Decentralization and the professionalization of teachers

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Introduction

The last two decades, Norwegian schools have participated in large-scale, centrally initiated and led programs for professional development for teachers. These initiatives have often had a single curricular focus, for instance reading motivation (but not reading comprehension) or assessment for learning (but not assessment OF learning).

However, now, schools and school owners are expected to initiate professional development together with universities and university colleges.

We use a large-scale reform of Assessment for Learning (2010-2017) as a case to identify what it will take for decentralized professional development to be sustainable.
Four principles in the new model (from 2017):

Local authorities have chief responsibility for the schools’ quality development.

They will have greater freedom of action.

Competence development has to be based on research based knowledge.

The State’s policy instruments will be differentiated.
RQ: How can a decentralization reform support teacher professional development?

Documents on a large-scale reform (Assessment of Learning) is analysed to understand how knowledge informs the planning and implementation of a centrally led and initiated reform.

What is the knowledge foundation, who are the knowledge brokers etc..

In the analyses and discussion, we use three approaches to policy implementation: (1) the cascade model, (2) the reflective practitioner approach, (3) the school-based approach to highlight findings from the narrative synthesis.
Competence development: Norway 2006-2018

Since the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2006) to present day, the national authorities have implemented more than a dozen different programs for competence development in school (1-13).

Many teachers in Norway take part in competence-raising activities, but they spend less time on this than teachers in other countries (3.5 days a year in Norway compared to 8.5 days in OECD countries).
Assessment for learning - Norway

DATA: 98 interviews with stakeholders at all levels indicate successful implementation of AfL in municipalities with dialogue and trust between the municipality level, school leaders, teachers and students and where the program was adapted to the local context.

FINDINGS: Despite this, the program had no effect upon students’ learning outcome, as measured on national tests in reading, English and mathematics.

QUESTION: We therefore ask how knowledge is used to inform and guide the work on Assessment for learning (AfL) in Norway by asking what is assessment knowledge, who are the knowledge brokers, how is knowledge presented, and by whom.
Perception of knowledge in Assessment for learning (AfL) 2010-2017

**What:** Assessment knowledge is assumed to reside externally, *in* foreign experts who have assisted schools in the implementation of AfL abroad and carry this knowledge across borders.

**Who:** Staff from the Directorate for Education and Training (DET) decided to learn together with teachers and school leaders and actively engaged in the implementation. They saw themselves as the prime implementation agents

**How:** A DET web-page (resource bank) was a key part of the capacity building effort, with introductory videos by leading UK researchers. This is a linear, top-down approach to professional development. While schools are different, they are all treated the same.
## Analytical approach

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Questions for discussion:

How are local competence needs identified;
  - who are engaged in the process of identifying the knowledge needs?
  - how are participants selected for participation?

Who leads the work of developing a local knowledge base;
  - which knowledge sources are used?
  - who participates in the process?


