issue. This grants the teachers the opportunity to at least influence decisions of his. (Teacher A, 12) A teacher remarks that it is rare that anything happens at MF without the teachers have been a primary part of the process. The Deputy Head of the school marks that there is supposed to be, exactly, transparency between the decisions being made and what happens at the school. (Deputy Head, 14) This is, too, what the Head of School states as his ambition:

“When I make decisions I often reflect the issue with the entire Staffroom. We do not have meetings where we just talk and talk and talk, but I do often raise the issue by saying: “We have this dilemma, what is your take on it?” (Head of School, 3)

This reflects an example of direct power from teachers as discussion on decisions being accessible for teachers, in that they have access to dilemmas which the head of the entire school is dealing with. The Staffroom seems to function as the arena for these reflections on dilemmas, and, too, it is the scene for the Tuesday Meetings. The Head of School proclaims that teachers at MF has a short distance to the leadership of the school, (Head of School, 18) and this seems to be exemplified through these meetings and the active involvement in dilemmas of the teachers.

The Deputy Head states that “We have discussions about everything here because it is important that everyone is being heard.” (Deputy Head, 7) Although this does not mean that every person has to agree with the decision being made in the end. (Deputy Head, 8) One describes the “agree-to-disagree”-ability as a pleasant mechanism for her and at least their voices have been heard. (Teacher A, 12) Another is certain that the Head of School is surely making a lot of decisions on his own prior to putting forth issues for teachers to commonly reflect on before a decision is being made. (Teacher B, 5) A third teacher ascribes that he finds his role at MF to be largely involved in the running of the school. (Teacher C, 3)

It seems important to notice, though, that although it is a goal in itself to involve the group of teachers in decision-making at MF, there is also a balance to be struck. Otherwise, the discussion maybe would go on, and they could end up with no decision being made, which the Head of School wants to avoid. This is clear from his comments on the previous Head of School:

“This was also done by the previous principal, but maybe there was a bit too much talking without getting to anywhere. I believe I have made it more efficient with the same values. I think it has just come naturally to me to evaluate when the delegation of responsibility ends.” (Head of School, 3)

Being a teacher at MF, it seems, you are involved in ongoing decisions on relevant dilemmas on leading the school. First of all, there are the Tuesday Meetings where all the staff are included and getting involved in both concrete issues but also issues on a leadership level. (Teacher A, 12) One teacher describes her notions here as “it is very rare that things are going on [at MF] that we have not become or been a part of.” (Teacher A, 12) Also, teachers ascribe that the Head of School often presents an issue that he wants everyone to reflect on and codetermine. (Teacher B, 5) For another teacher, an issue with a gym class and its changing room practice was pressing. This, he stated at the Tuesday Meeting in the Staffroom with his colleagues and the Head of School that he needed help to deal with, and his issue was dealt with initially afterward:

“I said it at the Tuesday Meetings because we talk about students, and diverse (...). Anders, the Head of School, who can then say, “can we try to rearrange for there to come one and help out (...)?” And then you think to yourself: Cool, that was quite easy, right? In that way, life became super easy, right!” (Teacher C, 10)

The common practice at MF is, that every third to fourth year, the specific values of the school is discussed amongst the parents and group of teachers. In their latest updated piece on the values of MF, they explain that these discussions concluded in a slight refinement of their set of values rather than a complete revamp. (Mariendal Friskole8, 2010) According to the Head of School, what is important in this process is that the teachers and other key personnel of the school feel a sense of ownership. The teachers have partaken in formulating the core values of the school which can be understood as the exertion of a form of direct power from the teachers. (Head of School, 1) This is so because the teachers have access to the clearly defined decision arena with the express purpose of formulating or recapturing the core values of the school. This is confirmed by all our interviewees and can be summarized in a formulation by one teacher:

“(...) I am to a very high degree involved in defining what it is we want (Klaus, p. 3) (...) we are very few teachers who can say how we would like this to be, [Refers to the small size of the group of teachers] so I have a say in the matter” (Teacher C, 9)

As evident by the above expression of one of the teachers and by the principal, the teachers are remarkably involved in setting the direction of the entire organization. This is not to say that they alone as a community within the school makes the decisions, however, but that they do have a large degree of influence on it.

Before starting at MF, the potential new students and their parents are, as we have seen, invited to an introduction evening. Here, the teachers of relevance are practicing games, etc., with the children while others are having meetings with the parents in the meantime. (Deputy Head, 20) This, in order to collect the “most optimal group of children”. At this meeting on the introduction evening, the teachers are informing the parents about the school, how they practice their teaching, and what cooperation is supposed to be upheld between teachers and parents. (Teacher A, 2)

Teachers are, hereby, already from the beginning in the close center of the decisions to be made on which children and parents to begin at MF. They get to meet the parents, and from this point, the relationship between the teachers and the parents are fundamentally developed. Still, although it being an interdependent relationship, the teachers seem to have the decisive say on the matter of who to start at MF. (Deputy Head, 20) The teachers are involved in picking the right students for MF, putting the puzzle together for the big picture.

This point adds some conflict to the work environment for teachers at MF though. As previously mentioned, this process is for the sake of gathering the most optimal group of kids: “If there are strong ones [kids] then we also have room for some weak ones.” (Deputy Head, 20) The methods used in the process does not sit as well with everyone. When talking about the method, one teacher simply refers to it as a lottery, as the teachers and leaders are not able to predict the selection consequences beforehand, (Teacher A, 2) while the Deputy Head is simply, somewhat, uncomfortable with the whole process, referring to it as “inhumane” and preferring a lottery process instead. (Deputy Head, 20)

A similar point can be made about the hiring process which we have previously mentioned. Although this shows that the teachers have a large say in how the teacher group of MF is constructed, it is, too, bringing forth a sense of anxiety for some. While some people appreciate this authorization, (Klaus, 8) others find it an uncomfortable procedure. (Teacher A, 9)

Nevertheless, it is the ambition of the Head of School to involve the staff in the ongoing development and practice of MF. Here, it seems, the ambition is to make the staff feel like one big family: “If everyone is engaged in what it means to run a school, then you cannot just move to somewhere else and find that. That would be like leaving your family.” (Head of School, 8) This also goes to serve for the ambition of bringing a sense of ownership of the school to the teachers:

“The teachers have been involved in formulating the Set of Values, and the teachers, too, has frequently been co-discussing if anything should be changed.”

(Head of School, 2)

The Deputy Head of the school describes that all the staff of the school is invited to pedagogical weekends from time to time where they take a trip to a summer cottage. (Deputy Head, 4) This, in order to bring forth a sense of contemplation on running a school. She tells that, at MF, running a school is a shared responsibility from every staff member all the way from the Head of School, who also serves as a math teacher, and to the secretary and the pedagogues in the SFO [study-care facility].

Indirect power

Indirect power is defined as ability or access to putting issues on the agenda in an organization and being able to execute decisions in a personal way. At MF, this seems to be a possibility for the

teachers, and this is too stressed from the Head of School as a primary attribute of the leadership at MF. (Head of School, 3)

First of all, one can notice that being a teacher at MF gives you the access to a lot of decision arenas by simply being in the Staffroom. Hereby, one can say, that putting issues on the agenda is, so to speak, a well-installed structured practice at MF for teachers. The Tuesday Meetings is an example of this, while another example is the everyday Morning Meetings for the entire school, where the instructor role is on tour from teacher to teacher day after day who then has to practice a Morning Meeting for the entire school. (Teacher A, 6)

On this, for one teacher, at the yearly employee-leader-conversation between her and the Head of School, a concern was raised about the way the school is hiring new teachers. These meetings are scheduled and practiced every year. (Deputy Head, 10) This concern was met with acknowledgment from the Head of School, and he, according to the teacher, accepted to consider if the way of hiring of today was going to be the established practice further on. (Teacher A, 9; 12) This matter was raised in a structured conversation, as mentioned, and these meetings end with the Head of School asking the employee if there is anything that the Head of School as a leader should do differently from what and how he does things today. (Teacher A, 4)

Second, this means that indirect power is often described by teachers at MF to be the possibility of executing decisions in their own way. This seems to be a possibility for the teachers at MF, as the head of MF states to have a great faith in his employees, which, according to himself, makes it unnecessary for him to control their actions:

“When I have given an assignment to someone [an employee] I let totally go of it. (...) Of course, sometimes the job is not done as good as I could have wished for, but then we talk about it afterward to find out if maybe it is supposed to be given to another one next time.” (Head of School, 3)

For the head of MF, this seems to be a style of leadership, as it is supposed to make teachers actively engaged in the well-being of the school. He concerns that if he would practice a directive leadership style, for example, telling teachers to give students the assignment of writing an essay every third week, then “teachers will not volunteer for an extra job that they were maybe interested in otherwise.” (Head of School, 13) He states, that he wants to have those who are engaged, and, hereby, are doing the things around the school that they find exciting. The Deputy Head, too, ascribes, freedom of

method for teachers to be reigning at MF: “there can be a set frame and then one can wiggle inside that frame.” (Deputy Head, 9)

In the everyday practice of being a teacher, it seems to be a general perception that the teachers recognize that they have a large influence on their working methods. Monumentally, Head of School states that, due to the high teacher coverage, teachers can individualize the teaching of students to what seems profitable for the students. (Head of School, 4) A teacher backs this saying that “No one tells me what responsibility I have. I, sort of, do this myself. I see the opportunities and seek them.” (Teacher C, 3) Hereby, it seems, that teachers are setting out to determine their own teachings themselves and that they do have a sufficient sense of authority to carry this out.

How it is to be a *professional* teacher at MF is a particular skill that, for example, the Deputy Head articulates when asked how to act as a teacher here. (Deputy Head, 2) It seems that acting on your instincts, your gut-feeling, behaving intuitively both according to the actual teaching but also on staff-flexibility, is a big factor at MF. If the shape and attitude of the student are, within that given day, not in accordance with the plan of the teacher, then regulation of the plan is a priority of the teacher. This is supported by the possibility of every teacher of the school to plan its own teaching from day to day without counting the hours in an excel-sheet. (Head of School, 13) The leaders of the school are aware not to disturb the teachers in the planning more than necessarily:

Of course, I must show interest, and offer my help or support, but as a starting point it is nice to do a job and not have a leader that says all the time, okay, let us see how far we have made it now.” (Head of School, 3)

The Head of School describes that it is not the ambition of the school that the teachers must guarantee good grades for the students, or for the school to marketize itself in this way. Rather, it is the goal to form students to become characters in life, by “meeting them at their level.” (Head of School, 14) And the teachers, again, have the autonomy to structure the teaching hereafter, and motivate the children in the way the teachers feel is possible and constructive:

“(…) I actually believe that there is an enormous value in packing a backpack and a stack of fire and take the children to the woods. And, this, we like to do every one or one-and-a-half month or so.” (Head of School, 11)

Again, we see that teachers seem to have, somewhat, a large amount of autonomy to practice teaching the way they prefer. If going to the woods for one day seems valuable, one teacher argues, this is not

forbidden, as they can plan and structure the teaching methods themselves. Carrying out the teaching as a teacher at MF seems to be characterized by a large degree autonomy, which leaves open for flexible and varied teachings. (Head of School, 9)

On the first thing, access to the agenda of the school is possible for teachers at MF. The examples of this are many, but we will only highlight a few which we find relevant. First of all, it is the ambition of the leadership of the school to have an “open door” for teachers to ‘enter’ always. (Head of School, 3; Deputy Head, 13) One teacher confirms this possibility, and states that “one does not need to book a time in a calendar [with the Head of School].” (Teacher B, 4) Another teacher states that her man’s sickness was a worry for the leadership of MF too, similar as for her, which made it possible for her – and the school – to arrange, in a flexible way, her job to be practiced with respect to her private issues. (Teacher A, 14; Deputy Head, 13)

As far as a common understanding amongst the teachers is that they can talk with the principal about, somewhat, anything and at any time, they do not, however, have any formal passage of communication if there is something they are unhappy with without wishing to go directly to the leaders. Therefore, the Principal rely on having built a relationship of trust and confidence, that employees can come to him if something is not working properly or need a load off their chest.

While this relation does seem to be established, as previously argued, there have been instances where this did not work. One such case is when the principal recalls a former member of the management team who would always call in sick whenever they had larger events at the school. Apparently, this employee, for some reason, did not feel comfortable sharing that he was suffering from stress to some degree, and it took the principal a long time to figure out what was going on. (Head of School, 16)

In the Staffroom, issues can be seen to raise from latency to visibility, as the Deputy Head of MF has her – not so-called – office there. This affects that she might hear issues within the teacher group, and can, somewhat, evaluate if something latent is supposed to be raised as an issue for leadership. (Nanna, 11) The Deputy Head raises an example of this where the parents of one student have criticized a teacher on the intranet of the school, which is, in her mind, an issue for the leadership then:

“Because it is important for the confidence of the teachers and their feeling of self-worth. The critique on the intranet is not a thing to just rub off the back and get on from, it demands a reaction.” (Deputy Head, 17)

Hereby, an issue, although latent, for one of the teachers were raised for the leadership of the school instead of having stayed hidden. The Deputy Head of the school attained the issue by having her office at the staffroom, which let the teachers' possible big issues become clear.

Also, the intimate Staff Room seems to offer a possibility for teachers to influence the running of the school, or, also, get touch upon each other's feelings and self-perceptions. (Teacher C, 11) The Deputy Head even stresses this as a function of the Staff Room, exactly, to be able to collect bad experiences and, hereof, emotions that might circle around the school:

"We have a break, and a few teachers are sitting in the couches, another teacher enters and strikes: "This does not work anymore", or, "You have got to hear about this!", or something similar. And the emotions just stream out. Attention is directed towards that one teacher now, because we sense that something is boiling, something matters. It is actually not something you take with the leaders or so, no, rather, you simply enter the Staff Room, and then you let go." (Deputy Head, 10)

Furthermore, getting issues with parents on the agenda of the leaders is often not necessary as such problems are rarely evolving. Nevertheless, for the Deputy Head, these may be important issues to deal with for the leaders:

"It is important for the confidence and self-worth of my teachers. They must have the feeling that actually someone believes that such incidents are that serious that it demands a reaction." (Deputy Head, 17)

Some incidents with parents are important for the leadership of the school to deal with. Although the teachers often deal with the relationship with the parents themselves, then in the very cruel cases, the Deputy Head states, leaders will take over. (Deputy Head, 16) For example, such cases can get on the bill of the Tuesday Meetings. (Deputy Head, 17) In other cases, teachers are prepared to answer the questions or confrontations of parents, for example, when it comes to the school camp's relevance for teaching and they then do so accordingly. (Deputy Head, 6)

So, it seems, raising an issue from the teachers at MF is not a problematic issue itself. It is self-dynamic, meaning that the structured Tuesday Meetings, and also the yearly employee-leader-conversations, and the life of the Staffroom brings forth issues that might otherwise be thriving in the minds of the teachers. Here, too, the articulated 'Open Door'-practice into the leaders at MF seem to help in leveling with the teachers' issues at MF. The possibility to personally steer a decision's execution into preferred practice as a teacher at MF is large, and it is so that leadership seems to let

go of control after decisions have been made. Parallel to this, the leadership at the school seem to have an ongoing and visible interest in the lives of the teachers, which is shown in the caring of teachers' private issues.

Conscientious controlling power

Conscientious Controlling Power is a power dimension which is about A being concerned with the perception of B. This means that A wants to influence on the perception on the reality of B. At MF, we, somewhat, see this happening but not as an obvious, ongoing struggle from the relevant actors.

Nevertheless, at MF, the Head of School wants the staff of teachers to feel part of a family. (Head of School, 8) This is done, he hopes, by giving the teachers the sense of co-ownership of the school. They are, hereby, supposed to become integrated into the aspect of running the school entirely. It is his ambition that the teachers at the school will not depart from the school, as such a responsibility and multi-ownership is hard to find likewise at other places, as stated. The Deputy Head of the school remarks, on supporting the teacher in confrontations around the workplace, that they must have the feeling that it is not their personalities that something is wrong about. (Deputy Head, 16) Here, the deputy wants to let the staff know that they are a part of a group of people that are thriving on the same collective and solidary value ground.

In Denmark, free schools, generally, are thriving on a shared value ground. For example, many are Christian, few are Muslim, while some are Rudolf Steiner, etc. At MF, their foundation is creative and philosophical. (Head of School, 2; Chapter: Case) They wish to form students that are nuanced and able to confront the world critically through an ethical persona. (Teacher C, 2) This, too, is, somewhat, the ambition with having the class of special care-needed children as "(...) you can easily articulate that some do have a larger responsibility than others" for the neurotypical children. (Head of School, 4) The neurotypical children should learn the skill of being open-minded, the Head of School states.

Here, also, the week-to-week philosophy teaching for each class is foundational, and it sets out to shape the thinking of the students which seem to have strings to other teaching classes:

"(...) it is incredibly infectious on other class teachings, so when we talk in other courses it is often easy to have a qualitative discussion because they are used to speak out about matters. They are talented in speaking about matters that they

are actually insecure about. (...) It never becomes a thing to actually win a discussion.” (Head of School, 2)

For the teachers at MF, it is clear that they feel that the relationship between them and the parents is a multifaceted relation. As being a small school with around 130 children, the teachers, somewhat, get to know the parents better than at larger schools. Too, the parents of the students are often involved in what goes on at the school. The parents take part, for example, in creating costumes for a musical, taking care of practical things at school camps, or cleaning of the school. (Head of School, 1) That way, the parents have a huge responsibility at the school by participating in different ways in the activities.

The introduction process of the school, where also the children are selected for MF, should manifest what kind of school the parents of the children are about to sign up for, the Deputy Head of the school states. (Deputy Head, 19) This should make it crystal-clear for parents to take responsibility for the school. Also, when meeting the parents from day-to-day to get to know them better, the teachers at MF seem to have a comfort in this. For example, they *seek* to meet them in the mornings when they take their children to class, and the teachers are sometimes waiting in the hallways of the school. One teacher states, that she on purpose has asked for morning classes with the youngest students in order to meet the parents. (Teacher A, 8) This way she can get to know their lives and worries, and have a good dialogue with them. Another teacher states, that he, too, sees the relationship between teachers and parents as a shared responsibility in order to get things to work for the children, which makes him meet the parents more often and constructive than he has experienced elsewhere before. (Teacher B, 8)

Although this dimension of power is not one that we have been able to mostly witness through our data gatherings, we have been able to see that actors of MF are, to some extent, aware that through manifestations on a regular day one can shape the mentality of the stakeholders of the school. Herein, the students and their philosophical and solidary appearances at school, the parents and their participation in the school, and, as foundational, the security of the teachers working at MF.

Institutional power

As previously mentioned, institutional power is concerned with the exertion of power in the more informal sphere of values, habits, and norms. At MF, leadership is, to a large extent, constituted by the institutional power in the Set of Values, which, again, affects the teachers' life at the school.

Some elements of the school's structure are not up for discussion, it seems. This is apparent in how the Head of School talks about, for example, age integration:

"(...) we do have our Set of Values foundation which we do not touch upon. We have some pillars. Age integration, for example, if a teacher came up to me and said, "I think we should change that", then I would say, "then find another school [to be at]"." (Head of School, 4)

The Set of Values is a well-established and integrated part of the school's life. Another example of this is the class of children with disabilities. If a teacher said that *"(...) it is difficult that these very different children can run around [the school]"*, this would be refused too. (Head of School, 4) These well-established pillars are simply not up for discussion, although slight alterations of these are possible. The Folk School Reform gave rise to discussions at MF, in order to investigate if anything was interesting for MF to adapt to their practice, but it was always discussed in perspective of the Set of Values. (Head of School, 6) The Set of Values was, here, the starting point of the discussion.

For MF, the size of the school has great influence, and, as this is a choice of practice [the size of the school], it is an institutionally integrated dogma. The Deputy Head frames it this way: *"We are that small so that no one [teachers] can hide."* (Deputy Head, 8) The number of teachers at the school also give rise to constant cooperation between everyone, it seems, and *"all the teachers are involved in almost everything."* (Head of School, 1) This is also a feeling that leaders of the school have about themselves: *"We have this flat leadership structure, (...) we are out there on the boat, and we know exactly what is going on."* (Deputy Head, 9)

The structure of the Tuesday Meetings and the size of the school, herein, the number of teachers, makes dynamic progression possible, it seems. One teacher states that the size of the school is an advantage as it makes changing the organizational direction quickly possible if needed. (Teacher C, 11) For example, too, the number of teachers makes the Tuesday Meetings appropriate for more intimate disclosure and quick responses to difficult situations:

“(...) this thing about us sitting at a table once a week at a minimum and with everyone, and then one can say “you seem sad, what is that about?”. Then I can take it to the leadership of the school if I cannot handle it myself, and say that “I think you should keep an eye on [this person, for example].” This brings forth a dynamic which is difficult to make a set of rules for.” (Teacher C, 11)

The leadership of the school seem very determined to voice the Set of Values at the beginning of a child's – and its parents' – stay at MF: “(...) [which is] even more important these years where people are interfering with what they think should happen at school.” (Deputy Head, 19) The Deputy Head believes that the Head of School is very aware of voicing the Set of Values in front of the parents and children that start at MF. The parents commit to the Set of Values, she states, and, accordingly:

“If you [the parents] show distrust to us [MF], “you might want to consider if your child is at the right place”. Harshly put, we would never say it like that, but between the lines, that is what we actually mean.” (Deputy Head, 15)

The parents know what the staff does at MF, and they have committed to the Set of Values since the first day. Hereby, the leadership of the school feels comfortable asking parents to set aside their personal opinions and have faith in the practice of school at MF. The Deputy Head stresses this, too, in order to back up the teachers at MF, because, while parents might, somewhat, attack a teacher individually, she states, they actually attack the entire school at once, as “they attack some things here, that we believe to be right!” (Deputy Head, 18) the Set of Values seem, hereby, to backup leadership into defending teachers if a confrontation is put up by parents

When it comes to the power of the institution within the well-being of the relationship between the teachers and the parents, or, more precisely, the teachers' experience of this, MF seems to acutely have developed fruitful frames for teachers. As mentioned before, a lot of activities are somewhat obligatory for parents to take part in: Cleaning weekends, working weekends, school camps, General Meetings, etc. (Deputy Head, 1) For the parents, selecting MF as the school for their children, also, does not seem to be a choice of ignorance: “It does not surprise anyone what [kind of school] you go into.” (Deputy Head, 19)

Fundamentally, this seems to moisten the earth for an interdependent relationship between teachers and parents. One teacher talks about the Set of Values at MF as constitutive of a healthier relationship with the parents:

“When you are confronted with someone who starts asking questions you can always refer to this thing about the community. You know, the way we practice ‘School’ here, we can always get back to that in such situations. This is very obvious. So, it rarely becomes a private issue. Because we do things the way we do.” (Teacher A, 9)

The Deputy Head backs this by saying that, sometimes, it *is* actually so that teachers need to be firm towards the parents, and make clear that:

“[We say], now, you must set aside your opinions because this is how we do it, it should not surprise you, because you have committed to it from day one.”
(Deputy Head, 14)

Here, the relationship with the parents is dealt with through the glasses of the Set of Values, which brings forth a calm but steady hand of the teachers. Rather than becoming vague on how to practice ‘School’ at MF, the teachers are transparent on what the school does, and communicates this to the parents. (Deputy Head, 15) A teacher states that, on meeting parents that ask him to alter his methods, MF is, “surely, a school that does decisive tests on the students, but we are not a school that practice for the test consequently”, hence, *he* decides how to teach for the exams. (Teacher C, 6)

Throughout the years, MF seems to have found rest on its Value Set: According to the Head of School, the Set of Values has proven to bring comfort in confrontations especially within the relationship between teachers and parents. (Head of School, 7) In the formulated Value Set it is, too, stressed that MF is a value based school in a practical sense, serving as a foundation for all of the decisions being made at the school on a continuous basis. (Værdigrundlag, 1) When reading about the formulated values one gets the impression that the values play a pivotal role in the structuring and practice of the school. This is confirmed by the staff of teachers and is expressed by the principal in the following manner:

“There is a sense of calmness. A clear frame around the school. Within the frame we can wriggle as much as we want, it is just very clear where we want to go”
(Head of School, 6)

The core values, therefore, exert a form of institutional power on an everyday basis, whereby, it reduces the complexity of teachings because it gives a human value-based set of goals to orient one's way of teaching towards. Expanding on this point, we encountered an unconscious effect of the core

values and its institutional dimension. We find this expressed by the Deputy Head in the following manner:

“It is not something I carry with me when I plan and execute my teaching, but I know that it is an integral part of me, in the way I am a teacher. (Deputy Head, 18)

Hence, the institutional power shapes the very practice of teachers, their ways of engaging with students in the classroom, and their way of understanding their teaching as such. But even though the institutional influence seems to work at an unconscious level, it does not mean that it only has unconscious effects. One of the things that were commonly expressed amongst the teachers was also a certain type of strength of having a shared set of core values that permeate the school. The principal argues that they have been ‘attacked’ over the years politically, but because of their deeply rooted core values, they have been able to distance themselves and not take it personally, but rather view it as motivation for reflection on their way of running a school. (Head of School, 6)

Expanding on this point, the Deputy Head argues, that confrontation and criticism from different stakeholders of the school are less likely to be taken personally, as mentioned elsewhere, precisely because all teachers at the school work towards and from the co-accepted values. Therefore, any criticism is not targeted at individuals as such, but rather at the school as a whole, as mentioned. (Deputy Head, 18)

Nevertheless, the ideal of the workplace can break down, meaning that the comfortability of the institutional power at MF is not always helpful. One such way can be exemplified by one teacher remarking on her experience dealing with conflict at the beginning of her career at MF. Her main point is that it was a lot more difficult to deal with confrontations in the beginning because the core values, or the school as such, had not yet become an integrated part of her. (Teacher A, 8) Because the institutional power exerted at the school is of an informal nature, it can make sense that it takes time before new teachers have properly distilled the essence of it and become comfortable with the way things are done at the school.

This road to becoming an integrated part of MF as a teacher is, however, something that they are conscious about and aware of. When talking about the newest recruited teacher, another teacher remarks that they try to ease them into the job by explaining to them that it is not expected that they take on extra responsibility within, especially, the first year of their employment. He does however

also admit that they are not very skilled at getting new people in because they very rarely do so. (Teacher C, 8)

As is clear from our analysis thus far, there seems to be a high degree of institutional power at play at MF. One way of confirming or supporting this analysis is by looking at what cannot be discussed at the school, as the Head of School remarks:

“(...) we walk the same paths because we have the same foundation of values which we do not fiddle with. We have certain pillars. Age-integration, for example. If a teacher said to me that he thinks we should change this, I would say, “then find another school [to be at].” This is not up for discussion. There are certain pillars which we never discuss, or which we sometimes... It is not true that we never discuss them, but then we discuss if something new we want to implement is in harmony with the pillars.” (Head of School, 2)

This helps illustrate the presence of a degree of institutional power. The previous point made by the principal about the political attacks and the response from the school seems to show this too, while some teachers recognize this. One teacher remarks that because of the size of the school and the similarity in opinions it can sometimes feel a bit stagnant. (Teacher C, 9) Although the possibility of stagnation is noticeable, the teachers seem to have the support on how and why to act the way they do, but, hereafter, it is their own cause that, somewhat, is driving their actions, still relying on the Set of Values though. One teacher states that it is her utmost important role at MF to be:

“(...) spacious, to be spontaneous, to cooperate. (...) Take a big responsibility. You have many features [as a teacher]. We are not that many to lift the responsibility, you know.” (Teacher A, 2)

Another state, that it is up to him to give the children the sense of community and to be happy being a part of MF. (Teacher B, 9) Too, he states, as they are not that many teachers, they must lift the responsibilities united as one bunch. A third one prioritizes the perspective for children to learn the art of perseverance and listen to nuances of an issue or topic. (Teacher C, 2) The ambitions of being a teacher at MF are, somewhat, individually formed but they are all legitimate within the school, it seems, as long as they take departure from the Set of Values and its substance.

This far, these four dimensions have helped us investigate the work environment for teachers at MF from a power perspective. The school seems to be, somewhat, harmonious, but like all other organizations, there are, however, also instances where the ideals of the structural organization break

down when confronted with reality in all its nuance. This, letting reality bring forth cracks that are, most likely, not intended ideally. Hereby, conflicts and friction do however arise inevitably, which is also a clear fact for some of the teachers at MF. (Deputy Head, 19; Teacher C, 6) Nevertheless, our data and dimensions have brought us valuable knowledge on the work environment of MF.

Part conclusions on power analysis

We have chosen to investigate the life of being a teacher at MF from a power perspective. This has brought forward plural angles on the teachers' role and structures of MF. For now, we will summarize our findings in these part conclusions of our investigation.

It seems teachers are largely involved in making decisions at MF within several areas: Every Tuesday a Staff Meeting, The Tuesday Meeting, is held, which is on and about possible dilemmas on both a leadership level, teaching matters, and, especially, student matter. Here, teachers can put forth their own agenda for the leadership of the school, who is participating. It is the ambition of the leadership to bring forth a sense of shared ownership of the school on behalf of the teachers, making them all feel like a family and not, simply, colleagues. Also, this setup aims for the teacher group to support teachers being criticized by stakeholders so they feel support from the colleagues.

Every day a joint Morning Meeting at the school for all the staff and children is held where one teacher alternately per day set the scene, the subject being everything from philosophy to music to games, etc. Here, the subject can set the scene for the day to come, it seems, and teachers can branch their interests or agenda. On this matter of putting forth one's agenda as a teacher, the intimate staff room seems to elevate the idea of togetherness and community.

Also, teachers are throughout the years concerned with, rather, fundamental decision-making at MF. For example, they are participating in deciding which children should start at MF, hence, in other words, selecting the right children to register for class. Another example is the production and continuing development every fourth year of the shared Core Values of MF. Here, the teachers, along with several other stakeholders of the school, are involved in the discussion and branching of these fundamental values. As shown, though, they found these values preliminary to the Value Day along with the parents, and these are then evolving throughout the years. Next, to this access of arenas of decision-making, the teachers seem to have a rather free power to execute their teaching in their own way without any leaders looking over their shoulders.

In order to bring up issues going on around the school, the leadership of MF seems to have a rather open door towards such. The Head of School and several teachers too describes that his door is always open for conversation and, also, personal considerations or dilemmas. The leadership of MF seems to show awareness towards possible issues with parents, although this is often handled by teachers themselves. Otherwise, the intimate staff room seems to pick up current dilemmas or issue dealings at the school on behalf of teachers for the leadership to handle.

Several teachers have the experience, exactly, that problems do float into visibility for the entire group of staff, and they assign this to be, partially, due to the small size of the school. Otherwise, the yearly employee-leader-conversation can be a valve for, for example, procedural issues or personal challenges. All this seem to rely on a sufficiently good relationship between the teachers and the current Head of School, as teachers at MF is not represented by a formal Staff Representative to communicate with leadership.

At the school, a shared value set is creating a part of the foundation for the teachers to reign on. For example, the Set of Values has gotten under the skin of the teachers at MF, our interviews show, and under the skin of the students, according to the semantic analysis. The teachers describe that they often act calmly and confident as they can rely on the Set of Values to support their teaching or actions towards stakeholders.

Also, some structures are simply not up for discussion, for example, the age integration or the special care-needed children class. It is said within, that “they have these frames, and then we can wriggle around within these” (Deputy Head, 9); hence, the Set of Values seems to foster both openness and closure within the teaching field. As a side effect, the Set of Values might, though, create a kind of stagnant feeling of the teachers, as one cannot discuss some pillars of it. The school seems to live a, somewhat, stable life throughout the years. Stagnation of the school is possible, and, hereby, stagnation in the challenges for teachers might rise, our empirical data open for.

For the school to thrive, the leadership has set up structures that work on the foundation of the Set of Values, in order to develop certain emotions in stakeholders of the school, especially the students and their parents. For example, the special care-needed group of children has, besides the obvious aspects, the function of broadening the perspectives of the neurotypical group of children at the school. Here, meeting the special care-needed children every day should make it easier for teachers to argue for the neurotypical children to accept differences in people.

The philosophy teaching is, too, making it easier to discuss on shared terms with students, as the methodological practice of philosophy is said to influence students, hence, other class teachings. Furthermore, the small size of the school and the demanding terms on parents, and, hereby, the relatively low number of students, makes it possible for teachers to get to know the parents better and create common grounds to develop from.

In order to become part of MF, a harsh selection process is currently reigning for both possibly new teachers and possibly new students. Besides the traditional application and waiting process, teachers must undergo a collective meeting with both the students and the teacher group. For the teacher group, this is, too, described to be, somewhat, anxiety creating, but, for others, also enjoyable. The process of picking the ‘right’ children for the group of students is, to some extent, anxiety creating, while it is, too, establishing the proper group of children to work with, at least the ambition is, although this is, somewhat, questioned as steerable. Teachers are, too, involved in the selection process of new students, children around the age of five, and some is stressing this to be an uncomfortable process, as picking between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ children seems inhuman. In sum, the process of hiring and recruiting is of some ambivalence for the teaching staff.

From the findings, a discussion on being a teacher at MF will follow with a focus on several different aspects on the work environment in general, but, to some extent, specifically for teachers. For now, the semantic analysis and the power analysis have shown us the life of a teacher at MF. This will lay as the empirical foundation for our discussion upon work environment as a teacher at MF. In the end, this will make possible for us to shed light on the entire discussion upon the work environment for teachers in the Danish educational system.

Semantic analysis

Moving on from our power analysis, we will now analyze the document containing the Set of Values. The values prove to be an important asset of MF, and therefore we wish to explore the coherence of the values across stakeholders. MF is broadly based on humanistic values, as we have shown in the introduction of MF, but has, too, its foundation on a highly valorized Value Set. Concretely, this is captured and reformulated every fourth year, and the process consists of both parents and staff, and children throughout the whole school except for the special care-needed children. This temporary

exclusion of the special care-needed children seems to be of some regret for the Head of School though. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 4)

The Set of Values was, in June 2010, debated and co-developed between all ages of students of the school. The *Value Day*, methodologically approached as an entire *philosophy day*, was about the values of MF. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 3) The students were divided into three different groups: *Grønne* and *Blå Springere* (kindergarten to second grade), *Frøer* and *Krummer* (third to fifth grade), and *B1* and *B2* (sixth to tenth grade). We want to show now, through a semantic analysis, what was the main things to regard as values at MF according to the three different groups of students and compare this to that of the parents and staff.

In this, through a semantic analysis, we want to show, to some extent, how deep the transcendence is between the Set of Values presented by the parents & staff and it is presented by three different age student groups of MF. It is our perception, that the bigger the coherence between the formulation of perspectives on the Set of Values the better offset for teachers to use the Set of Values as an actor in itself when meeting stakeholders, *for example*, students and their parents.

The Set of Values of 2010 (which is the latest one publicized)¹ announces one primary skill to be the target for students of MF: *Life Competency*. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 13) From the perspectives of the pivotal stakeholders, the parents and the teachers, *life competency* is the result of professionalism, community, faith and equality, and progression. This skill, *life competency*, is, generally, based on structural implementations of the school through several different aspects. First of all, the age integrative structure gives rise to letting different aged children complement younger or elder children. According to the parents and staff, this is the foundation of every other aspect of the school to develop and progress from.

Besides the age integrative structure, the target of creating *life competency* within the children is based upon other important pillars of the school. Here, the year-to-year traditions of, for example, the Summer Camp, the *horse-foal-construct*, and the parents-as-teachers-day are important. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 16) In order to support these institutional traditions, the parents are an active co-partner. From the eyes of the parents and the staff, skills like showing faith and mutual respects, developing

¹ Appendix D: The newest updated document on the set of values of MF has not been published yet. As the Head of School remarks in the mail to us, the most important part is the process anyway.

a tolerance for others and different types of people, and the ability to communicate and have an ethical part in constructive conversations is fundamental.

For the youngest, *Grønne* and *Blå Springere*, we regard that they stress the fact that everyone knows each other at MF to be a key part of being a student at MF. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 6) Too, they mention, that everyone helps each other. This seems to go along the idea of the *horse-foal*-institution, where an elder student is designated as the tutor of a younger student. Too, the youngest mention the traditions of the school as a key value. They mention the Summer Party, the Ski Tour, the Summer Camp, the Jumping Week, among others, as main events. In general, they summon to the feeling of security, which they align with MF, in general, and regard there to be no bullying.

For the middle-aged group, key points regarding the values at MF seem to be highly similar. For example, they envision traditions as a big part of being a student at MF. The Summer Camp, the Summer Party, etc. are stressed as highly valued. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 9) On the same level, understandings of co-students to be showing respect, and to be listening when spoken to, is dominant. Here, too, bullying is stressed as a non-existing phenomenon at MF. Somehow, traditions, tolerance, and respect seem to be leading figures throughout the development of a student at MF, also for the middle-aged students at MF.

Regarding the eldest age group, B1 and B2, the most interesting thing seems to be that the Set of Values is very eventful and, even, formulated by the students themselves without the involvement of the teachers, it seems. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 4) From their point of view, the values at MF seem to regard some of the aforementioned aspects similar to the youngest and the middle-aged group. The community of MF is applauded and highly valued, as it teaches the students to accept everyone within it, they state. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 10) Respecting others, and including them in the community, is the foundation, it seems while trying to understand others' point of views is a valued skill.

The age integrative structure and the institution of the philosophical methodology of MF's teaching are contributing to trying to understand the world, they believe. (Mariendal Friskole 8, 12) Here, considerate contemplation is a drawing figure from kindergarten-years to becoming the eldest students. Also, projects, group works, etc. are dominant at MF, and the eldest students seem to highlight this as an aspect that evolves the social sphere in a positive way as they are grouped in different age groups with different students all the time. In the end, the eldest, too, highlight the traditions of MF as a key value, for example, the Summer Camp:

“One may not learn a lot from sitting around a bonfire singing “Imagine” for the sixteenth time, but you do learn to be happy together with others and to trust your classmates.” (Mariendal Friskole 8, 12)

They stress, too, that the joint Morning Meetings with every student of the school, and the *horse-foal*-construct, are key institutions in the establishment of a joint community of MF. This seems to create, they state, an environment of security to grow in for the students and a view upon communities as positive as possible.

Part conclusions on semantic analysis

In all, it seems, some key values of MF are transcending every age group of the school. Considering the substance of the Set of Values, and the differentiated views upon MF from the different age groups at the Value Day, the Set of Values seems to float, somewhat, in the veins of the school as an entity.

Multiple key values, formulated by the parents and staff, are stressed as key values from the perspectives of the students too. More considerably, big events of the school are mentioned throughout every age group and stakeholder: The traditions, the community as a valued aspect, and the security of being a child studying at MF. These are described in a very positive manner, and, for all, highlighted as primary aspects of MF.

In the end, the eldest students seem to explore the Set of Values themselves mostly, but this may, of course, be due to a more mature development of age and skilled communicative set. It may be concluded that some of the aspects of the Set of Values are transcending down through the entire school, while it is mostly reflecting in the minds of the eldest group of students at MF. This seems clear, as they are strikingly well-formulated on this subject.

According to the Set of Values, reflecting the considerations at the Value Day, the students of the school seem to cohere, on a large scale, with what is set out to be the influencing values of MF. The teachers at the school, therefore, can be said to have a great starting point in order to hold the Set of Values as an authority at the school in meetings with stakeholders on an everyday basis. Hereby, it follows, that the Set of Values of MF has a high amount of everyday power at MF, and this seems to support the teachers in their jobs.

Discussion of work environment

Having presented our part conclusions based on the analysis of being a teacher at MF, we now want to investigate our findings in a broader sense through discussion on the work environment at MF. Here, we want to dig deeper into several themes of the work environment of MF. Our discussion will begin within the theme of leadership and the organizing of work, move through and over themes like habits, predictability, values, purpose, and meaningfulness, and end with the theme of social support. By this, we wish to contribute to the specific knowledge of the work environment for teachers at MF, and, indirectly on organizing work for teachers generally.

Leadership and influence

When discussing the work environment of MF, we regard leadership to be a defining mechanism. Leadership establishes the possibilities for, for example, influence from the employees on their work situations. Svend Kreiner & Jill Mehlbye (1997) defines the influence of teachers as a fundamental trait of a healthy work environment at schools. In this chapter, we will discuss this theme at MF while discussing the practical consequences of them.

At MF, as we have been witnessing, monumental week-to-week meetings with the teaching staff included are held every Tuesday. At those meetings, the agenda is accessible for the teachers, and their emotions, worries, or ideas seem to be of interest for the leadership. The teachers have a large access to power arenas at MF, and this creates a sense of involvement in the ongoing practice of MF. In general, this seems to be of great acknowledgment from the teachers being involved every week in the constant development of the school and its dilemmas. In order to understand how the school organizationally is set up and does bring about this large involvement of employees, we turn to Henry Mintzberg (1980), as his descriptions of ideal types of organizations can show us how the school basically is functioning. Mintzberg describes one of these structures to be a *Simple Structure*, an organizing mechanism that is often seen in entrepreneurial organizations especially.

“Typically it has little or no technostructure, few support staffers, a loose division of labor, minimal differentiation among its units and a small middle line hierarchy. Little of its behavior is formalized and it makes

minimal use of planning, training, or the liaison devices. It is, above all, organic.” (Mintzberg, 1980, 331)

Here, the short distance from the operating core to the strategic apex is beneficial for establishing an environment able to make quick decisions and alterations of practice. The, somewhat, informal functioning of decision making is allowing rapid responses at the school. This, we hear is productive for the teachers at MF in order to help out each other in the work. Generally, this goes for entrepreneurial organizations to be described as, but, it can be said to be the case for MF also, although, of course, more planning is done as, for example, school practice needs structure if different schedules must work smoothly parallel to each other. Nevertheless, the broad definition of the teacher role at MF, the few numbers of support staffers, and the teachers to be largely involved in considerations regarding leadership decisions, for example, through the involvement week-to-week in operational meetings, support the notion that MF resembles a *simple structure*. Altogether, this allows for adaptable operations and for the organization to adjust in a particular direction according to the situation, although, as we will see, always in accordance with the Set of Values.

This does not mean that bureaucracy is unknown to MF. As we see with several mechanisms; the weekly planned meetings with the entire staff members, the Morning Meetings, the scheduled school days, etc. Although the teachers have a broad job role within the organization, they are, too, specialized within respective fields individually. There are, therefore, foundational bureaucratic structures which make the organization rather fixed, and which limit the organic nature of MF. Nevertheless, we move forward from establishing the structure and organizing of work to be rather simple, which makes room for the teachers to influence the everyday being of the school. Hereby, the school is, somewhat able to let teachers take part in decision making at decision arenas, instead of, simply, moving from rules and ingrained regulations of practice.

Peter Drucker describes the foundation of values to be important still for creative workers, in saying that, “(...) *volunteers are bound to the organization through an obligation towards its goals and purpose* (...)”. (Florida, 2005, 154) Drucker is well-known for stating that, in leading creative workers, we must accept that we should treat almost anybody as if they were volunteers, in other words, for example, to establish a value set based upon the purpose of the organization. This is meant to make creativity and solutions flourish, according to Drucker. Hereby, the connection between the

organization and the employees becomes value-based rather than fixed-goals-oriented. Although the teachers at MF are, of course, not volunteers, they seem to accept the values of the free school as the baseline and direction of their job. The common acceptance of the direction of the school makes way for the teachers to exert their teachings in accordance with their own ideas hereafter. This works, of course, only as long as they teach in accordance with the Set of Values and the fundamental ideas of the school.

Autonomy to exert one's teachings according to one's own ideas seems to be a fundamental possibility as a teacher at MF. Through our data, it seems apparent that the leadership of MF does not exert its power within the actual execution of teaching. As MF do rely a lot on the Set of Values, and its freedom to organize itself being a free school, it can be said to be driven more on an idea of personal formation rather than yield absolute criteria demanded by the government. Nevertheless, the Set of Values seems to be functioning as an organizing principle instead of a harsh bureaucratic everyday evaluation and documentation of decision making. Hereby, the teaching staff members are free to base their activities on the idea of personal formation established in the Set of Values, rather than a yield of instructional goals and targets.

In spite of the supported notion of knowing everything that goes on at MF, the teachers also refer that they in some cases are involved in decision making that is uncomfortable to be involved in. Some even state that they are happy not to be involved in the picking of the proper children to begin their school life at MF at the age of five. Keith Grint (2010) describes it to be fundamental for leadership to remain, or become, sacred in the sense that it involves the ability to silence the anxiety of the employees and create comfort in vulnerable situations. Leaders must be able to *silence* followers, meaning that a leader must be able to slice through inertia by decision making. Here, Grint increases the perspective upon the described negative emotions by the teachers at MF when confronting uncomfortable situations like picking the 'proper' new children, or meeting the – potentially – new coming teacher in order to judge their potential in communion. The teachers are involved in a lot of the decision making, and, for some of them, this seems to be anxiety creating. In an unstable world, which those situations can be defined as at the moment of confrontation, a leader is someone who can cut through insecurity and create certainty.

On this perspective, for Kirstine Andersen, a good leader is, among other things, someone who dares to make the unpopular decisions, and, by this, step forward and take responsibility of the ongoing development. (Andersen, 2009) At MF, the Head of School may need to do something else than what is witnessed in these, somewhat, unpleasant situations. As Andersen states, a leader knows, that he has some dilemmas to cut through, and, although not being able to justify these to the fullest every time, he sees this as a part of his job. In some cases, the teachers at MF are, possibly, involved too deeply in the decision making, for instance, selection of new students and teachers, and a silencing of the anxiety can serve to help the well-being of the teachers. This, we see in the description of the inhumanity in the process of selecting new children for classes at MF, and the unpleasantness of being too involved in the job interview process for new teachers.

On the other hand, one other teacher advocates that the process of hiring new teachers to the school is an enjoyable practice to be involved in. This may show that the leadership upon the entire group may not need to be the same. Because of the small size of the teacher group, it is, arguably, easier for leadership to get touch upon who may need not to be involved in some situations, and who is more suited for it. In the end, this could summon to the need for differentiated leadership, as employees have different experiences to the same situations. The collectivized responsibility for the hiring process of new teachers seems to be a controversial mechanism, at least, at the school. At the same time as it may produce a rather homogeneous group of teachers, it is also producing unpleasantness at the same time.

So far, we must conclude that the teachers are, to a very large extent, involved in decision making at MF, and, too, in situations where the role of deciding is ambivalent for the teachers to be present at. We have discussed whether it is the role of a leader to cut through inertia, especially, for an organization to move forward, but also in order to cut through the anxiety of an employee. Here, there seems to be a reality of which the teachers also must accept, as far as for a free school it is important to actually pick the right children and teachers, for the entirety of the group and in alignment with the Set of Values. If these decisions are not made through the involvement of the group of teachers, then, possibly, the decisions are perhaps not made with the sufficient enlightenment upon the demands to pick from. Therefore, it is with some ambiguity the mechanism is this way, but it may show to be the best functioning practice of the school, in order to make the best decisions upon who to accept into the community.

There is a balance to strike though against the entrepreneurial setup of the organization, as ultimate autonomy may leave room for the development of insecurity for employees. Although many of the teachers describe the organic autonomy of practicing their teachings as a positive mechanism, it may cause them to feel the urge to work more and with an unappeasable thoroughness. Intensifying one's own workload due to the autonomy to do so, and, also, the well-meaning of the faith shown in you, may be one of the factors that cause, for example, stress to develop at workplaces. (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) Social exchange theory has shown that reciprocating positive feelings at a workplace because of autonomous work possibilities may cause employees to work more than needed and, also, more than what is healthy.

One of the teachers describes pressure to be something that he experiences only to be put on him by himself. Such a statement can serve to show how stress may walk in 'through the backdoor'. Such a side-effect of autonomous work is a leadership issue rather than a personal issue if to handle stress at a workplace, as employees may feel obliged to reciprocate the freedom they have been shown to handle their job on their own terms. (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010) For example, working from home or working at off hours are intensifications of work. At MF, the teachers are, exactly, free to prepare themselves for their teachings from anywhere and at any time, and this is a conscious choice from the leadership of the school, as this reciprocity of positive feelings is wanted, and, to some extent, expected by the Head of School, our analysis shows.

In that way, the leadership and organizing of the school may cause an increase in the risk of the occurrence of stress in the teaching staff, as they are free to exert their teachings in their own preferred ways. As to be discussed further on, autonomy may still, though, possess the ability to decrease the stress level for teachers by lowering the risk of role-conflict for them. Nevertheless, as we have argued, the reciprocity of positive feelings when being free to exert one's professional actions in the way that suits oneself best may cause an increase in work intensification leading to a rise in stressors at work. So far, the leadership and the organizing of work at MF seems to leave room for such intensification to happen.

The Head of School states that everything the school decides to do is always mirrored towards the substance and directions of the Set of Values; In decision making at Tuesday Meetings, at internal

weekend courses for teachers, or at the Morning Meetings, the Set of Values is the guiding principle. This Value Set may, though, legitimize evaluation and criticism of colleagues because the Set of Values can function as an anchor for criticism. Of course, this may serve to increase the notion of the entire staff to walk the same path, but it may, too, cause the teachers to point at elements of others' teachings, and label these as insufficient or without coherence to the Set of Values.

The TALIS-report from 2009 showed, though, that Danish teachers believe that there is too much tolerance towards teachers who show weaknesses in their teachings. (Sløk & Ryberg, 2010) The Set of Values may be a tool to narrow in or, even, block colleagues' possibilities and ideas of teachings. Hereby, it becomes a disciplining tool in lack of learning objectives for the teaching staff to mediate the teachings towards and a legitimizer of internal critique in the community of the teacher group. (Qvortrup, 2016) The internal critique may become a constructive force within the group of teachers, and, arguably, an organization without the legitimacy to criticize internally may become stagnant, and, also, develop incoherence between activities of the school.

The values and leadership practices of MF seems to pave a clear path on which teachers are expected to walk. This path serves to legitimize internal critique between the teachers of the school. This is not a negative thing, entirely, as an internal mediator of practices is, to some extent, a tool to catch incoherence within an organization. At MF, the Set of Values seem to work this way, and, with the quite simple structure of MF as an organization, and the high level of autonomy, this may be invaluable for the school to function from.

The teachers at MF seem to be rather motivated by the autonomy to practice teaching throughout their own ideas, although still being internally mediated by the Set of Values. This does not mean that directive leadership, or, simply, giving orders, is not fruitful in some situations; when needing to reach goal-set targets or monitoring employees this may be better than transformative leadership. (Martin, Lao & Campbell, 2013) At MF, though, they do not highlight any importance of, for example, the grades of their students, meaning that such goal-set targets are not equivalent to their learning objectives, and, therefore, directive leadership would seem to be rather unfruitful at the practice of leadership at MF. Nevertheless, a sort of directions may be fruitful, as Lars Qvortrup (2016) sets forth from the thoughts of John Hattie:

“It is the leaders of schools that formulates challenging goals, and then creates secure environments for the teachers to criticize, challenge and support other teachers in together to reach these goals.” (Qvortrup, 2016, 35)

This secure environment seems to show in the confidence and faith shown in the teachers to be able to lift the responsibility at MF to live up to the Set of Values. Some actually state that the high job satisfaction is due to the faith is shown in them from the leadership of the school. (Nanna, 9) Several teachers state that they value the Head of School highly, as they can see themselves in his personality and are very appreciative of it. This is important due to the belief that knowledge workers prefer to be in appraisal of their leader in order to carry out the work accordingly. (Florida, 2005; Martin, Lao & Campbell, 2013)

The Head of School seems to be fierce in his way of defining MF both internally and externally, for example, towards parents of possibly new incoming students. Andersen (2009) describes a good leader to confront reality through a conscientious appearance as far as he must know who he is as a person and a leader. One teacher remarks that he sees the Head of School as a human visualization of the values and that if incoherence with the organizational values is thriving, one's identity as a teacher can be ruined due to a discrepancy between inner values as a person and values of the workplace. It is known that a coherence between individuals and organizations greatly impact job satisfaction and commitment. (Boxx, Odom & Dunn, 1991)

While we do believe that utilizing values in an organization in the manner that is done at MF can be fruitful, no matter the values, there might be more things to be aware of in this space. One study finds that alignment between the values of the organization and its members tend to result in a larger degree of job satisfaction and commitment to the work, while also reducing the likelihood that employees will attempt to find new workplaces. (Vandenberghe & Peiro, 2010; Boxx, Odom & Dunn 1991) Therefore, choosing or getting the right values should not be the only question that is asked when trying to establish or maintain this value-oriented practice. In fact, if teachers believe the core values do not align with their professional values they might engage in contrary behavior. (Gibb & Burns, 2018)

One way of engaging with this is to do as is done at MF, to make the task of developing the Set of Values a common project wherein teachers partake in shaping the values, and by introducing a rather

extensive hiring process to reduce any potential noise in an already established value harmony. We do find this point of cohesion to be the most important feature of a value-based organization as MF, there may, however, be certain values that might produce more fruitful outcomes than others. For instance, organizations that focus on interpersonal relationships rather than individualism tend to have a lower employee turnover rate. (Vandenberghe & Peiro, 2010) While a high turnover rate can be unproblematic in certain types of organizations where project workers are highly utilized, in the teaching profession it is arguably unwanted to have a large degree of change in the teaching staff.

Ethical leadership is concerned with being in accordance both with the organizational values and the human values of the employees. (Andersen, 2009) Regardless, these do not seem to be contradictions at MF as the Set of Values, to a large extent, seem to concern and regard the development of both human values and organizational values. In sum, it is quite likely that there is cohesion between the employees and the leadership, and this seems to be the case at MF: The teachers, quite simply, approve of their leader, and, also, the Set of Values at MF as an organization.

Thus far, we have discussed the work environment with regards to the leadership and the organizing of the work, in general, at MF. We have argued that the short distance between the leadership and the teachers make room for quick decision alteration or direction changes, that the Set of Values establish the foundation for constructive, internal critique among teachers and leader, and that, fundamentally, the teachers seem to value their leader which, also, affects the behavior of the teachers within the work environment. Nevertheless, less fruitful mechanisms may also be existing, for example, a risk of work intensification due to reciprocation of positive feelings is possible, and some lack of decision making from leadership in order to cut through ambivalent situations for teachers to be concerned with.

Values, habits, and predictability

In this discussion of the work environment of MF, we regard values to be a foundational mechanism of the environment at play. As we will come to see, values establish the possibilities for, for example, stability and predictability for the teachers in their work situations. Relying on values to establish predictability has certain implications that set it apart from more conventional means of coordination, which we will explore using an understanding of habits. Following will, therefore, be an investigation of the relationship between values, predictability and habits and consequent implications.

In classical bureaucratic organizations, where rules, roles, and regulations serve to align organizations towards a common goal, autonomy, and predictability are antagonists. The level of comprehension of the rules, roles, and regulations ensure predictability on the expense of autonomy. There are without doubt advantages to this form of organization, but what happens when the resources of some individual do not match the required resources needed to live up to demands enshrined in the rules, roles, and regulations?

In the literature on the problem of stress occurring amongst teachers, this problem has commonly been termed 'role conflict'. (Sullivan & Hansen, 2003, 614) Role-conflict stems from the lack of ability of teachers to live up to the potentially conflicting expectations put on them and results in a stressful work environment. One way to diminish role-conflict is to give teachers the autonomy to determine how and when they want to complete what tasks, but also give them influence on what they are supposed to do at all, that is, incorporating feedback from teachers into managerial decisions. (Sullivan & Hansen, 2003)

It should be clear from our analysis that the Head of School at MF to a large extent does involve the perspectives of the teachers in his decision-making. It is also commonly confirmed amongst the teachers that they do have a large degree of autonomy in terms of how they want to plan their work-life, but also to make professional decisions on an individual basis on how and what is the best approach to teaching. Autonomy in its purest form is, however, not an unconditional good, as we have discussed earlier. Complete autonomy implies the lack of any centralized coordination between individual actions, which can result in conflict. Because the workplace is subject to limited resources, one teacher's exertion of freedom can potentially limit another teacher's freedom. This can, of course, take a rather mundane and insubstantial form but, principally, also result in making the planned action of some other teacher obsolete. Therefore, a larger degree of autonomy and a lesser degree of central coordination puts a larger responsibility of communication on individual teachers to avoid potential conflicts.

Complete autonomy can however also be understood as the lack of any expectation, which can result in stressful work environments. (Groth-Broderesen, 2013) In the literature on teacher stress, this is commonly called 'role-ambiguity'. (Sullivan & Hansen, 2003, 614) Teachers need some form of guidance, they need some form of goal to orient their actions towards, some ways or means to narrow the horizon, in which, the path they choose to walk become manifest. As we have previously

mentioned, and what is a point of Christensen and Daugaard (2011) is, that values reduce complexity. They do so by reducing the number of legitimate ways of behaving and acting within an organization, and, therefore, they also constrain the ways in which teachers at MF can legitimately do their job. Therefore, the Set of Values of MF helps to make the job more predictable by providing some form of goal to steer their action towards.

So far, we argue, the existence of a mutually accepted Set of Values contributes to an increase in the predictability of MF as an organization. This balances the high level of autonomy for the teachers to practice their job, while this autonomy, also, balances the inherent job demands allowing the teachers to live up to such inherent job demands. We argue that the Set of Values and the high level of autonomy balances each other by mixing freedom and predictability for the teachers. The same can, of course, be said about rules, roles, and regulations, there are, however, still differences between rules, roles and regulations, and a set of values, which we will show with the concept of habits.

A common conception of habits is that they are learned, automated, and mindless action instigated by certain environmental cues. (Turner & Cacciatori, 2016; Styhre, 2017) While some habits certainly share this characteristic, there is a lot more to be said on this topic. This conception, arguably, does not regard the degree to which habits are an integral part of the human experience and knowledge-intensive exercises and actions. The philosopher, Felix Ravaisson, has a different perspective on the role of habits in human life and experience. For Ravaisson, habits are the very condition of being able to act and to act freely, because of the potential complexity of having to engage with every parameter of a decision rationally on an ongoing basis. It is not, merely, mindless action, but it is the manifestation of the connection between human instinct and intelligence. As such, habits are not only part of the human experience but a fundamentally defining trait of the human experience. (Styhre, 2017) This perspective allows for a greater appreciation of the degree to which habits influence the daily work-lives of teachers at MF.

The question of habits is important in relation to the predictability of the work situation of teachers at MF. While rules, roles, and regulations do in fact also reduce complexity, thereby making work more predictable, they are easily changeable. Principally, it would take mere seconds to alter some description of a work-role, while the habit structures of teachers cannot follow suit this swiftly. This is problematic because it, to some extent, leaves the habit structures of teachers obsolete and in need of revamping. This leaves the teachers in a situation if we are to regard Ravaisson, in which they are

unable to act, act freely, or, simply, act in misalignment with the new direction, until their habit structures have been reconfigured and reconstituted.

The option of relying on strong core values, continuous communication and feedback, as they do at MF, has certain advantages that the classical bureaucratic method of reducing complexity does not. The values are not as easy to change as a formal role description. At MF, for the values to change, it requires the involvement and agreement between teachers, leadership, and parents at the school. This, arguably, ensures a larger level of stability in the values, also given the influence of the process of student selection and the hiring process, enabling incoming actors to be, to some extent, in acceptance of the values already.

One of the dangers of relying heavily on values as a management tool is that values can be rather abstract and generic. Because of this, they might be hard to translate into the practical reality that organizational members encounter. One study in the healthcare sector showed that the organizational values were known quite well, but many of the workers were unsure about what they were supposed to do with them. (Gibb & Burns, 2018) Therefore, there is an inherent danger in relying on values as a foundation of stability in relation to habits. If the values are devoid of operational content in the eyes of the workers, they might be expected to rely on their already existing unsynchronized habits, which therefore establishes an organization out of harmony. We would argue that the continuous communication and feedback amongst teachers and the leadership of MF helps to ensure that the values do in fact have a real impact in reducing the complexity of the teachers, thereby creating a larger degree of predictability in the direction of the school. As we have previously elaborated on, this is also commonly expressed amongst the group of teachers at MF.

Thus, the strongly ingrained habits of the actors of MF, and for MF as an organization, help to create structure and predictability for the teachers of MF. We argue that it is due to the high frequency of internal communication between the leadership and the teachers of MF, that the Set of Values gets to have a real impact on the everyday life of the school.

One of the contemporary problems of teachers that have evolved over the last couple of decades is what has been termed both a de-professionalization or proletarianization of teachers. (Hargreaves, 2000; Mottelson, 2010) Teachers used to have a certain status and authority in society, and their perspectives were respected broadly and, not least, by the parents of the students in school. Partly because of an increasingly academically minded public, (Mottelson, 2010) and, perhaps, partly due to the “lowering of the acknowledging of teachers’ aura of professionalism”, (Sløk & Ryberg, 2010,

47) the status and authority of teachers has steadily decreased, which has been the cause of more conflicts and arguments between parents of students and teachers. (Hargreaves, 2000; Mottelson, 2010)

This trend is, arguably, impossible for a single school to challenge. We do, however, believe that the use of an internally agreed Value Set between relevant stakeholders can help alleviate the problem of increased amounts of conflicts due to such proletarianization. What the values do is to provide the teachers with a means of deflecting external critique by referring their motivations and actions back to the values. In contrast to more classical organizing principles like rules, roles, and regulations, for instance, values are multifunctional and traverse organizational boundaries. Therefore, we can understand the way of working with values at MF as a way to counter some of the effects of the proletarianization of teachers more generally.

The rise and stability of a set of values are, therefore, important in maintaining a healthy work environment at MF. It ensures a level of freedom as well as a level of predictability by the establishment of stable and aligned habit structures. This level of stability is however not only important in these two respects. In Ravaisson's conception of habits, they are subject to a so-called 'double-law'. As habits become more and more established, actions are executed more swiftly and effortlessly and with minimum energy expenditure. They do so because the passions and sensations of individuals become gradually dulled as habits form, replacing it with an embodied form of intelligent behavior. (Styhre, 2017) Teachers in a rather fixed environment can rely on their set of habits to minimize the resources needed to fulfill their duties and complete the tasks at hand. This is, arguably, what we find at MF.

We argue that the constant absorption of the Set of Values into the habits of the school works to counter a proletarianization of teachers at MF. Hereby, it seems, the broad acceptance from stakeholders of the Set of Values diminishes the likeliness of upsetting confrontations to happen. We argue that the ingrained habits based on the broad acceptance and co-development of the Set of Values help teachers in their everyday practice of teaching and, generally, in being a teacher.

Values are, of course, not the only feature of MF that provides predictability and, hereby, stability. They also have a lot of traditions and practices that repeat over time; Tuesday meetings, Friday gatherings, and also events that recur on a wider timescale, where they tend to repeat what they have

previously done. (Teacher B, 11) There is, however, also a certain danger associated with a, to a large extent, very stable environment. As teachers can rely so heavily on their habit structures to reduce the resources needed, some might be tempted to take on a lot of extra duties, thereby intensifying their job by leaving them with a large *standard* workload. While this in itself is unproblematic as long as they have the resources to deal with it, intense workloads make them more vulnerable to changes or deviations in the established work environment as changes make it insufficient to rely on their already existing habit structures. The workload may end up exceeding the capacity of the individual teacher, especially if the work environment is subject to alterations.

Another potential problem, arguably the opposite problem of the one we just explored, is that some teachers may come to feel that things at the school can become a bit stagnant. This can be problematic, because, if teachers are not properly challenged in their work-life, they might end up getting demotivated and lose the sense of purpose that sustains them. Daniel Pink (2009) stresses the need to feel challenged at work in order to be motivated, but only so much that one is able to do the job in the end. At MF, one of the teachers remarks that in some periods things are very predictable, and that life is, to some extent, always the same at MF. (Teacher C, 8) This risk may, therefore, be possible for a teacher to experience at MF.

Thus far, we have now, also, noticed some challenges as the work becomes predictable, and, possibly, not challenging for the individual teacher. This, we argue, may lead to a bit of a stagnant feeling for the teachers to professionally feel challenged, possibly leading them to seek elsewhere, or, as one must be wary of, leading them to take on too much responsibility that, in the end, may lead to an intensified workload. Increasing one's work responsibilities may, exactly, set out the benefits of the largely rooted habits, and, thereby, shake the life of the teacher.

In society, in general, but also particularly in the world of business, there is a tendency to focus heavily on individuals' capabilities and development thereof. (Baruch, 2001; Clarke, 2008) Employability has become a key asset for employers that cannot guarantee the stability of work, but, instead, wants to provide the employee with the development of professional skills, etc. MF has taken a different approach to this market logic. One teacher remarks, quite clearly, that the organizational focus is not upon improving individual capabilities in order to solve problems, but, rather, they tend to find solutions to problems in unity as a collectivity. This is, of course, not to say that all problems are being through over and over again with everyone in the group of teachers. But when problems arise, the group of teachers are far more likely to solve problems, which exceed current individual

capabilities, by ‘helping each other out’ or doing slight reconfigurations in their practices, the belief seems to be.

On the one hand, this can leave MF with teachers who are not living up to their full professional potential individually because of the problem solving of the group, instead of, for example, the external inspiration through courses on teaching, etc. Although, still, the Head of School is aware to invite external speakers for the benefit of the school, but only as a shared practice, not as an individual development practice. The external inspirational content is for the community of MF to accept or refuse, and not, simply, the individuality of the beliefs of the teachers. On the other hand, exactly such focus on individual development might make some teachers engage in negative social evaluation, leaving them to compete more explicitly within the teacher group instead of helping each other out. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018)

Thus far we have focused on the existence of a Value Set at MF and its effect on the daily practices of the teachers. We have argued that there are certain advantages to relying on values, which relate to the harmony between individual habit structures and stability of values, and, also, the effect of values traversing organizational boundaries. There are, however, also potential pitfalls that relate to a potential lack of activity to make practical sense of the values, a potential problem of having a large standard workload, and, also, a development of an unchallenged and, hereby, a demotivated group of teachers. At MF, teachers seem to develop their professionalism and competencies within the community, and not in an individualized matter. We have shown how there may be positive and negative aspects associated with a lack of individual development of teachers and a focus on collective problem-solving.

Purpose and meaningfulness

Within the investigation of the work environment of the Danish public schools of 1997, the researchers establish the experience of the work to be meaningful as a condition to a healthy work environment. (Kreiner & Mehlbye, 1997) Our empirical findings give us some support in order to shed light on a meaningfulness of work at MF. In our discussion, one aspect of considering the work environment at MF is, therefore, if the work seems to add meaningfulness to the job experiences of the teachers.

At MF, the teachers are largely involved in the foundational grounding of the school. Hereby, they set the direction of the school to act within and show itself. One of the teachers explicitly states that he is happy about the internal awareness of the profile of the school throughout the entire teaching staff. (Teacher C, 8) This, he says, makes him safe to say that they all walk the same path. Another teacher stresses the fact that they can always point to the Set of Values in order to feel safe in their teachings:

“(...) so you do not just say, “that is because I find it right to do so...”, no, instead you simply say, “that is because this is how we do here, that is what we believe in (...).” (Deputy Head, 18)

First of all, as we can see, the teacher remarks her sentence in a “We”-sense setting out from a solidarity perspective based on the Set of Values. Daniel Pink (2009) refers to such vocalization as a symptom of a healthy organization instead of phrasing it as an individual point anchored to the leadership of the organization, saying instead, perhaps, “that is what they do here”. He does so, referring to the former Minister of Work of the United States, who said that, “*Them*-companies and *Us*-companies are very different workplaces.” (Pink, 2009, 155) In the end, Pink states, *Us*-companies will always win, in the sense that they are the preferred workplaces for employees for longer periods. (Pink, 2009)

Second, the point she is making is that the teachers are not alone in defending their teaching or, somewhat, their actions; they can rely on a shared understanding of the actions of teaching, in general, at MF. Hence we notice that the entire organization is a part of the development of the shared Value Set every fourth year on average. This means that both the staff, the children, and their parents are co-developing the shared Value Set together. In our semantic analysis, this showed to accumulate a, somewhat, common experience of the school’s values, as there are, to a large extent, obvious commonalities between the experiences of the values from the stakeholders of the school. The students, divided into three groups, and the parents and the staff, showed in the Set of Values to highlight many of the same aspects of the practices and values of the school. Hereby, the values of the school can be said to be experienced similarly between the ages and the roles of MF, again, showing to create a solidary ‘We’-sense at the school.

We can say that, in terms of unity and, perhaps, solidarity, the community at MF between the teachers and the leadership seem to be quite strong, as far as the discourse is concerned. One of the reasons for this seems to be the inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders within the school to discuss and formulate the Set of Values for the school.

There seems to be room, though, for individualization of the teachings, as long as it is always within the frames of the Set of Values. Autonomy of work, along with the ability to cope with the challenges of it, and the idea of inclusion of *purpose* is, for Dan Pink, what triggers ultimate motivation. (Pink, 2009) For the teachers, the purpose of teaching seems to be formulated and incorporated in the structures of the school, in the Set of Values, and, hereafter, the school leaves room for the autonomy of teaching, and, as one teacher remarks on leaving another school for MF, this is creating the basics of motivation:

“The thing about being asked to do something that is against one’s own set of values, that sort of destroyed my identity of being a teacher. I have to do this, but I do not like it”, (Teacher B, 5)

The same teacher states that, when practical and sensible, leaving the school, for example, for going to the woods with the students is a possibility at MF, and that this makes him comfortable to be at MF. Here, it seems, *autonomy* and *purpose* are co-producing the reality of being a teacher at MF. *Autonomy*, in the sense that there is openness towards having flexible teachings as long as it is in accordance with the Set of Values, and *purpose*, in the sense that they can see themselves in the Set of Values of the school, and are even involved in the making of it every fourth year.

Besides the strong community between the teachers and leadership at MF, there seems to be an equivalently large degree of purpose and autonomy in the work environment. Through our theory, this may foster motivation in employees, as far as they are, too, challenged professionally. This, we discussed earlier, and, as we touched upon, the environment may become, to some extent, quite predictable, which has the risk of lowering enthusiasm in teachers as they are not sufficiently challenged professionally. Moving on from this, though, we wish to affirm that the possibility of highly motivated employees is, to a large extent, possible at MF, if they are, too, professionally challenged over years. Now we wish to contemplate the possibility for meaningfulness to thrive in the work environment at MF.

Flourishing, to some extent, in the academic debate is, exactly, the idea of *meaningfulness* as a philosophical theme. According to Susan Wolf (2010), the possibility of meaningfulness arises when *“subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness; that is, a conception according to which meaning comes from active engagement in projects of worth.”* (Wolf, 2010, 62) The process of developing the Set of Values for the entire school and all its stakeholders can serve as an example of developing a shared perspective on what is *objectively attractive*. The *objective criteria* in the terminology of Wolf must, though, also regard an overarching objectivity of attractiveness within a society, in other words, what seems to be a norm. As far as we are concerned, this is not entirely constructive in determining a rather closed entity to be supportive of the experience of meaningfulness. One example may be the story about Claus von Stauffenberg who, although failed, tried to coupe Adolf Hitler during the 2nd World War in 1944. (Wolf, 2010) The actions of him and his group were against the norm in Nazi Germany, but were since labeled heroic and hence meaningful. Norms in a society may, therefore, not be a convincing factor in determining whether something can be labeled meaningful or not. Also, another critique is the size of a society or system, that is determinative of what may be the overarching values. (Wolf, 2010) If a small society must always refer to the objectivity of a larger society, can, then, the Amish people, for the example, be said to live meaningless lives? Due to the vagueness of the construct so far on the philosophy of how to determine meaningfulness, we believe it is reasonable to assume that meaningfulness is, principally, reachable within a closed system like an organization as MF.

Therefore, we say that the agreement of the Set of Values is the fundament when asking about meaningfulness at MF as an organization. Hereby, the Set of Values comes to serve as the founding document of the direction of the school, and, to be stressed, as a direction that is aligned with the stakeholders of today's school. Objective attractiveness becomes personalized in the compromise of the shared Value Set, thereby, concrete and common for the stakeholders of the school. The teachers seem to value how these objective criteria influence the school:

“It is comfortable for us to be involved in how to shape this school to be. It is we that work here at the school who say, “this is how the school works, that is what we like to aim for.” (Teacher B, 5)

With this perspective, meaningfulness for stakeholders of the school, especially the teachers, is possible to feel. Regarding that the teachers have been involved in developing *the objective criteria* of the school, they are, too, involved in the practice of school on an everyday effort. Hereby, *the active engagement criteria* are fulfilled, as long as they get the freedom to exercise the objective criteria. As the Head of School states, and we see that in our analysis, he rarely monitors the teachings of the staff, and they, somewhat, practice their teachings due to their own ideas and the daily shape of the children themselves. The subjective criteria, *subjective attraction*, seems also to be present at MF, (Teacher C, 3; Teacher B, 5) especially, all the while, as they are subjectively involved in the making of the objective criteria.

So, as far as we wish to contribute with the possibility of determining whether the job as a teacher at MF can reach a state of meaningfulness, we must conclude that meaningfulness is recognizable, at least, for the teachers in their work environment. Thus, as long as the teachers are involved in creating the level of objective criteria, as far as they have autonomy, to some extent, to affect their teachings, and they are still passionate about their profession, meaningfulness, in our estimation, is reachable. We will move on by discussing the performative level of meaningfulness for the teachers and the school.

When the teachers are subjectively engaged in the ongoing evolution of the Set of Values, and they are, somewhat, free in order to practice their teachings in their own preferred way, then, from the perspective of Wolf, the criteria of meaningfulness in being a teacher at MF seem to be fulfilled. This supportive foundation of the Set of Values, creating the possibility of meaningfulness, seem to have a performative level to it, as it enhances the ability to advocate for one's actions as teachers at MF towards stakeholders as, for example, parents of the children. One teacher states that the agreed objectivity of the objectives of the school described and enhanced in the Set of Values 'defends' the teachers when met with confrontations regarding their teachings:

"(...) when you are met by some that start asking questions, then you can always refer to this notion about the community at MF. That is, the exact way we practice school, we can always point to [the Set of Values]. That thing is very obvious. So it very rarely becomes a private issue, because it is the way we do things."
(Teacher A, 8)

The performative level in the meaningfulness of work being a teacher at MF seem to rise into an inherent support of their professional actions and communication with other stakeholders. Thus, MF seems to be a meaningful workplace for these teachers to be working in, and this enables them to act with comfort as long as in alignment with the Set of Values. Teachers have some autonomy to teach using the directions and values from the Set of Values, which they, themselves, have been involved in co-developing along with relevant stakeholders. This creates the possibility for the job as a teacher at MF to reach meaningfulness from time to time. Insofar, we can state that meaningfulness for the teachers at MF in the workplace seem to not only be possible but, also, that it has a performative level which supports them in confrontations with other stakeholders. This enables them to act with some safety and comfort in these interactions.

Social support

So far we have been concerned with the multiplicity of leadership, the organizing of work, habits, values, meaningfulness, and purpose. Now we wish to shed some light on the aspect of social support both between colleagues internally, but, also vertically within the organization between leadership and teachers. We understand social support as a broad concept that encompasses numerous different types of practical and emotional assistance. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018) Arguably, the degree to which an organization and its members are able to provide and receive social support is crucial in maintaining a good work environment. (Kreiner & Mehlbye, 1997) We will try to elaborate on this, and discuss social support within the environment of MF as a workplace for the teachers.

It should be clear from our analysis that social support is readily available at MF through numerous different channels. Three channels, in particular, we find interesting in terms of social support: The ‘open door’ of the Head of School, the Tuesday Meetings, and the informal everyday channel of the intimate staff room.

In terms of, for example, stress, social support is shown to alter what is perceived by individuals as stressors as well as reduce the strain experienced by stressors. (Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999) Some argue that this is achieved because support increases the available coping resources. (Sullivan & Hansen, 2003) While Viswesvaran, Sanchez & Fishers (1999) research was conducted on a general level, subsequent research has identified the importance of different types and levels of social support in relation to its effectiveness. Social support should not necessarily, though, be given

through standard generic procedures as it might produce unintended consequences. For instance, generalized support mechanisms that are not tailored to the specific needs of the individual recipient may, in fact, introduce higher levels of stress in the recipient. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018)

One way of exemplifying social support at MF is by understanding their approach to conflict between parents and teachers at the school. As mentioned in our analysis, most conflicts are left for the teachers to handle themselves, although the leadership of the school does step in from time to time to defend and support their teachers. This raises the question of what an appropriate social support is in different situations. On the one hand, the leadership wants to make sure that their teachers feel supported, while, on the other hand, they do not want to overexert social support. (Deputy Head, 12) An effect of overexertion of social support may be the possibility of making teachers worry if they appear competent to the leadership of MF, which, therefore, increases their levels of stress. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018)

Luckily, even in those cases where leadership does not intervene, there are still avenues of receiving social support that are less explicit and visible, and the question of visibility of support is an important one. Flores, Bolger & Higgins (2018) argue that different types of people respond best to different levels of visibility of social support. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018) Individuals who are prone to assessment tend to respond less to visible support because it leads them to assess and worry why the support was given, thereby leading to social comparison and doubts of their own competencies. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018) Another group of individuals, which they term 'locomotion-oriented people', worry less about assessment and more about movement and progress. Because of this, they are less prone to social comparison and, therefore, more likely to accept visible support. This is because invisible support tends to be more ambiguous and subtle, in comparison with the visible support that more clearly provides direction for progress or improvement, supporting then the needs of this group of people. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018)

We will now move on by discussing the importance of the question of visibility and invisibility in terms of the three aforementioned channels of support at MF. Here, we will discuss both more visible support and the occurrence of, rather, invisible support at the workplace.

Beginning with the least formal channel: The everyday channel of the staff room. As we have heard from the teachers of the school, the staff room is readily used on a daily basis by the teachers at MF. The Deputy Head informs us that often teachers enter the staff room having to de-load something that happened to them or that frustrates them. This opens for several different scenarios to occur, ranging from invisible forms of support to visible ones.

On the invisible end of the continuum, the teachers, that are being de-loaded upon, might choose to simply take a passive yet empathic role and begin to listen. They could, however, also choose to engage in conversation and offer indirect advice by referring to how others have dealt with some particular situation. Hammer et al. (2009) argue that this sharing of experiences from colleagues upon stressors in the personal life of the teacher is fundamental to a healthy organization. This form of support is, arguably, the most relevant to this channel, although teachers might feel that something needs to be done also about the situation of challenge and, hereafter, take it up with the leadership of the school.

It is important to note that staff rooms exist on basically any school and, therefore, this channel is principally available to all teachers in any school. What might distinguish MF from other schools is the level of cohesion within the school and among the teachers at MF. Research suggests that the higher the level of organizational identification one feels, the more collaborative and supportive one is towards co-workers. (Avanzi et al., 2017) We have previously argued that there is a high level of cohesion among the teachers at MF due to their high level of influence on the general direction of the school, but we also believe that the hiring process is a way of ensuring a high level of cohesion that may inadvertently serve to make this support channel an efficient and well-functioning one.

Furthermore, we would argue, that the small size of the school contributes to an environment where the teachers are more invested in each other, know each other better, and therefore are more willing or, simply, inclined to be supportive. This is supported by one of the teachers at MF, whose experience of the staff meetings at his previous workplace was completely different as people were focusing more on formalities of work, regulations, fixed goals, etc., than on each other or the children of the school, (Teacher B, 3) although, admittedly, this is quite circumstantial.

Nevertheless, the size of MF and the intimacy of its staff room could serve to benefit the disclosure of challenges for teachers both professionally and of more private concern. Effectively, this may increase the forthcoming of social invisible support around the workplace of MF.

On the other end of the visibility spectrum, we find the ‘open door’-structure of the Head of School. This channel is, arguably, characterized by more formal and visible social support. This can be exemplified by how one teacher had the workload reduced by the Head of School when information on long-term illness within the teacher’s immediate family struck the Head of School. Although there are potential pitfalls to this very visible form of support, there are circumstances where this is warranted and without negative consequences. For instance, when the workload truly does exceed the teacher’s resources to manage, or if the act of visible support makes the teacher feel valuable or cared for. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018) Besides getting valuable support to restructure the workload of a teacher being an informal caregiver in his or her’s personal life, explicit care for employees are invaluable, too, Plaisier et al. argues. (2015) Several teachers at MF share the experience that the Head of School has a very explicit caregiving appearance as a leader, which provides them with a sympathetic experience of him. They articulate that they feel the support from his side. As being a leader, this kind of skill is fundamental for an organization. (Hammer et al., 2009)

At MF, in sum, the teachers seem to feel a valuable visible support by both the Head of School and, also, in several cases, the Deputy Head, who is, also, very articulate of the importance of supporting, also, the professional life of the teacher at MF. Next, we will discuss support at the communal meetings at MF, the Tuesday Meetings.

The third and final channel of support are the formal Tuesday Meetings. We argue that this channel is a forum where both the more invisible kind and visible kinds of support can manifest. One example of visible support is when one teacher had problems managing a particular situation in relation to sports classes. Here, the teacher brought it up at a Tuesday Meeting and, quickly, it was agreed that a co-teacher would help during these few troublesome periods at the sports classes. The solution to the problem, thereby, was a rather visible form of support. This does however not mean that more invisible forms of support cannot take place in this arena, for instance, invisible support happens if or when other teachers *express* that they have the same problems. This has the effect of deemphasizing the difference between the teacher that provides support and the teacher receiving support, which

makes the advice offered to be more towards the invisible end of the continuum. (Flores, Bolger, & Higgins, 2018)

It should be clear, now, that there are numerous ways and means, and maybe even more than noticed, of both providing and receiving social support at MF. This is important because of the potentially different problems or circumstances that might call for social support and the potential benefits that can come from it. What is also clear, though, is that a lot of these forms of social support require a larger degree of individual assessment by potential providers, and who, therefore, may or may not provide the optimal form of social support. We will, now, finally discuss a possible alternative to an organic support dynamic, as at MF, for example, by establishing a formal staff representative.

Establishing a formal and generic structure of social support may, however, not solve the problem of diversity in the needs there are to social support, but may, rather, treat situations and individuals generically whereby misfires of social support are more likely to happen. There are, however, still advantages to formalizing a support channel that should not go unnoticed as well. Contrary to many other organizations and schools, teachers at MF do not have an individual staff representative, for instance, to whom they can go when they have problems or concerns and whose role it is to raise those concerns with leadership on behalf of the teacher. They are, therefore, principally left to fend for themselves if they have an issue that needs to be brought to the attention of leadership. The problem with having to bring up problems and concerns directly with the Head of School is that the Head of School is in a position of power over the teacher where it is the teacher that is, rather, vulnerable in such relation. Therefore, the actual teacher needs to be confident in and with the Head of School and trust that, to some degree, raising concerns with the Head of School will have constructive benefits, and not lead to destructive reactions from leadership.

On the other hand, in a formalized system where teachers can principally stay anonymous, the character of the personal relationship is, arguably, less important. While it is confirmed by our interviewees that the relationship between the Head of School and the teachers is a relationship actually characterized by trust and confidence, this does not necessarily have to be so continually. The Head of School exemplifies this when explaining how some employee earlier on was suffering from stress but did not talk to the Head of School about this. (Head of School, 16) This is not to say that the lack of a relationship built on trust is the only reason why someone would choose not to raise

problems, as, for instance, whether something is taboo or not can be important as well, as other personal characteristics may be too. Furthermore, a relationship of this positive sort does not evolve overnight, so for potentially newly hired teachers, this problem might be a bigger one than for the ones that are already settled in, as they might favor the formality of a staff representative.

When relying this heavily on a relationship of trust and confidence it is important that teachers feel that they are taken seriously when they do raise issues with the Head of School. Examples of the sort where one teacher had the workload reduced because of illness in the immediate family and experienced the consequent stress of that situation, does lead us to believe that the Head of School does in fact act upon the issues of his teachers, and do not just engage in a passive form of feedback mechanism where the critique or feedback is not being constructively acted upon afterward. (Willig, 2016) Examples of this kind, arguably, help bolster the confidence in the Head of School as a leader who takes his teachers and their problems seriously, and, therefore, already makes them more likely to raise issues with him, and making him able to adjust and individualize the proper needed social support.

Generally, to sum up the discussion on social support within the work environment at MF, there seems to be a large degree of both visible and invisible support available for teachers. Several structural mechanisms are founding this observation, for example, the dynamic of the Tuesday Meetings, the intimacy, and functioning of the staff room, and the short distance towards the Head of School with the 'open door'-policy. Although a staff representative is not formally introduced at MF, it seems that the teachers can rely on active support from colleagues and leadership at MF.

Concluding remarks

We set out to explore the potential functionalities and dysfunctionalities in terms of the work environment for teachers of the specific structural relations at Mariendal Friskole. We believe to have shown that there are both potential functionalities and dysfunctionalities associated with the conditions at MF. Hereby, we have tried to shed light on the opportunities and limitations in the established work environment at MF. We will now conclude on our investigation into the work environment at MF.

On the topic of leadership and teacher influence, we have argued that the teachers seem to, sincerely, value the Head of School. Besides, the teachers have a large degree of autonomy on teaching, and influence on both their own role and fundamental dilemmas of the school. We have argued that sometimes the Head of School may want to shield the teachers from certain decisions to reduce the anxiety of the teachers. The positive feelings towards the Head of School and the presence of a large amount of autonomy contain though, possibly, a danger in that teachers may end up intensifying their workload because of reciprocal behavior. Finally, we believe the set of values legitimize critique of colleagues' practices on the basis of the shared values and direction.

On the theme of values, habits, and predictability, we have argued that the set of values and continuous sparring and communication on this matter serve to increase predictability. Possibly, also, in a more stable way than more classical ways because of the large effect on teachers' interpersonal habit structures. We have argued, too, that the values work as a defense mechanism against the risk of societal proletarianization of teachers, and that habits on the basis of values help reduce daily energy expenditure. Furthermore, we have argued that there is a danger in relying on stable habit structures that, too, relates to a possible intensification of work, which makes teachers vulnerable to changes. Finally, because of these firm value-oriented structures and habits, there is a danger that this gives rise to a feeling of stagnation for teachers, making them experience a low level of personal professional progress or development.

Around the topic of meaningfulness in the work as a teacher at MF, we argued that the co-development and inherent focus on the purpose of the school seem to enlarge the likeliness of experiencing meaningfulness as a teacher here. When co-development and a firm belief in the values go hand-in-hand with the high level of autonomy, or, in other words, the possibility of having a

positive engagement with the objective of teaching, we argued, therefore, that meaningfulness in work is attainable as a teacher at MF. We argued, too, that this has a performative level, as it supports the teachers in meeting with stakeholders as far as the symbiotic of the teacher, the school, the parents, and the profession is in some sort of alignment.

Within the theme of social support, we have argued that, fundamentally, there exist three channels of social support at MF, which have different characteristics. We have argued that there seem to be good conditions for ‘invisible’ support to take place through the everyday channel of the intimacy of the staff room in particular. We have shown how the Head of School can and have engaged in workload reconfigurations which helps bolster the experience of social support at MF. We have also argued that there are certain dangers in not having a staff representative as a form of support channel because teachers, especially new ones, might feel safer in bringing up personal issues with someone of this particular function.

This concludes our investigation on the topic of the work environment. We will now move on to the last part, which is less rigid than previous parts and leans more towards the speculative. Here, we will attempt to explore whether it is possible for all schools in Denmark to structure their work environment in the same way as MF.

Speculation on scalability

We want to explore the potential of scalability of the specific structural model of work environment of MF. To be clear, we are not making any specific judgments as to whether this structural model is better than the models of other schools. We, simply, want to explore what kinds of potential difficulties one might encounter if one wanted to expand this model to other schools, or even all schools, in Denmark. The following matrix will briefly simplify the potential outcomes to an overarching question, which relates scalability to whether it is advantages to scale or not. As mentioned, we will only contribute with arguments to one part of this question: The question of scalability.

	Scalable	Difficult or impossible to scale
Better work environment at MF	Other schools should explore the way of organizing the work environment at MF	MF has a certain organizational privilege in being able to create better work environments for teachers, which other schools does not have
Worse work environment at MF	Other schools should not explore the way of organizing the work environment at MF	MF have chosen to organize the work environment in a suboptimal way and should change its practices

Moving on from this, we wish to elaborate on which of the features we regard to be scalable for all schools, and which features we regard to be complicated to scale. Thereby, we will try to shed light on the possibilities and challenges of developing a work environment similar to MF at other schools.

Autonomy of teachers

One potential difficulty in attempting to scale this model lies, not so much in practical limitations, but rather in the collision of different logics. The control regime of New Public Management [NPM], which in the context of the Danish school system has resulted in a large focus on the more measurable forms of quality, has, arguably, had a limiting effect on the autonomy of teachers'. (Ravn, 2008; Olsen, 2017) The management practice of NPM tends to demands for frequent registration of activities, several measurements on performance, and, thereby, to some extent, a form of surveillance. Because of this focus, some teachers have felt forced to plan and execute their teaching with a focus and goal in mind that does not inspire or motivate them. (Ravn, 2008) At MF, there is, arguably, a more holistic understanding of what students are expected to learn through their time at the school, which allows for teachers to prioritize their choice of teaching in a more autonomous - and, to some extent, broad - manner. It is, therefore, difficult to expect the model of MF to scale as long as there is this distinct focus on measurable forms of quality which NPM imposes.

What we have also seen at MF is that the short distance between the Head of School, and, therefore, decision making, and the teachers, is founding of some comfort for the teachers. Therefore, we find it interesting to contemplate on the possibility of having the same short distance at all school between leadership and the teachers. Here, we see some challenges. First of all, it seems, in organizational theory, that the larger an organization is and the more members it holds within different areas, the more levels of leadership are, to some extent, fostered. Middle line managers, for example, are often adopted in a large organization, and these, may not always have the same authority to alter fundamental decision making as the top of the leadership pyramid do. One could imagine that, the larger the school, the longer distance towards the top of the leadership. The 'open door'-policy at MF can, of course, be adopted as a symbolic invention, at least, at other schools, although, it would be a question of action, hereafter, by the leader if such a policy is effective and comforting.

A Set of Values

One of the stark characteristics of MF is their use of their Values. While we have argued that this does serve a purpose in terms of the work environment at MF, it does present certain challenges if one wants to implement a local Set of Values at all schools. As MF is a rather small school in Copenhagen, it is, arguably, more likely to find parents and teachers that all share value orientations,

but on a larger societal scale, this might be trickier though. For one thing, we believe it is an unwarranted assumption to believe that the value orientations of teachers as a group have the same characteristics as the diversity of parents in society. Teachers have, to some extent, always been labeled in Denmark to set out from a rather leftist political direction. (Folkeskolen, fagblad for undervisere, 2015) We believe it is a safe assumption that teachers in between each other share certain values to a larger extent than the plurality of parents generally do. For this reason, a certain level of mismatch between the values of teachers and values of parents is to be expected, and a high level of cohesion between stakeholders will likely not occur within all schools. Therefore, the function of values as a defense mechanism to, for example, the larger societal tendency of teacher de-professionalization will likely not function in the same way as at MF. This makes imagining scaling the mechanism of broadly accepted Set of Values between relevant stakeholders difficult.

Second, and importantly, it is a firm value within a larger narrative of inclusion that the Danish public schools should be open for everyone, which, all in all, does make it more difficult to list a set of shared values as they may, in effect, exclude certain groups of people in the Danish Society.

In spite of this difficulty, we regard a co-developed Set of Values between relevant stakeholders that is quite directing of a practice of a school, and, thereby, the functioning of teachers, to be establishing a higher likeliness for meaningfulness to thrive in the job as a teacher. As we have discussed, the objective criteria for a purpose of a school are established with the involvement of, for example, the teachers, and this is too one of the mechanisms for pointing at meaningfulness to occur. As long as teachers are not involved in the development of objective criteria of a practice of a school, meaningfulness, at least, relies on a void of complication between the objective criteria and the individual purpose of being a teacher. Thereby, for a teacher to experience meaningfulness within the job, objective criteria for a school must not interfere, to some extent, with the teacher's original purpose of being a teacher, for example, on values like love for the education of children, raising comfort in the childhood of children, or anything similar of, otherwise, objective value.

The size of a school

We might, though, ask the question of what one would see if all schools began developing and working with values in the way they do at MF. As previously mentioned, MF is a small school with only, roughly, 130 students and a teaching staff of 12 people. This feature has certain implications

for the ability to build relationships founded on trust towards the leadership of the school, but also the degree of intimacy amongst teachers, which has certain implications for the ability of teachers to exert and receive social support. While it is possible to envision a future where all schools are small in size, it does run counter to the tendency of the last decades of shutting down and merging schools, effectively making schools larger. (Pihl & Salmon, 2017)

One of the other features of MF is the large involvement of parents and stakeholders in the establishment and maintenance of the value orientation of the school. While this process is still possible at large schools, it, arguably, becomes easier the fewer people are involved because more compromises will have to occur. In other words, the process itself may become characterized by more conflicts, disagreements, and disharmony. Therefore, the foundational values will, arguably, tend to be less broadly rooted the more people are involved in the process of developing the values. It is, nevertheless, important to strive towards cohesion, because if values, in the end, are being forced through it may provoke contrary behavior and incohesive action.

Student selection process

The current law in the public school system provides students guaranteed access to one particular school within their school district, which negates these potential social and practical problems. (Undervisningsministeriet³, n.d.) This means that before any such practice can be introduced, a change of law is necessary. The introduction of this practice could, though, possibly help schools create a more harmonious work environment by attempting to find the exact students and parents that fit into the profile and set of values, of the school.

Nevertheless, in spite of the impossibility of this due to the law, if we speculate on such an adaptation within other schools, or, more specifically, the public schools, one of the potential difficulties of expanding the model regards a societal issue. There is an inherent danger in doing this as some students might be left out, not fitting in anywhere, or fitting to a lesser degree than someone else. There is, too, a danger that parents will have to spend an inordinate amount of time trying to find any school for their children by attending one meeting after another on different schools.

Furthermore, by allowing schools to pick and choose the students and parents that become part of their school, without providing clear criteria for the selection process, they could very well just pick resourceful students and parents and leave out the less well-off for other schools to deal with. Given

that selective picking of the most resourceful is not a problem and that schools willingly take on the responsibility of accepting those that are less resourceful, there are still potential problems with this practice on a societal scale. For instance, while urban areas like Copenhagen are crammed with lots of schools in a relatively small area, schools are farther in between in rural areas. This implies that the travel distance for students that are potentially not accepted to a school in rural areas quickly can become rather large.

So, even though, we did change the law for other schools to practice student selection, it would open up for difficulties, both socially and practically, which could end up leaving a range of families and children left out of the school system. Besides this, it is a cultural heritage of a Danish society to make access to schools possible for everyone, and such practice of student selection could, possibly, have worse side-effects on a societal level than positive effects for the work environment of teachers or the harmony of a school. Therefore, we speculate that it is not possible for every school within a society to practice this ambivalent privilege.

The communal intimacy of the teacher group

What is, too, of interest is the large degree of support, both visible and invisible, we conclude to be available for the teachers at MF. It seems, that the intimacy of the staff room, the size of the teaching group, and the structure of the formal Tuesday Meetings grows some amount of relational comfort within the teachers, and, also, between the leadership and the teachers. When speculating on how this effect would be reachable at other schools, one must address both the size of the school and the continuity of the members of the teaching staff. What is noticeable is that MF has had only one new teacher throughout the last 10 years (Head of School, 6), which, all in all, makes room for stability and continuity to thrive, and, thereby, internal relations to grow comfortably.

Such growth may be harder to reach at larger schools, as, first of all, the intimacy of the staff room will be less conceivable with more teachers to involve, second, more teachers are to get to know each other, if the communal to be strong, and, third, a parallel to the Tuesday Meetings may be more difficult to make sense of, as far as these are to show openness to *all* teachers at the same time. Again, now, the number of teachers to keep in mind makes it more difficult to show concern to everyone, and, thereby, for social support to be available throughout a longer period for everyone. Nevertheless, of course, we regard communal meetings between teachers at other schools to be existing already,

but we must stress that it is the process and, thereby, the outcome of these that is of importance for the comfort of the teacher. The process and outcome of these may be more difficult to scale to schools of larger size than MF.

What is possible to give rise to, though, at other schools, may be the ongoing problem solving through communal efforts between a broad range of the teachers, instead of individual problem solving and professional development through external courses for teachers. There seem to be less that discern a school from practicing professional development of their teachers from within, for example, through internal lectures or talks from guests of relevance, or by weekend excursions, as we have seen at MF. This may, exactly, provide stronger attachment between teachers as a staff group altogether, and, again, giving rise to the availability of stronger social support in a work environment at a school.

Final remarks on scalability

As we have attempted to explore in this final section of our thesis, there are practical problems in attempting to scale the model of MF to other schools, which makes it difficult to envision the entire structure of work environment at MF at full scale in the Danish school system. Even if solutions to the lack of practicality were found, there would also be conflicts of values and logics that require resolution before potentially attempting to scale the model of MF.

The possibility of student selection and the upbringing of a consensus-oriented Set of Values between relevant stakeholders is impossible at public schools as the political and ideological situations are today in Denmark. In addition, the large degree of autonomy for the teachers at MF may be, at least, problematic to scale entirely, as long as the government controls the public schools through the regime of NPM. We argue, furthermore, that the scalability of the exact level of social support is difficult as the, relatively, small size of the school, and a number of stakeholders, play a crucial role in the development hereof.

Nevertheless, some inspiration may be fruitful for leaders of public schools to take from the structuring of the work environment at MF, although they are driven by different values and logics. Holding in mind that MF has had a very low employee turnover rate in the last ten years, (Head of School, 7) it could be useful to examine what they do to attract and withhold the teachers to such a large extent. Furthermore, although we cannot say that it is entirely due to a healthy work

environment that the sick leave is relatively low at MF, the fact remains that teachers at MF during the entire 2017 had, in average per teacher, five days of sick leave. (Appendix C) Compared to public schools in Copenhagen, the sick leave per teacher is, on average, six days shorter over a whole year. (Christiansen, 2017) This provides, at the very least, some evidence that something is done right at MF.

Luckily, there are however also things that principally are scalable. For example, a short distance between a Head of School and teachers may be possible, and cause faster operations and transparency on a daily basis. A, rather, soft agenda of quality at, for example, weekly meetings between leaders and teachers may, too, be suited, as a focus on more purposeful objectives may be in alignment with the inner motivation of teachers, and cause, at least to some extent, a feeling of meaningfulness. Furthermore, we argue, the fostering of problem-solving in a communal effort may bring forth more flexible and, possibly, fitting problem solving, and, too, professional development in the same communal sense may cause a larger upbringing of personal attachment between teachers, which can give rise to, also, more social support.

Further Investigations

The question of how good the work environment at MF is compared to other schools in Denmark, which we have alluded in our section on scalability, is, without a doubt, an interesting topic for further investigation. It might be interesting to attempt to replicate our investigation into several different schools to enable a form of comparison to take place. It could also be interesting to follow one of the probably forthcoming self-governing public schools that will become in the process of implementing changes towards the model of MF, (Regeringen, 2018) or other established free schools, in order to observe what difficulties are presented when trying to establish, for example, a Set of Values based on influence from relevant stakeholders. Another question that could be relevant to investigate is how the work environment for teachers, be it good or bad, affects the students of schools. In the forthcoming development of the partly self-governing public schools, one of the primary arguments seems to be a betterment of the school for the sake of the children. Generally, possible causalities between the work environment for teachers and the comfortability of children at schools is interesting to investigate further thoroughly.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Appendix B: Transcription of interviews

Head of School

Deputy Head

Teacher A

Teacher B

Teacher C

Appendix C: Absence due to sickness for teachers of MF in 2017

Appendix D: Mail correspondence with Head of School on Set of Values