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## **Empirical findings about organisational innovation in a Danish Municipality**

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### **Abstract**

Innovation in the public sector has become a buzz word in the last years because the public authorities need to find new ways for delivering public policies and services with the same quality, but for lesser resources. Innovation is a popular catchy word claimed by both academics and practitioners. All seem to give directions about how to modernize and improve the quality in the public sector. However, the study of innovation has not received the rigorous attention as a cross sector interdisciplinary study in political science, public administration and sociology. Innovation is flourishing everywhere like a mantra often without critical reflection and often treated normatively as a synonym of efficiency and more public value. At the same time innovation is generally tackled theoretically and there are few studies that apply the theory to serious empirical analysis. This empirical paper shows how this can be done and reflects on the need for improving theory and methods of studying innovation. In addressing these gaps in the literature, this paper reports on an exploratory study which seeks to contribute to theory-building in this area. The paper presents the results of the first innovation journey of the Children and Youth administration in Gentofte Municipality, Denmark<sup>1</sup>. The investigation departs from the realisation of a new political school vision in Gentofte Municipality. In an innovative way the vision challenges the traditional organisation of the public school system and the roles of politicians, administrators, school leaders, teachers, educators, labour unions, parents and children. The aim of the paper is to examine and develop the theory of innovation within an organisational context, to explain how the organisation understands and operationalizes innovation. And last but not least to highlight the main challenges that innovation raises for the organisation and individuals and what can be done to overcome these challenges.

**Key words:** *Innovation in the public sector, innovation culture, organisational innovation, methods of innovation, challenges of innovation, innovation management, organisational change, learning and New Public Management*

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<sup>1</sup> BUF, Børne- og Unge Forvaltningen (BUF)

## **Introduction**

Innovation has conquered the agendas of public administrations in most of the developed world in the last years with the purpose to improve the public sector policies and services with fewer resources. The whole chain of governance with politicians, strategic managers, administrators, institutional managers and sometimes including citizens, are celebrating innovation. Governments around the world are having troubles to create welfare with traditional methods and it seems that governments need to improve their capacity to innovate (Bland et al, 2010). Innovation seems to be the panacea for finding new solutions to existing problems, challenging existing assumptions, bringing together old and new partners and to conceptualising politics and delivering services in a new, different and innovative way. If you are a modern politician or talented manager you will urge to spur innovation. Literature about innovation and the practices of innovation in consultant companies and public organisations highlight the normative qualities of innovation and hence often use the concept of innovation as a synonym of efficiency or increased public value. This is causing serious misunderstandings among theorists and practitioners and can put in risk the functioning of the public sector.

Innovation can have an undesirable boomerang effect in public administrations and must be treated as more than a buzz word. The practice of innovation may have intentions and potentials for improving the public sector, but their attempts must be studied and treated according to norms of scientific discipline and with critical reflection. The challenges of how to do this will be dealt with in the paper by defining innovation descriptively and analysing how it is put it into practice in a Danish municipality.

Organisational change is known as a traditional discipline of public administration and political science. Often the purpose is to explain and identify how and why changes takes place in organisations. Innovation, as many authors point out, is a specific type of change that looks after the improvement of the public policies and services (Sørensen and Torfing, 2012; Hartley 2005). Whereas several empirical studies discuss the external and internal mechanisms that trigger change in public organisations, studies of innovation have a tendency of being theoretical. Theory and practice of innovation should be more interconnected in order to learn from each other and to develop tools to create and implement innovation successfully. Furthermore, innovation relies on the context where it is exercised, it is urgent that more empirical studies illustrate how innovation is conceptualised and performed.

This paper outlines the study of innovation within the educational system in one municipality in Denmark. Nordic countries are generally seen as laboratories for studying the creation and implications of interactive and collaborative governance. In Denmark, the public sector and the delivery of public welfare are decentralized to municipalities, which have significant political power and autonomy. Furthermore, Denmark has a long tradition of cooperation between state and civic society based on high levels of trust (Torfing, 2010). Countries differ in how much and how they innovate. Each country is rooted in particular historical and cultural developments that help explain why countries have specific innovation profiles (Casper and van Waarden, 2005: 3).

Education policy is a classical policy area with public provision of schools and high likelihood of being influenced at the point of delivery. At the end, the quality of educational policy is generally determined by the work of the teachers (Hill, 2009: 128). However many different actors are engaged in the delivery of education. There are hence many different interests in delivering the best education service, but they often differ in the way of doing it. For instance it is well known in Denmark that there are frictions between different groups of professionals, such as teachers and educators, despite that they work in the same educative system. They conceive schools, education and learning in different ways.

The paper findings are based on a case study of organisational innovation in the public administration of Children and Youth in Gentofte municipality. After a longer political process, the new political school strategy called *Learning without of Limits*<sup>2</sup> was approved by the politicians in October 2011 after 1½ years in the making. The strategy replaces the earlier strategy and sets innovation as a mechanism to achieve better results for the children and new learning constructions. The new strategy conceives that the children's learning is not only a responsibility of the teachers, but also of the parents, the administration, the politicians and the school leaders. The innovative part of the strategy relies on the assumption that learning must be understood, constructed and developed through the collaboration of different interdependent actors. This implies finding new ways of thinking in the school system and to develop new relations between the actors involved. The new relations require cross sector collaboration in order to achieve the purposes, rather than silo thinking and competition. This is because learning is understood as a collective responsibility and requires collective action. These new relations between the interested parts shape the roles of the actors requiring learning from each other, openness to accept different point of views, learn from mistakes, a high degree of trust, motivation to believe in the common goal, innovation to think out of the box and management of the innovation process. The learning concept in the new school strategy has a broader scope when compared with traditional education and teaching. It is thought of as more inclusive. The new school strategy hence represents a paradigm change from teaching to learning. This challenges the established organisational structure of the schools, the logic of appropriateness of the actors and especially the traditional conceptions of the teachers – who are the main responsible of delivering the educational service.

The aim of this empirical paper is to report and analyse the findings about innovation and innovation management from the case study about the new school strategy from Gentofte municipality. And last but not least to highlight the main challenges that innovation raises for the organisation and individuals and what can be done to overcome these challenges.

This paper is cutting edge because it applies theory of innovation to an organizational context. The research has a bottom up policy analysis in order to handle the complexity of the implementation process and organisational fragmentation (Bogason and Sørensen, 1998: 9 and 25). The research question guiding this paper is: ***How is innovation conceptualised and put into practice in the politico-administrative system with the new school strategy in Gentofte municipality? And what are the main organisational and individual challenges that innovation raises in praxis?*** The theory that is drawn up in this paper is about innovation in the public sector and is primarily rooted in studies of public administration, political science and sociology. Studies of innovation most often concern *organisational and managerialism aspects* (Osborne, Chew and McLaughlin, 2008: 52) and are the main dimensions in this paper too. The focus of this investigation is primarily organisational and collaborative innovation. Furthermore the empirical study is exploratory and hence contributing to theory-building. The paper represents a work in progress.

Studying and analysing innovation from an organisational and managerialism angle is particularly interesting in the field of public administration and political science, because it allows treating innovation within a particular policy area and context. In this way it is possible to explore and compare innovation in different organisational traditions, like for example different municipalities, different policy areas and different levels of authority and formality. Education is the policy area for the study of innovation in Gentofte municipality and it frames a particular context with particular historical and local

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<sup>2</sup> Læring Uden Grænser (LUG)

characteristics and with specific groups of actors. The assumption here is that the practice of innovation may differ from country to country, from policy area to policy area and from one organisation to another organisation. This is why the contextualisation and limitation of the scope of the study of innovation is extremely important. The literature of innovation focuses on the inputs of innovation (the determinants of innovation); the process of innovation or what is called the black box (the process in between the inputs and outputs of innovation) and the outputs<sup>3</sup> of innovation (number and type of innovations adopted and policies that come out of the innovation process) (Becker and Whisler, 1967). According to Sørensen and Torfing (2012: 851) idealistically the innovation outcomes in the public sector correspond with the preferences of politicians. This paper is based on this assumption and does not discuss whether the outputs are democratic or not.

The structure of the paper is as follows: theoretical background, research strategy and methods, case summary, analysis, discussion and conclusion and future directions.

## **Theoretical background**

This section draws lines from existing literature in order to develop an understanding of innovation in the public sector emphasising the collaborative dimension, organisational innovation and the managerialism aspects of innovation.

There is not a single definition of innovation. Among academics there is not consensus on determining what innovation is and there is much research trying to make a definition (Bland et al 2010). Innovation is an elusive and abstract concept that can have many meanings (Jensen et al, 2010: 22). This fact makes it difficult to tackle the concept of innovation. One of the explanations why there is no single definition of innovation is that innovation is often perceived and defined in normative terms instead of descriptive terms. The typical misunderstanding is to conceptualise innovation only in positive terms and referring to concepts like effectiveness or increased public value. The output/outcome of innovation can per se both be positive and negative; like to sides of the same coin. New ideas can be evaluated as being either innovation or mistakes (Van de Ven, 1986). One can have positive expectations about innovation, but the only sure way to know if the results and effects of an innovation process can be called innovative is *ex post* (Unger, 2005:21; Van de Ven 1999). Mulgan and Albury (2003) explain that innovation helps public services to improve performance, increase public value and increase service efficiency.

As mentioned above this conceptualisation of innovation relies on normative statements. To conclude that innovation increases public value and increases efficiency it is necessary to evaluate the outputs and outcomes of innovation once the process is over. It is erroneous to claim that innovation means increasing public value and efficiency *ex ante*. If the consequences of innovation do not lead to a positive increase of public value and efficiency, it will still be possible to say that innovation has taken place, if the new ideas are implemented in a particular context. Furthermore it is possible to determine if innovation has been successful or not when evaluating with reference to the original purpose. As mentioned above innovation does not per se increase the public value, but it must be evaluated according to its purposes and hence most often its ability to fulfil the expectations to create public value. This is a qualitative difference between public innovation and innovation in the private sector (Bland et al, 2010).

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<sup>3</sup> Note that there is a distinction between outputs and outcomes. Whereas the outputs are the decisions and policies that come out of a policy process or innovation process, the outcomes refer to the effect that those policies have on citizens (Hill, 2009: 142).

The descriptive definition of innovation proposed is:

*Innovation is the complex process of creating, implementing and disseminating new ideas through a process of socialization to a particular context with the intentional purpose improving the quality of public policies and services*

This definition is broad enough to apply to different types of innovation. Furthermore the definition contains only descriptive elements avoiding the normative ones in order to enable analysis and evaluation of the innovation process by admitting the duality of being positive and negative.

### **Explanation of the definition**

Innovation is a *complex* process because even setting the goals before the innovation process started they can be changed or accommodated if it is necessary. In this way it is possible to say the innovation process is the process of framing the purposes collectively, identifying the problems, creating trust and implementing and institutionalizing the ideas. Innovation is complex process also due the governance nature of the public sector. It is not only about creating ideas but *implementing* the new ideas in the organization. The particular *context* of innovation refers to the idea of what it is innovation in one context may not be in order context. The point here is if the ideas are perceived or not as innovative by the actors involved in the process. Innovation must be *intentional* in order to mobilize resources, to offer training skills and create public value that is the most important goal of public policies and services. Innovation involves an requires an *qualitative improvement* of the public policies and services because innovation is not about creating policies or services almost in the same way (first order of change) as they were before, but about changing the form of policies and services (second order of change) or transforming the conceptualization of policies and services (third order of change).

Innovation is a new idea which can be a recombination of old ideas that **challenges the existing practices**. It is a unique approach that is **perceived** as a new approach by the individuals involved. From the managerial point of view, understanding the process of innovation is understanding the factors that drive and inhibit the development of innovations (Van de Ven, 1986). The innovation as a process is understood as temporal sequence of events in the development and implementation of the ideas. In this process organisations should shift structures and strategies in order to adopt innovations, because each stage of innovation requires different attitudes, strategies and organisational conditions accordingly (Bland et al, 2010:4). Thinking innovation as a process based on different innovation phases help to diminish the chaos that innovation embraces and to convert innovative ideas into smart solutions.

The proposal for the **innovation phases** is inspired by Eggers and Singh (2009) and extended with more phases. The innovation phases suggested are: 1. *Identification of the wicked problem and reflection of the purpose of innovation.* 2. *Idea generation.* 3. *Idea selection.* 4. *Implementation.* 5. *Diffusion.* 6. *Evaluation of the innovation process.* According to Van de Ven (1986) one of the challenges of innovation is to ensure innovative ideas are implemented in the organisations. This means that until new ideas are implemented it is not possible to call them innovative, but just attempts of innovation.

Innovation does not only refer to the input and output, but also to an interaction and hence a **process of socialisation** (Sundbo and Fuglsang, 2002). In the private sector innovations can often be individual, but the complexity of the public sector makes it almost impossible to innovate without collaboration. This makes collaboration an independent variable of innovation. Several Danish theorists involved in the

research project called CLIPS<sup>4</sup> (Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector) have focus on collaborative innovation in order to emphasise the important role that collaboration most often plays in adventures of public innovation. However, though innovation and collaboration often go hand in hand, and innovation may include a process of collaboration, collaboration does not per se ensure innovation. Yet this paper treats collaboration a necessary determinant to create and implement new ideas in the public sector. Collaboration illustrates the **relational dimension** of the actors in a given context and contains social elements like trust, learning, dialogue and mutual understanding (Innes and Booher, 2003). Collaboration can be defined as *the process of working together within a specific time* (Roberts and Bradley, 2010). Invention can be an individual activity, but innovation is a collective achievement (Van de Ven, 1986).

Innovations depend on the ability of creativity and seeing things differently. In general organisations that have staff with diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking are more likely to be innovative (Mulgan and Albury, 2003: 13). A good argument for collaborating with new partners is to search new ideas and share resources. Knowledge grows when it is shared and the process of exchanging knowledge and information is shaped by the interactions of the actors involved in the process (Bland et al, 2010).

Innovations adapt to the organisational context but can at the same time transform the structure and practices of organisations depending on the degree of novelty (Van de Ven, 1986). Innovation embraces change because change is the fuel for action (Coffman, 2004: 2). Innovation and change are not the same thing, although innovation implies a second or third order of change. Innovation is not about producing almost the same kind of services or solutions (**first order of change**) but about changing the form, content, routines or services (**second order of change**) or transforming the understanding of the problem or policy objective (**third order of change**) (Sørensen and Torfing, 2012: 850).

Organisational innovation can be understood as the implementation of new procedures and ideas. Organisations can resist to innovation or can produce innovation. According to Becker and Whisler (1967: 462ff), organisations innovate when they learn to do something new; something they did not know how to do before. Hence organisational innovation differs from organisational change and adaption, although organisational innovation involves organisational changes. The main difference can be determined by the costs of searching new solutions and in the degree of risks taken. In general, organisational innovation requires more costs of searching solutions and a higher degree of risks than the organisational change and adaption. Organisational change can be confused with organisational innovation when the qualitative change or innovation is detected with reference to the history of the particular organisation rather than with reference to the history of the whole world's organisations. Becker and Whisler distinguish between adoption and innovation, claiming that innovation has a high degree of novelty and is never prior done by other organisation. This means that innovation can be registrable and possibly patentable; almost like in the private sector.

For other authors (Sørensen and Torfing 2011, Ansell and Gash 2012, Hartley 2005), there is no distinction between adaption and innovation in the public sector and any organisation adopting other organisations' ideas and practices are considered innovative. In this paper I analyse without distinction between adaption and innovation following the latter approach. The reason relies partly in the fact, that the public sector innovation is more often incremental and partly adapting ideas of other organisations, and partly in the fact that I make the distinction between an innovation process and the product of an innovation. Once the innovation process is over, then it is possible to evaluate the degree of innovation

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<sup>4</sup> CLIPS web site: <http://www.ruc.dk/institutter/isg/forskning/samarbejde/clips/om-clips/>

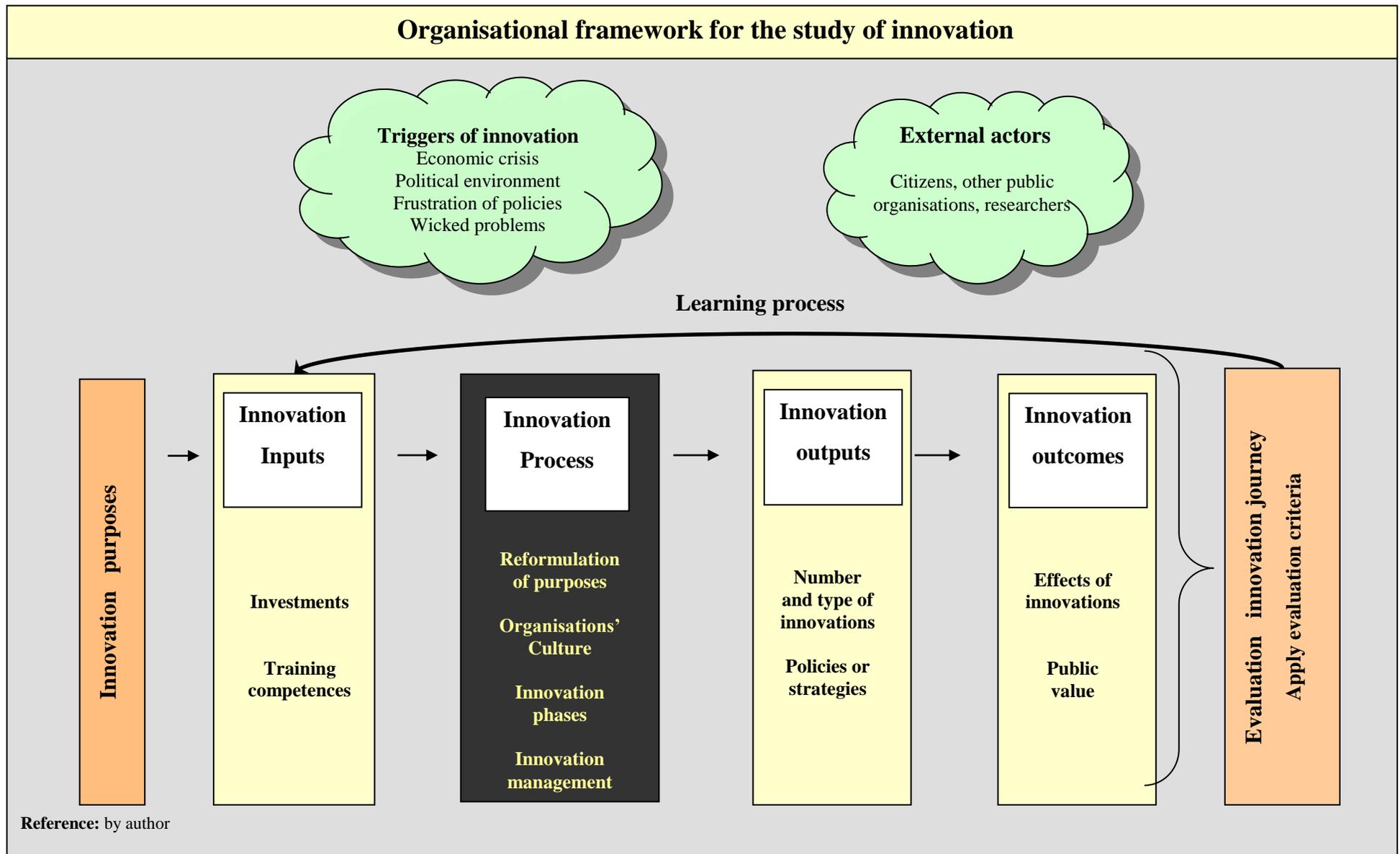
and determine the novelty. I also choose this broader approach because the awareness and nature of organisations differ. Some organisations with the urge to innovate may not have the knowledge of how and what they try to adapt to, and the nature of their (political) organisation most often differ (politically) from other organisations, and the process of adaptation will hence always involve some degree of interpretation and innovation.

Depending on the degree of innovations they can be **incremental** referring to small continuous changes based on the existing policies and services or **radical** referring to development of completely new services or ways of doing things (Mulgan and Albury, 2003: 3; Kristensen and Vøxted, 2009: 17). Normally innovations in the public sector are incremental (Jæger, 2002). The public sector has been criticised for lacking innovations (Albury, 2005), being less innovative, lacking a culture of risk and being conservative bureaucratic when compared with the private sector (Mulgan and Albury, 2003: 5ff). However, the challenge of innovation in the public sector is not the lack of innovations, but rather because they often appear accidentally and not systematically (Eggers & Singh, 2009).

Innovations in the **public and private sector** differ from each other because they are driven by different forces and have different purposes. The public sector innovation is often a more complex system than what is found in the private sector (IDeA knowledge, 2005: 2). Public organisations are not homogenous entities and involve many different persons with different preferences (Hauknes, 2005: 44). Innovation in the private sector is mainly driven by competitive advantages, incentivising alliances between strategic partners and restricting the sharing of good. The purpose of innovation in the public sector is in general to spread the services and governance improvements among the population (Jæger, 2002; Hartley 2005). In the private sector the incentive to innovate is to gain profits, to cut costs and to create new services and products. Innovation in the public sector can have similar motivations, but the value in the public sector is more difficult to measure (Mulgan and Albury, 2003).

**Innovation management** refers to the management of innovation and is a new concept, which has emerged within the innovation practice (Torfing, 2012). Managing innovation is a crucial element in order to achieve desirable outcomes and outputs and to obtain successful innovations (Ansell and Gash, 2012). However innovation management cannot ensure the success of innovation, but it can influence its probabilities and reduce the uncertainty of the innovation process (Van de Ven et al, 1999). Innovation management is an **open concept** that does not necessarily refer to a concrete person or management level. This idea is particularly interesting because it contradicts the “hero innovation” role of managers institutionalized with the NPM. According to the logics of NPM, public managers are the ones responsible of innovation and efficiency (Aagaard, 2011). Within the NPM reforms politicians and public managers with budgeting or responsibility of human resources are normally the ones engaged in driving NPM rationales. Innovation management is a broader concept giving the possibility to drive innovation with a broad spectrum of employees. The role of politicians and strategic managers as the only ones being able to frame discourses, ensure the organization values, efficiency and drive innovation has shifted. This means that politicians and public managers should be open to share power and develop trustful relations.

**Figure 1:** Model for studying innovation in public organisations



**Explanation of the figure:** Innovation can be triggered in the organisation by having economic pressure, by frustration of the existing policies and services, by the political environment and by trying to solve a wicked problem. These triggers can be affected by external or internal pressures. At the same time innovation processes receive specific inputs according to the values and characteristics of the organisation. These inputs can be investments or training competences of the employees to try to make the innovation process successful. When innovation is seen as a process it is often named 'the black box' of innovation and contains several phases. The process is adapted into the organisation's culture and will need management to achieve the expected results. Once the process is over and the ideas are implemented it will be necessary to evaluate the outputs and outcomes of the innovation process in order to learn from the experience and ensure anchorage.

As mentioned above (theoretical background) the problem of the public sector is often not the lack of innovations, but that innovations are episodic rather than systematic. The **first generation of innovation** in the public sector had the intention to introduce innovation in the political and strategic agendas in the organisation. In this period some organisations began to develop one or few innovative projects to learn by practice. However many other organisations were not innovating. Research about innovation in the first generation is characterised by defining innovation with different phases, explaining the differences between innovation in the public and in the private sector, identifying the types of innovation and analysing the drivers and barriers of innovation. Studies of innovation in this phase focus on innovation as a product or services rather than a process or routines.

The **second generation of innovation** (happening now) have the focus to emphasise the social dimensions of innovation. Collaboration is seen as a determinant and a source of innovation. Researchers point to the necessity of managing innovation to insure the innovation purposes and to reduce uncertainty in the innovation process. Innovation management becomes a central focus. Since the economic crisis started in 2008 many organisations continue to incorporate innovation into their agendas and develop innovation strategies. Innovation is not longer seen as a luxury commodity, but as a real necessity to develop and implement policies and services. More and more innovative projects begin to blossom in the organisations and the organisations start educating staff through innovation courses. However many of these courses have a weak innovation focus or are very practical and inspired by the private sector.

**The third generation of innovation** must focus in the creation of an innovative culture. The organisations should not only innovate by developing short projects and educate staff with innovation competences, but to transform the public administrations inspired by New Public Management (NMP) reforms into innovative organisations. In such organisations staff has formal time to innovate and the organisational silos are transformed into collaborative arenas where channels of information share and exchange knowledge in the organisation.

The following table illustrates the main concepts involved in the transition from a New public management organisation (NPM) to an innovative organisation. While innovation in the first one is accidental and preventive, innovation becomes a proactive activity rooted in the innovative organisations culture. However elements from one to another organisation can coexist in praxis.

**Table 1<sup>5</sup>:** Features of New public management organisation and innovative organisation

New public management organisation	Innovative organisation
Seek stability	Seek for innovation
Aversion for failure	Failure as “smart mistakes”
Efficiency through standardisation	Efficiency through innovation
Management through market mechanisms (performance management)	Innovation management and involvement
Avoid change	Embrace change
Innovation as a prevention	Innovation as proactive
Silo thinking	Collaboration across professions and sectors
Control	Trust, empowerment, motivation and learning
Driven by New Public Management	Driven by New Public Governance
Episodic or accidental innovation	Innovation Culture
Innovation as a project or strategy	Innovation culture: innovation as a value rooted in the organisation
Requires individual effort: innovation champions	Requires collective effort and collaboration

## **Research strategy and methods**

The research strategy for this paper is based on an **explorative case study** of innovation in the field of the public schools in Gentofte Municipality. The research in this municipality has the main focus to study and observe innovation in praxis, search for patterns of innovation that can be extrapolated and tested in other organisations and develop a comprehensive model for the management of innovation based on the innovation phases. The research incorporates the central administration and decentred administration (the schools). The investigation will be finished by September 2015 and will include studies in four other municipalities in Denmark. This paper reports the first findings about innovation in Gentofte municipality based on a three and half months field work.

**Process tracing** was used to trace the causal relations between innovation, collaboration and innovation management. A causal mechanism can be defined as a complex process which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts. Process tracing attempt to identify the causal process between an independent variable/s and the outcome of a dependent variable (Beach and Pedersen, 2012). In this investigation innovation is the dependent variable because innovation it is the phenomena to be explained and it is the variable to be predicted. The independent variable is innovation management

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<sup>5</sup> The table is inspired by Morris, 2007.

because it can influence innovation. Collaboration is an intermediate variable because it is affected by innovation management (independent variable) and influences innovation (the dependent variable).

**Interactive research** can be understood as an experimental research strategy (Packard, 2008) based on the active involvement of the field actors in the different research phases (Ansell, 2007). This research strategy understands the practitioners as collaborative partners. It is particularly relevant to apply interactive research to the study of innovation to detect and provoke innovation (Martinez, 2012).

The methods used to collect the data are qualitative and have the purpose to gather knowledge for the case study. The methods applied are: **document analysis** (especially from the municipality data base), **observations and notes** from different formal meetings and qualitative and **semi structured interviews**. Different organisational contexts are investigated in this study of innovation to map out how innovation operates on different levels of the organisation and within a time line having consequences on the collection of the data. This means that the different levels of authority in the organisation are incorporated to see how innovation evolves in specific contexts and how innovation can be improved having a holistic view of the organisation structure. The interviews and observation of meetings are with politicians, strategic leaders, administrators, school leaders, teachers, labour unions of educators and teachers, parents and students. In total I have conducted 40 interviews using the snow ball method.

The education system/organisation is in some contexts considered an organisation that also includes the main actors involved in the creation and realisation of the educational policies. Such actors are: politicians, strategic managers, administrators, institutional leaders, teachers, educators, parents, children and professional labour unions.

## **Case Summary**

The case study is about innovation in the public school system in Gentofte municipality and departs from the new political school strategy (LUG). LUG replaces the older school strategy called SKUB, and builds on previous experiences. The previous school strategy had the focus to find out how children learn best and build the physical frame of the schools according to the learning practices. The experiences from last strategy show that children learn according to their individual potential and most importantly that the teachers need to approach them differently. LUG continues the focus on the children's learning, but with more emphasis on a different way of making learning a responsibility of not only the teachers, but also of the parents, administrators and labour unions. This qualitative organisational change calls for a governance network approach in order to solve a public problem and in order to share resources. Interactive governance requires a high degree of collaboration and management.

The children's school results have always been a priority for politicians, teachers, school leaders and most of all for the parents. Gentofte municipality's children's score is one of the best in Denmark, but the ambition of the politicians is still to improve the existing conditions in the schools. They want to turn the trend of children moving from public to private schools and find new solutions and methods. The municipality receives financial support from the state per child that goes to school. The parents pay a tuition fee for the private schools and the development risks leaving children from families with fewer economic resources in the public school system, whereas the wealthier parents send their children to private schools. This situation is negative for the municipalities if the children of the wealthier parents are easier and cheaper to school. The municipalities end up educating the children who are expensive to educate and hence spend more resources on educating or lower the quality. A challenge for this system

is that the states economic support is not differentiated in accordance with the expenses tied to educating each individual child.

The explained wicked problems in Gentofte municipality are complex to solve with traditional methods and require new innovative ideas and collective effort. Parents are now treated like partners and not merely as customers that pay taxes for getting the educational services. LUG does not only attempt to change the educational services and the routines behind the school system (second type of change), but to transform the policy objectives and the understanding of the problems (3<sup>rd</sup> type of change). The transformation from teaching to learning challenges the existing norms and routines of not only the schools culture, but the logic of appropriateness of the parents, the children, politicians, the central administration and the respective labour unions.

The type of innovation that the educational system is addressing is primarily organisational. Politicians have set concrete purposes for the realisation of LUG, but let the ways of achieving it open to diversification and up to the school leaders. Gentofte municipality has 13 public schools with the duty to follow the political vision and the central administration's guidelines. But each school remains having a particular identity. The schools identities are built up over time and teachers and parents are proud to be part of them. The ways to achieve the political vision is to be found through a formulation of the problems and possible solutions together with a broad representation of actors. In this way the outputs and outcomes acquired will be more legitimate and the realisation process will be smoother. The previous school strategy (SKUB) was trying to develop the idea of unique schools. However the new strategy (LUG) now takes up the challenging task to establish a common reflection room for all the schools which remains open to all the differences. The hypothesis is that the schools should be more open to other schools and not compete, but to see each other as collaborative partners where knowledge, ideas and resources should be spread faster and give rise to new constructions.

In the new strategy, learning is understood broader than through the concept of teaching. While teaching traditionally takes place in the classrooms and in the schools, learning does not have limitations on location. This means that learning can take place inside or outside of the school. At the same time, when using learning to refer to the education of the children and not teaching, it can be interpreted as a wink to bring different professional groups closer together; such as teachers and educators to open new ways of conceptualising the schools and the education. The new strategy sets collaborative innovation as a core element in the realisation of its purposes. The success of LUG relies on the interaction and collaboration of the different actors in order to frame the achievement of common goals. Children are set in the centre and the school system is organisationally becoming more flexible to allow innovative ideas to come up and to try new constructions. The most interesting in investigating LUG is not to evaluate how innovative the new school strategy is, but to trace how innovation is understood in different contexts, which innovative mechanisms are developed and how innovation is managed in order to overcome the challenges that Gentofte Municipality is facing in the area of education.

Gentofte municipality is organised in different public administrations lead by directors that annually create a common strategy to perform the political goals. In the last direction strategy, 'innovation' and 'cross collaboration' are named as main tracks that the organisation should work with. Together with the Human Resources department the municipal direction organised a course in management with innovation as part of the program from 2009 to 2011. The course was mandatory to all managers from the municipality and the institutional leaders a cross the administrators. In this way the municipality initiated innovation training of the managing staff in order to create a common framework for innovation. One of the requirements of the course was that the participants should work together with a partner (preferable from other administration) and should develop an innovative project. For some of the

interviewed persons that attended the course this came as an excellent idea to get innovation knowledge and develop innovative ideas and projects in the school. However other interview persons mentions that the course was too empirical and they did not learn that much, because they were not interested in interacting with professionals out of BUF. Another group of respondents did not attend to the course and did not acquire the innovation competences. The course was divided in two sessions and in the one with most emphasis on collaborative innovation resulted in more innovative and successful projects than those projects with less emphasis on collaborative innovation. This illustrates the importance of the social dimension of innovation and working together. The innovation process is too complex and uncertain to do alone.

Among the different public administrations, BUF, the Children and Youth administration has a tradition of incorporating and stabilising change in the organisation. An illustrative example is that BUF was the one most engaged in organising the ‘innovation agent’s course’ for the entire municipality staff. Innovation was the main focus and most staff attending the course came from BUF and the schooling institutions. The requirement to attend the course was to develop an innovative project for the organisation. For people with out experience about innovation the course was interesting to learn more about innovation and challenged them to develop and implement creative ideas in the form of projects. However for those with experience with innovation the course was too practical and did not provide them with new innovation skills.

The BUF strategic managers have set innovation as a cutting edge for the administration embracing the risks and challenges that innovation arises. At the same time among the administration are competent entrepreneurs that have experience with innovation and are engaged on mobilising the resources necessary to innovate. The roles of these entrepreneurs are relevant because they are in between the strategic managers and the institutional leaders catalysing innovation and making things happen in a innovative way.

## **Analysis**

In this section the main theoretical ideas about innovation in the public sector are applied to the case study. The analytical framework for this paper is based on the model for studying innovation in public organisations proposed in the theory section. The innovation definition will be unpacked and problematized focusing on collaboration and innovation management. At the same time innovation will be explained according to the views and discourses of politicians, strategic leaders, administrators, teachers, institutional leaders, parents and labour unions.

### **Organisational framework for innovation in the case study**

In the educational organisation in Gentofte municipality innovation was introduced for the first time by the politicians - they were not satisfied with the existing policies. Innovation came to the political agenda of the Children and Youth Committee, once they realised that the municipality was not doing enough for the children. Innovation came as consequence of the evaluation culture in order to improve the existing policies and services. At the same time, the argument is that the economic recession has made it necessary to find new ways of conceptualising the educational system in the municipality. The factors mentioned above are considered examples of innovation triggers from inside the organisation. External actors can also cause pressure to the organisation to innovate and these are among others parents that want to improve the education for their children. Another external actor is me as a researcher in the organisation with focus on innovation.

Strategic leaders have been loyal to politicians and have taken the “innovation ball” passing it through the different organisational level. A strategy of the top managers is to anchor innovation in the

organisation by framing discourses and investing in innovation training programs. Managers, institutional leaders, teachers and educators have been attending to courses about innovation and acquired innovation competences and skills. Without doubt politicians and top managers have invested resources for bringing inputs to the innovation process. According to the politicians and strategic managers the final responsible of the realisation of the LUG strategy are the school leaders. School leaders have good experience in handling political and management guidelines and adapting to new circumstances. However they do not have more experience with innovation than the one acquired in the courses of the municipality. And not all school leaders have had the possibility to attend to the courses. Another nuance is that many school leaders in Denmark are educated teachers and not managers, and that many have relatively long experience as managers. It is not until 10 years ago, that the concept of school leaders became really important in Denmark because of waves of decentralising power to institutions. With this background it is comprehensible that the school leaders are uncertain about innovation and that many innovative attempts might possibly fail if the innovation process is not properly managed.

Some schools have teachers and educators that have been trained as innovator agents to develop innovative projects. Some projects have been successful and approved by the institutional leaders for implementation. Other projects have not been approved by the institutional leaders among others because of staff resistance and frustration to change. The roles of these innovator agents in the schools and in relation to the implementation of the new school vision are not yet clear. Many innovation agents see their contribution to innovation in the school via a project, but once the innovative project is done they expect to come back to their routines. The innovation agents have acquired social capital that could be used more strategically by the institutional leaders or strategic managers. They have acquired innovation skills and despite they have little innovation experience, they can spread the innovation message and practices to many schools. In connection with the first practices of the innovation in the organisation it is particularly relevant to create and spread the good story of innovation in order to motivate others to innovate. This does not mean that less successful stories should not be told. But in the situation that there is an unsuccessful story it should be perceived as a learning process and analysing the reasons why innovation did not happen or why innovation was not a success.

Top down analysis in public organisations set up a clear distinction of the tasks in the organisation. According to the top down approach politicians are responsible for the creation of policies and services while the administration prepares the formulation of politics and implements them in different levels (Bogason and Sørensen, 1998). With less organisational and governance complexity it would be more clear and easy to distinguish who does what. However in complex interactive processes including governance networks, the distinction of the tasks is also blurred. Governance networks play a central role in delivering public governance through the interaction of autonomous, but interdependent public and private stakeholders at different levels (Aarsæther et al, 2009; Torfing, 2005 and Fotel and Hansen, 2009). With networks, the rules of the game are different as the actors are interdependent, but recognise each other and they need each other to accomplish the common purposes. More than talking about hierarchy in networks, it is more convenient to talk about central and decentral actors. Several institutional leaders and professional labour unions agree that Gentofte municipality has a particular tradition for collaboration and bringing the parts together. This can be explained by the signals that politicians and strategic managers are emitting in order to find the best solutions for the children. The educational area is an area of many different professional people involved with the common purpose of giving the best possible education to the children. Teachers, educators, parents, institutional leaders and labour unions cooperate and in some occasions collaborate. The mode of collaboration in the school system should be more tuned in on transforming old roles and experiences into a more innovative culture. Politicians and strategic managers should not only give signals to develop a collaborative

culture, but get more involved in the processes. This means to have hands on contributing to the creation of a more collaborative culture.

The school system in Denmark (as in many other western countries) is quite representative. The different interests are most often represented in different boards or through interactive platforms. Some platforms did not exist before the new strategy. But with LUG, one school in the municipality has created four informal networks for the parents in order to mobilise resources and closer collaboration between the school and the parents. The idea of these networks is to provide a resource catalogue for the school, so it is possible to see and use the competences of the parents. Some parents are able to contribute to presentations about globalisation others find sponsors to visit; for example Microsoft, etc. This initiative came from the parents at the school board after participating in an innovation camp. The camp was organised by the school leaders and for two days children in the secondary school challenged their knowledge by finding new innovative ideas for private companies invited to the camp. In general the camp was experienced as very positive by children, parents and teachers. They all collaborated to make the event a success. After the innovation camp, the motivation of the parents increased to the extent that they mobilised to create the four new networks. The school leaders of the school are positively surprised that the experiences from the camp could brake down the professional barriers between parents and teachers without complaints. Different persons involved in the innovation experience of this school mention how much it means for children's motivation, if parents and teachers interact more. The trust relation between the parts is strengthened and critics are taken as positive reflections and suggestions.

Governance networks have the merit of involving different actors in different stages of the public policy process qualifying and legitimising the outcomes of the process, as they provide frameworks for dialogue. Furthermore, governance networks foster collaboration by bringing together different stakeholders, making public governance more effective, breaking policy deadlocks and tackling complex problems (Torfing, 2005; Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2000). Governance networks can strengthen local democracy by bringing citizens and politicians closer (Sørensen, 2010) and contribute to the creation of innovation in the public sector (Sørensen and Torfing, 2012). Finally governance networks are considered the third form of governance after hierarchies and markets (O'Toole and Meier, 1999). The education organisation in Gentofte municipality has experience with governance networks, especially on the management levels. And as different strategic managers and school leaders point out, there is a willingness to operate more through governance networks in the school area. When LUG is categorised innovative and distinguishes itself from previous strategies, one reason is because it includes more actors as responsible for the learning; children, teachers and educators, parents and other relevant actors. As mentioned in the case summary the new school strategy calls for collaboration and collective action. This should during the implementation develop the organisation into a more dynamic and fluid structure and being less hierarchical. The organisation should hence move towards a governance approach transversally and include different levels together, and not just operating with a separated network approaches for each level.

The potential for innovation in the education area in Gentofte municipality is high. In part this is because politicians and strategic managers are ready to take the risks of trying different paths and are conscious that small failures will come. On the other hand staff has the courage to develop new ideas and work to implement them. Politicians and strategic managers want to innovate and mobilise the resources in the organisation to make it happen. But with the purpose of reducing organisational complexity, the leaders give the final responsibility to the institutional leaders. This is NPM as it increases the distance between political leaders and the service providing administration. On the other hand innovation is thought to bringing politicians closer to the line of operation and the real necessities of the organisation and the

citizens. According to innovation theory the strategic managers do not need to create innovation by themselves, but to manage innovation. Strategic managers often try to delegate responsibilities to the administration and to the institutional leaders too early without being involved in the process long enough to drive innovation. The drive of innovation can not be delegated, but must be managed. It hence requires a higher degree of involvement than traditional organisational processes. Politicians and strategic managers should get more involved in the innovation processes and share the power with actors in order to increase the possibilities to achieve successful innovation. In this frame the strategic managers are seen as the champions of innovation.

If we look at the model of public innovation it is possible to identify the triggers of innovation, the external actors, the purposes/expectations of innovation and the expected outputs and outcomes that the organisation wants to achieve. With LUG it is hence necessary to wait until 2015, when the realisation of the strategy is done, in order to evaluate the innovation journey. Next step in the strategy process is to find out what is happening and is to happen in the black box? How can uncertainty in this innovation process be reduced?

The process of innovation is different from organisation to organisation, because it is influenced by organisational values. Some organisations quickly adapt to new requirements of an innovation agenda and others require longer processes because they need to mobilise more resources and people, motivate staff, enhance staff's innovative skills, raise political support, determine risk aversion strategically etc. However, when conceptualising innovation as a process with different phases, it helps to reflect on innovation and to reduce chaos and uncertainty. At the same time phases are most often cyclical and hence needs emphasis on dynamics of the process to help guide proper management. In praxis the phases can appear simultaneous and altered, but with experience it will be more natural to work with them.

The innovation phases can be of extreme value for the persons engaged in the management of the innovation, because they integrate *elements of exploration* such as creativity, and *exploitative elements* such as strategic thinking and planning (March, 1991). The phases before the implementation need to be open, explorative and creative whereas the phases during implementation require more strategic thinking. It is also relevant that when setting the purposes of innovation before the process starts, it can help to create guidelines and mobilise resources. However, the complexity of the problems will often require a reformulation of purposes and problems to enable tackling them under the innovation process. The innovation process needs to be understood as a 'chaos with guidelines' meaning that innovation can not be planned from beginning to end. Innovation requires openness, flexibility to change direction if necessary, high degree of learning and negotiation. Innovation is not about creating a perfect contract and afterwards following the contract, but finding and defining the common interests. Learning in collaborative innovation processes means learning from the other actors through active listening and open dialogue. Innovation is different from traditional project management in how the process is planned and the results achieved. In project management the purposes are clearly defined and planned before the process starts and normally signed in a contract. The process of project management is to follow the milestones identified from A to B and C.

Another way in which innovation complexity and ambivalence can be reduced is by strengthening innovation management in all the innovation phases. The innovation management is an open concept that does not refer to a particular level of management. The requirement is that innovation managers have innovation competences and skills, and a high level of motivation. This means that all levels of politicians, strategic managers, school leaders, educators, teachers, etc. can be innovation managers. Innovation management operates best in a network platform where power is less hierarchic and the

actors involved in the process have framed the purposes and goals together. This legitimises the innovation manager's decisions and gives a broader understanding of the interactions of the actors. The roles of an innovation manager are pluralistic and changes over the process. The main roles of innovation management detected in the education organisation in Gentofte municipality are: 1. *The initiator*, the one who initiates the process, creates room for innovation and momentum. 2. *The facilitator* refers to the person that mobilises resources, helps to overcome conflicts and facilitates collaboration. 3. *The critic* is the one that understands that other ideas are needed in order to accomplish the process. 4. *The catalyst* is the one that brings actors work together, brings new motivation and ideas to the process (The roles have been inspired by Ansell and Gash, 2012, Sørensen and Torfing, 2012, Van de Ven et al, 1999).

Innovation in the public sector is most often far more complex than innovation in the private sector. The achievement of public value and public goods require far more persons involved in the process. The interactions and collaborations are more necessary in the public sector because more coordination is needed. This means that innovation in the public sector most often require a high level of collaboration. Silo thinking and competition need to be transformed into collaborative platforms and communicative channels on all levels of an organisation in order to develop a durable innovative culture.

Innovation is not an easy task and requires investments, learning and training. However the alternatives for public organisations if they do not innovate, will frustrate and stress the staff with the risk of reducing their work satisfaction, productivity and the ability to fulfil the citizen's necessities.

### **Understandings and practices of innovation in the case study**

Innovation is difficult to define because it has become a container of wishes and expectations with the purpose to improve the quality of the policies and services in the public sector. If defining innovation is a tricky task, making innovation happen it is uncontrollable and chaotic. Many theorists and practitioners define innovation normatively and not descriptively, but innovation can both be positive and negative. The only way of finding out if the outputs and outcomes of an innovation process can be called innovation is by doing an ex post evaluation. The following section presents the understandings of innovation among politicians, strategic managers, institutional leaders and teachers in the educational area in Gentofte municipality.

Many administrators and school leaders understand innovation normatively and not descriptively. This means that innovation is understood as an increase of public value. This can be explained by the fact that innovation is defined in the municipality as follows: "...develop and transform new and original ideas in praxis in such a way, that they create added value for the citizens an users". However, is seems necessary to reflect on if the results of innovation can be negative too.

In order to illustrate the complexity of the innovation process and the importance of innovation management, a school leader experience is explained and analysed in the following. One school wanted to develop an innovative project to strengthen the relation between teachers and pupils in order to increase the possibilities for the teachers to empower and motivated the children. The project wanted to give more hours for the called "children plans" (The pupils elaborate a plan in collaboration with the teachers, where the challenges that each pupil has are specified in order to help overcome them. The teacher and pupil meet 2-3 times in order to discuss the plans). Instead of meeting 2-3 times per year, the school leaders wanted to reserve 15 min. every 15 days for the teachers to meet with the children. The first challenge was to find the resources for more hours for the teachers. The solution became to move hours reserved for teachers' collaboration and move them to the project with the children's plans. The second challenge appeared when the teachers and school leaders found out that it was not possible to

move hours from one purpose to another, because of a pact between the labour union and the administration in Gentofte. The success of this project hence does not only rely on the schools, but on the flexibility and collaboration between the administration and the teachers' labour union. The example illustrates how complex it can be to initiate new innovation projects and finding creative solutions to problems. The example also shows how important it was to manage the process and how innovation transcend institutional setups.

According to the president of the Children and Youth political committee in Gentofte, there was a broad consensus among politicians when introducing innovation into the area of education. The wish was to find new ways of learning for the children and to motivate them and make them responsible for their own education. Though politicians have particular expectations to the outputs and outcomes of innovation, they seem to be open about how the process is done, though recognising that the process of innovation can be just as important as the achievement of the results. The politicians are aware of the different innovative projects that the schools have initiated or are planning, but want to go even further than that. They expressively want to create an innovative culture and not just to create an organisation operating with innovative projects.

The strategic managers in Gentofte see innovation as a challenge to the schools on how to find new solutions and hence expect both frustrations and mistakes. The strategic managers assume that school teachers will drive change and lead innovation. They expect the administrations role to be offering help with allocating resources, coaching and strengthening reflection and dialogue. However the role of the strategic managers in innovation processes could be more active. Innovation offers the possibility for the managers to develop new managerial skills in leading collaborative processes. The strategic managers agree that taking calculated risks is important in order to enhance innovation; and that if they participate more in the network organisation, it can move the organisation away from NPM and spur further innovation. Among the strategic managers there is a debate on whether getting involved in innovation processes leaves room for innovation or not. However, strategic managers can drive innovation by being more involved in the process of innovation and signalling support to the projects. Furthermore, being part of the process can ensure results. Yet more important, participation can spur innovation and risk aversion among school leaders and staff by ensuring backing in cases of failure. To manage innovation is hence also about creating safety nets for the employees on the right levels or in the right networks, so they increase their risk aversion.

The school leaders see innovation as the process of creating and implementing new ideas that will increase public value. In the schools general, innovation is considered organisational and treats to bring more flexibility into the structure and create new constructions. Many of them have no practical experience with innovation and many are afraid of failing. At the same time innovation is being implemented in the schools by developing *innovative projects* and by *creating room for dialogue* with other school leaders from other schools. The innovation agenda has created the necessity among the school leaders to get closer to other school leaders in order to share experiences. In the municipality there is one school that has incorporated innovation as a core value in the school strategy and among others organised an innovation camp. The success of the innovation camp was so great that another school developed a similar activity for the older pupils. Other schools are beginning to see and become attracted by how these innovation activities can increase the motivation of children, teachers and parents. The innovative projects of the schools are all developed and initiated by the school leaders, teachers or educators. In all cases they require high level of innovation management. The development of the innovative projects and rooms for dialogue is moving many schools towards a more collaborative culture.

### **Analysis of the innovation culture in the case study**

It is possible to observe how the education organisation in Gentofte has clear intentions to progressively move away from traditional public administration and develop into a more innovative organisation. By analysing and comparing the features of a public administration organisation and the features of an innovative organisation, it is possible to trace some developments in the case study. The organisation is in transition from one type of organisation to another type and is considered a hybrid organisation.

As explained above politicians and strategic managers in the education organisation have set innovation on the organisation's agenda. There is an assumption that the future of the organisation is to develop a culture to embrace innovation and to institutionalise innovation as permanent practices (innovation culture). The search for innovation and the acceptance of the failures that might arise within the practice of innovation are characteristics of the innovative organisation. At the same time it is accepted, that it is more difficult and challenging for the organisation to drive efficiency with innovation rather than with standardisation. And that the errors will occur due to the organisation's relative short experience with innovation and the sedimented culture of the NPM. NPM is criticized for undermining public service motivation, learning and trust, and for promoting competition and silo thinking (Aagaard, 2011).

NPM reforms are hierarchical because those with leadership responsibilities are normally considered the drivers of the reforms. At the same time NPM promotes specialized tasks (Christensen and Lægheid, 1999: 180 and 181) and undermines collaboration across sectors. The administrative culture need to develop the ability of recognizing all employees as potential drivers of innovation. One of the greatest challenges for public organizations is to maintain both organizational innovation and efficiency (Aagaard, 2011). In traditional politics, politicians set purposes such as innovation and strategic managers ensure that these purposes and expectations are being translated to concrete work in the schools. In Gentofte, the strategic management wants to show results as soon as possible to increase politicians' trust in the administration. However most innovation takes time, and when innovation is compulsory for the schools, they may wish for more time to internalize innovation. The schools may need to reflect on the 'why, what and how' of innovation to incubate great new ideas. Many attempts to overcome the complexity of innovation and achieve 'quick fix' efficiency will result in standardized processes in all schools. However, by standardizing the innovation process there is a risk that the actors will not identify themselves with the situation and will not feel empowered and motivated.

Another innovative feature in Gentofte is that the education organization has embraced the change. Though innovation came to the organization to prevent future challenges there is now a common understanding of going further and developing a proactive innovation culture. The organization has a mix of governance mechanisms, where control checks things and a high level of trust spreads motivation among the actors. This approach has another set of values such as innovation, collaboration, learning and trust (Christensen and Lægheid, 2007).

## **Discussion**

The practice of innovation in the education organisation raises several organisational and individual challenges. In the following section the main ideas will be discussed.

The organisation is rooted in the practices of the NPM and traditional public administration, where hierarchy is clear and efficiency of the organisation is achieved through setting the goals, planning and specialisation of the tasks. However, innovation promotes other values such as collaboration, trust and motivation and is better described as a NPG reform. Innovation and efficiency are not antonymous, but when efficiency is achieved with innovative practices, it is different from the way that efficiency is achieved in traditional public administrative organisations. Innovation requires openness and flexibility in order to involve different professional actors and to construct trust. Whereas NPM claims a strong focus on output, an innovative approach places importance on both inputs and outputs, and hence recognizes that the processes determine the outputs and outcomes. In other words, the new school strategy will not be possible to implement successfully, if the actors involved in the school system do not collaborate and are motivated. Politicians, strategic managers, school teachers and parents see working in governance networks as a way in which the organisation could go to break with policy deadlocks and silo thinking. To fulfil this goal, the organisation must develop more dynamic and collaborative structures where knowledge is created and shared.

The individual challenges of innovation in the organisation refer mainly to the changing roles of politicians, strategic managers, school leaders, teachers, parents and professionals' labour unions. Politicians have the possibility to get closer to the operational level and framing their discourses more directly to boost innovation. The politicians are in contact with the school system, but more involvement could empower people to innovate. The NPM builds on the idea that responsibility should be in accordance with hierarchy. But with innovation non managers can also lead the process. The roles of strategic managers have traditionally been to delegate tasks, ensure the efficiency of the organisation and be the champions of innovation. With innovation and the implementation of LUG, managers have the possibility to develop new roles and get more involved throughout the innovation process instead of delegating many tasks in early phases. Another challenge for the strategic managers is to manage innovation; they do not seem to have much experience with being involved in innovation processes. Strategic management have stressed the focus on the outputs and giving little attention to the input side and the process. The successful realisation of LUG in part relies on the process and the new roles require time for reflection and action.

The new school vision challenges the school leaders on their openness to share information. Schools develop innovative ideas through collaboration and when knowledge is shared. School leaders create room for innovation by developing collaborative platforms where dialogue is ensured, trust can be developed and knowledge shared. With LUG, learning is not only a responsibility of the teachers and school leaders, but also of the parents. The school leaders would need to involve the parents more actively and in other than only formal ways. The experiences of the two schools with the innovation camps show how informal settings can bring different parts together.

The vision challenges teachers and educators by moving them from their comfort zone. Learning is no longer only depending on the teaching. The learning can take place in other contexts and non-teachers can be responsible for the children's learning. The main challenges for some teachers are to see educators and parents as partners rather than competitors, and to be open to create new learning possibilities. The schools are traditionally characterised by professional barriers between teachers and

educators, but an effort from these professional groups and the labour unions can help develop new learning constructions that are traditionally restricted by pacts.

Some of the parents are more traditional than others when it comes to the education of their children. All of us have once been a child and we have expectations and ideas on which school and which educational values we would like to give to our children. In the realisation of LUG, the involvement of the parents is needed in the learning process of the children. The challenge for the parents will be to move from a role as a customer or client to being a co-producer of the children's learning. They have knowledge, information and experiences that could be used more strategically in the schools. Increasing and reinforcing the relations between parents and school leaders, educators and teachers will contribute to increasing the children's motivation to learn.

Furthermore, a challenge for both the organisation and for the individuals is to think innovation beyond the innovative projects. The innovative projects that have blossomed and are blossoming in the school area can be described as a first generation of innovation, where staff is trained to acquire innovation skills and where it is possible to learn through the projects and develop new skills. Though the final purpose of innovation is not about creating projects and returning to the old routines, but progressively developing an innovative culture where innovation is institutionalised in the organisation and where the logic of appropriateness of the individuals incorporates innovation as a routine. Then instead of talking about innovation it will be possible to talk about an innovation culture where innovation is not merely preventive but proactive.

## ***Conclusion and future directions***

In this section the problem formulation is answered and the main conclusions are summarised.

Innovation processes are complex and uncertain. In order to reduce the chaos of the process it is recommendable to operate with innovation phases. The phases incorporate creative and explorative elements in the first phases and more rational elements throughout the implementation phases. Innovation is a social act and the success of the process can depend on how the interactions and relations are managed. At the same time innovation requires a high level of collaboration between the parts in order to exchange knowledge and frame the purposes collectively.

The new school strategy LUG has the innovative purpose to find new possible ways of learning adapted to the individual children. Teachers and educators are not the only ones responsible for the education of the children, but also parents and other relevant actors are involved in the children's education. In order to achieve the goals, it is necessary with common action, because the goals are not easy (possible) to achieve individually. The strategy calls for new and more flexible organisational structures where knowledge and innovative experiences are shared. A solution could be systematic reinforcement of governance networks across the organisation and mixing actors from different levels. The relations between the actors need to transform and the actors must realise their interdependencies. Teachers, educators and parents are now seen as partners rather than eternal adversaries. Politicians and strategic managers will need to involve more in the innovation processes in order to reduce the distance between politics and service delivery. Politicians need to get close to the operational level and the citizens to understand the nature of the necessities and difficulties of the organisation. Strategic managers will also need to get closer to the institutional leaders and get more involved in the longer innovation processes before delegating. This means that they do not have to create innovation, but to create room for

innovation and facilitate it actively. The isolation of strategic managers is understood as a bureaucratic barrier.

In other words, innovation challenges the existing organisational structure of the Children and Youth administration and schools in Gentofte municipality and the logic of appropriateness of the staff with old organisational practices. The new school strategy's switch from teaching to learning requires a change of roles for the actors involved in the education of the children. Motivation and commitment is needed along with recognising collaborative partners rather than competitors. The children have always been in the centre and driving the development and deliverance of the education policy. But the new element is that the actors involved in the process need to collaborate more to give the children better learning.

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