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University of Oslo

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## **Carrying Leadership Knowledge Across Border**

**Dr. Guri Skedsmo**

Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education and School Research,  
University of Oslo, [guri.skedsmo@ils.uio.no](mailto:guri.skedsmo@ils.uio.no)  
Senior Researcher, Institute for the Management Economics of Education,  
University of Teacher Education Zug, [guri.skedsmo@phzg.ch](mailto:guri.skedsmo@phzg.ch)

University of Teacher Education Zug  
IBB Institute for the Management and Economics of Education

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### **Aims**

- 1) To explore important reform waves which carry with them ideas and concepts for how to lead and govern education
  - a) New Public Management (NPM)
  - b) Evidence-Based Management (EBM)/  
Evidence-Based Practice
- 2) To look at implications in terms of leadership configurations
- 3) To investigate challenges linked to implementing these ideas in the Norwegian education system:
  - a) How do school leaders meet expectations about evidence-based practice and use of student performance data?
  - b) What kind of learning and knowledge building take place as part of improving practice?

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### **Different types of borders...**

- Western/Eastern/North-Atlantic worlds etc.
- National borders
- Borders between domains such as policy making, practice and research
- Borders defined by professional knowledge and the type of professional language which is used

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### **Practices of Data Use in Norwegian Municipalities and Schools (PraDa)**

Financed by the Norwegian Research Council (FINNUT)

Participants: Dr. Sølvi Mausethagen  
(project leader, Oslo and Akershus University College)  
Dr. Tine S. Prøitz (University College of South-East Norway)  
Dr. Guri Skedsmo (University of Oslo)

Three subprojects:

- A: Mapping local practices of data use (Guri Skedsmo)
- B: Characteristics of data use practices within schools (Sølvi Mausethagen)
- C: Data use in a governance perspective  
Tine S. Prøitz)

For more information about the project:  
[hioa.no/PraDa](http://hioa.no/PraDa)

**PraDa**  
Practices of data use in municipalities and schools

**1) Important reform waves which carry with them ideas and concepts for how to lead and govern education**

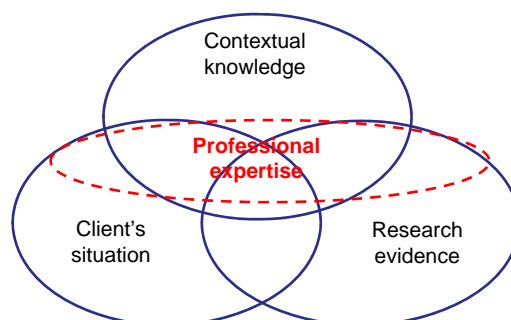
**a) New Public Management (NPM) – 1980's**

- Belief in leadership – «let the managers manage» (Hood, 1995, Gunter et al, 2016)
- Indirect (instead of direct) control serves the client best - «the government should steer, not row» (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992)
- Customer focus (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011)

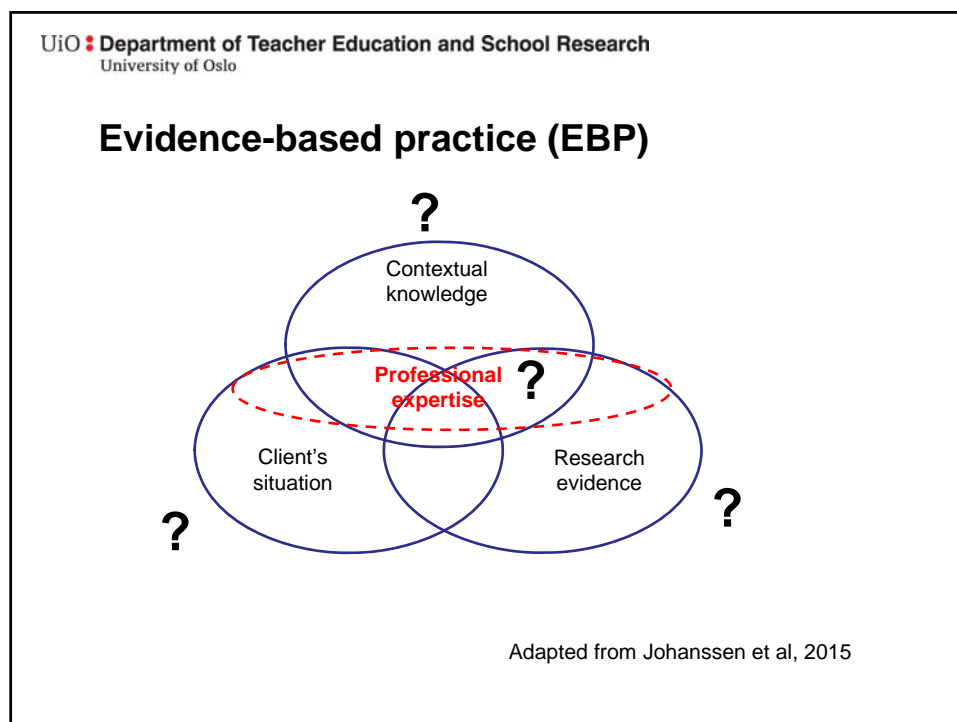
### **b) Evidence-based governance (EBG) – from 1995**

- Belief in «what matters is what works» (Johansson et al, 2015, Vedung, 2010)
- Systematic reviews by international cooperation bodies
- Interventions supported by strong evidence that the specific interventions produce intended outcomes
- Evaluative designs should produce ‘safe’ evidence (knowledge of intervention effects:
  - Randomly controlled trials
  - Quasi-experimental studies
  - One-group comparison before and after
  - .....
  - Professional expert opinion
  - Client opinion

### **Evidence-based practice (EBP)**

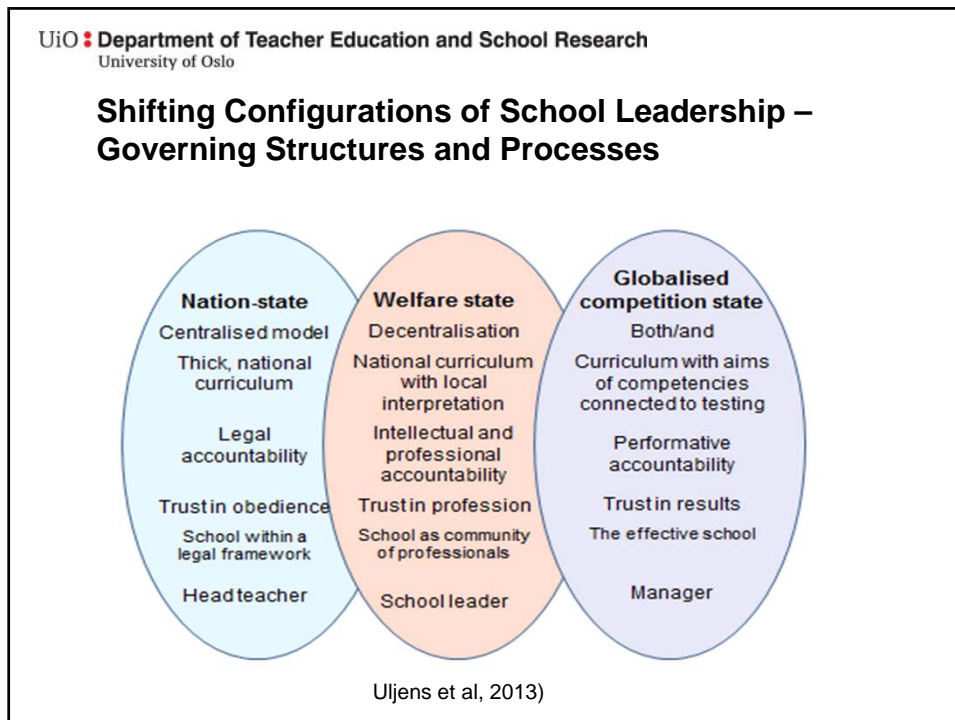


Adapted from Johanssen et al, 2015



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## 2) Implications in terms of configurations of school leadership



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### Practices on data use/data-informed decision making

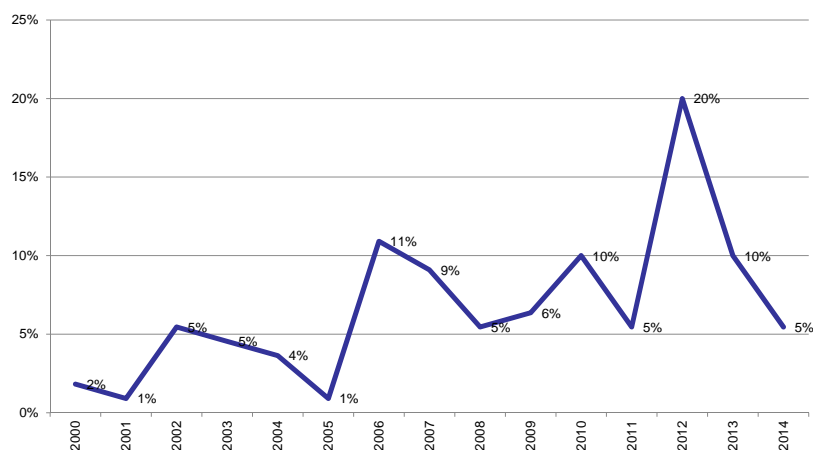
- A strong belief in data use as a basis to improve practice (Sun et al 2016, Skedsmo 2011)
- Practices on data use are defined as what happens when individuals interact by using test scores, grades, and other forms of assessment tools in their work (Coburn & Turner 2011; Spillane 2012).
- The number of studies in this area is increasing
- Vague descriptions of concrete data use practices (Prøitz, Mausethagen & Skedsmo, 2015)

## Literature research

- Searches in data bases for English and German language literature identified over 6000 studies. The searches in Scandinavian databases have not been completed and are not presented here.
- The inclusion/exclusion process have three phases; screening by
  - 1) title and keywords, (293, 520/273)
  - 2) abstracts (293, 129/104) and
  - 3) full text publications (110, 54/56)
- In accordance with the criteria for inclusion and exclusion the body of relevant English and German language studies have been reduced to 110 publications.
- We are now in the phase of analysing the English and German language studies and searching for Scandinavian studies

(Prøitz, Mausethagen & Skedsmo, 2015)

## Year of publication



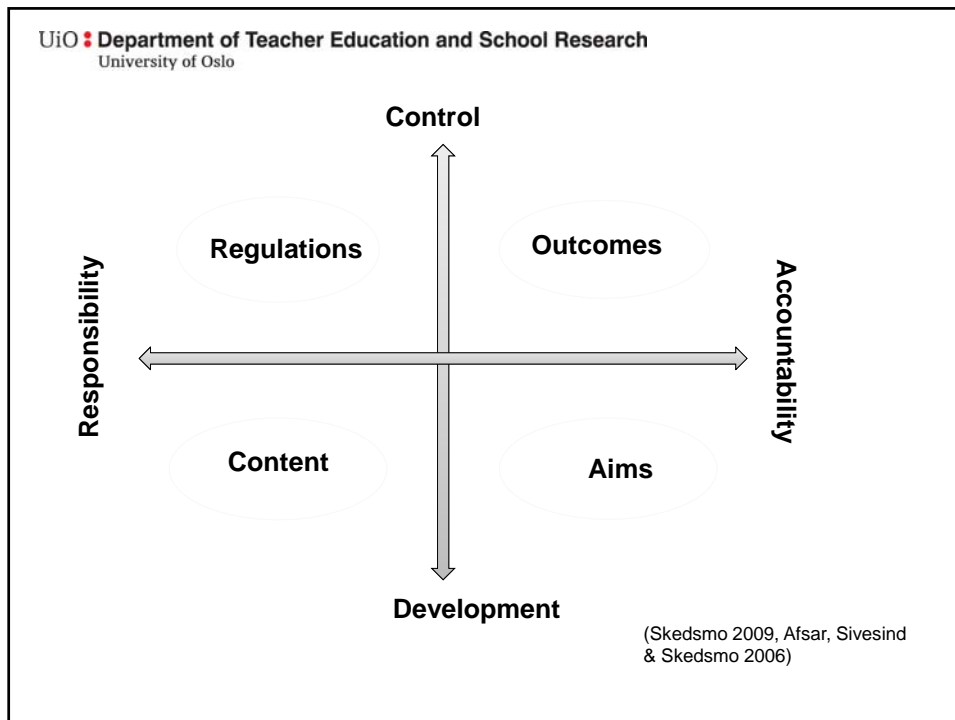
(Prøitz, Mausethagen & Skedsmo, 2015)

### **3) Challenges linked to implementing these ideas in the Norwegian education system**

#### **Developments during the last decade...**

- A national quality assessment system was launched in 2005; national testing in Literacy, Numeracy and English at the grades 5, 8 and 9
- In educational policy documents published after 2004, the municipalities are defined as “school owners”:
  - adapting the national curriculum to local needs,
  - running in-service training for teachers and school leaders,
  - ensuring the quality of schooling.
- The municipalities’ services are controlled and supported through state supervision (Bernt, 1997; Engeland et al., 2008; Karlsen, 1993b).
- The schools are considered as self-governing result units that report to the municipalities.
- Main responsibilities of the principals
  - development of the school practice,
  - to follow up on state and local priorities,
  - follow up on educational outcomes achieved,
  - personnel management, administration and resource allocation
- Teachers work in teams (organised according to grade)





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### Organizational routines as an analytic lense...

- Data do not objectively guide decisions on their own – people do...select information and negotiate problems and possible solutions (Spillane 2012)
- Interactions between teachers and school leaders and between school leaders and local authorities represent what Spillane (2012) describes as routines in use, that is, practices that are established within specific contexts (people, time, norms).
- Routines in use represent the local situated practices developed by those involved, and are defined as “repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions that involve multiple actors” (Feldham & Pentland, 2003, p. 311).
- Organizational routines can represent both mechanisms of preservation and change (Spillane, 2012).

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### Data use and organizational routines in three schools located in three municipalities

| Municipality                   | Waterfall  | Riverside  | Lakeview   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Important data</b>          | National test data<br>Student Survey<br>Parent Survey<br>Municipal tests<br>Transition tests                   | National tests<br>Student Survey<br>Parent Survey  | National tests<br>Student Survey<br>Parent Survey<br>School reports  |
| <b>Organisational routines</b> | Municipal strategic chart<br>Goal hierarchy<br>Performance appraisals<br>Risk analysis<br>Leadership contracts | Result meetings<br>«Concern»-meeting<br>Performance appraisals<br>Leadership contracts<br>Municipal priorities | School reports<br>Leadership dialogues<br>Performance appraisals<br>Leadership contracts<br>Learning dialogues |

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### Result meetings as a new organisational routine

- Represents a concrete arena for data use with interactions between different actors in the system
  - The CEO at the municipal level and the principals
  - Principal and teacher teams
  - School leaders and teachers at lower secondary schools and primary schools
- Includes summative as well as formative use of data – control/accountability and improvement purposes



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### **Important leadership tasks**

- To frame the problem:
  - «Our results are not good enough».
  - «Depending on the cohort of students this year, our results are reasonable good».
  - «Compared with our neighbouring schools, we are doing well».
- Motivate teachers to engage with data to improve practice
- Use of guidelines to keep the discussion focused and initiate sense-making processes
- Initiate collective interpretations of the data
- Clear distribution of responsibility to the teacher teams
- Strong belief in «approved» methods
- Collective and individual accountability in terms of following up on decisions and report on student outcomes

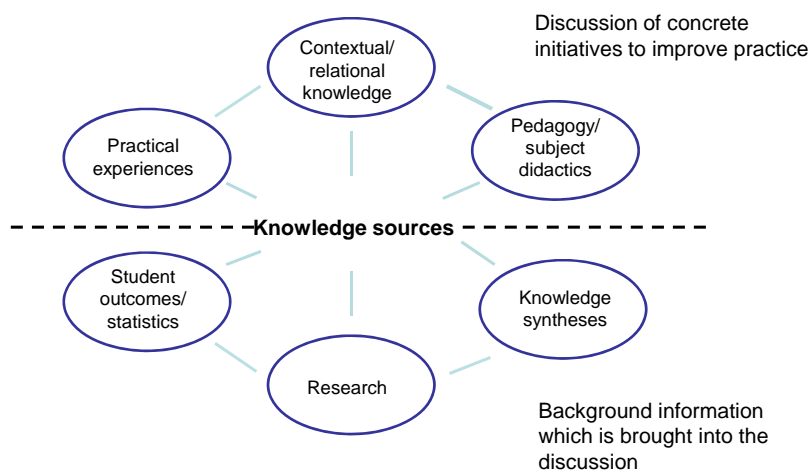
(Mausethagen, Skedsmo & Prøitz, forthcoming 2016)

### Teachers' engagement with the data

- Degree of engagement varies
- «The national testing has come to stay»
- Perceive national test data as «external» and prefer their own tests or screening tests for formative use
- Good results confirm good practice = no need to improve
- Improvement initiatives discussed tend to be superficial and instrumental
- Do not question teaching methods that are generally «approved» and decided on

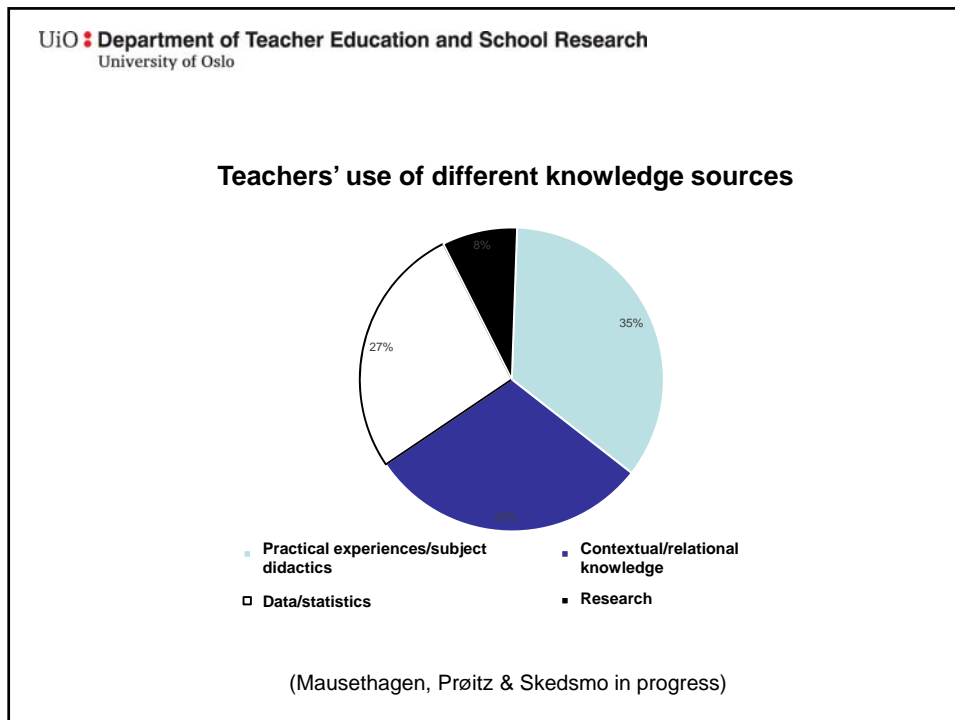
(Mausethagen, Skedsmo & Prøitz, forthcoming 2016)

g2



(Mausethagen, Prøitz & Skedsmo, in progress)

- g2** Sølvi, kan vi framstille modellen slik (foreløpig)? Tenker at noe av poenget er at kunnskapskilder når de diskuterer utviklingstiltak tar utgangspunkt i den nære, lokale kunnskapen, og det er utfordrende å bruke de tre kildene under, - spesielt aggregerte data. Dette viser reviewen fra Nord-Amerika, som jeg leste i helga også.  
guri, 16/2/2016



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### Learning – framed by accountability practices?

- Different forms of accountability are played out (e.g. performative and professional)
- Implications of a strong focus on performative accountability:
  - Short term improvement initiatives to improve results quickly
  - Single-loop versus double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön)
  - Less confidence and trust in teachers professional judgements
- Result meetings between the primary and the lower secondary school are characterised by...
  - Stronger sense of accountability (blaming)
  - Collaboration between teachers who normally do not work together
  - Discussions where more fundamental questions are raised regarding the level of competences students should have at the end of primary school
- Collegial pressure – accountability in terms of moral obligations (cf. Dubnick, 2007) within schools

(Skedsmo & Mausethagen 2016, Mausethagen, Skedsmo & Prøitz, forthcoming 2016)

## Summing up

- “Evidence” is often presented as global and general ideas, those ideas can easily be carried across country borders on the policy level
- To carry abstract knowledge into local practices by problem-framing and sense-making processes is an important school leadership task
- An evidence-oriented policy agenda is, however, often criticized for...
  - its linear rationale
  - being too ‘top-down’
  - lacking context sensitivity
  - not taking the unpredictability and complexity in teaching and learning into account

## Evidence-based practice (EBP)



Adapted from Johanssen et al, 2015

### **Challenges...**

- Research on teachers' data use practices to inform administrative levels/policy level - teachers are positioned as "users" of data
- A stronger focus on student outcomes and evidence represents a break with the traditional conceptions of knowledge and key values in the teaching profession
- "Evidence" is often presented in abstract and general terms, the traditional professional language used in schools is based on experience, context, and a focus on student relations
- Should teachers and school leaders be part of validating "evidence"?

### **Questions to be raised...**

- What counts as "evidence"?
- Who should be involved in defining it?
- What kind of rationale do we want our research to be based upon?



**Thank you for the attention!**

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