

Limitations and possibilities of school management in Belgium

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A. Problem

- Tradition: law + national decision making bodies are leading school management

- Last years : decentralization

- How did headmasters use these new possibilities?

Hypothesis: All headmasters got the same opportunities, but act differently (contingency hypothesis)

B. Method

- **Study of law and regulations**

 - + **interviewing of senior civil servants and national trade union representatives**

- **12 case studies: 4 state schools + 8 catholic schools**

- **In-depth interviewing (80 persons)**

 - headmaster (4x)**

 - deputy head**

 - co-ordinator**

 - accountant**

 - members of statutory board**

 - trade union members**

 - members of labour council**

 - members of school council**

 - members of council of parents**

- **reports of meetings and bills**

C. Issues

- 1) Use of the available hours/teachers**

- 2) Recruitment and appointment of teachers**

- 3) Rationalization and programming**

- 4) Financial organization of state schools**

1) Use of the available hours/teachers

a) Problem

- schools had to save hours
- decreasing number of pupils
- obligation of schools: national programmed curriculum
- schools were free to spend hours for grade co-ordination, class director, class council, differentiation of pupils, special lessons, remedial teaching, reorientation of teachers, additional training of teachers
- decreasing number of pupils + same compulsory curriculum → some fields of education had to disappear

Solution

- most of the schools supply the same fields of education
- put classes of the same grade together/ put classes of different grades together
- state schools could not do this
- schools want to keep employment of teachers
- State schools: provisional teachers were dismissed + tenured teachers put at
the disposal of the minister
- Private schools : 3 schools had to dismiss teachers
5 schools could appoint teachers
- larger number of pupils in classes
- remedial teaching was left
- private schools kept coordination

Private schools opposed to national policy of NSKO:

- 1) guidance of pupils**
- 2) keep small classes**
- 3) offer as many fields as possible**
- 4) keep employment of teachers**

Answer of private schools:

- 1) as many fields as possible**
- 2) keep employment**

b) Decision making process

Prescription: personnel should advice to director

Did not happen

Reasons

5 patterns:

- 1) 3 schools: HM decides + teachers are very superficially consulted**
- 2) 2 schools: HM decides after consultation of advisory boards**
- 3) 2 schools: HM decides after consultation of a few collaborators**
- 4) 3 schools: HM and collaborators decide after consultation of advisory board**
- 5) 2 schools: HM + teachers decide**

Specific realization

Factors influencing decision making

2) Recruitment and appointment of teachers

State schools

- appointment by minister**
- politicisation of appointments**
- dismissal of teachers is very difficult**
- no local school management**

Private schools

- right of statutory board**
- surplus of teachers at disposal of minister → redeployment in other schools**

Patterns of recruitment and appointment:

- 1) 1 school: SB + HM**
- 2) 3 schools: SB gives directions; HM decides; formal appointment by SB not always following advice of HM**
- 3) 3 schools: HM recruits + SB always accepts his proposal**
- 4) 1 school: Personnel and trade unions participate in decision by HM; SB always agrees**

Principles of selection:

1) prescriptions of minister

2) specific principles of schools

- 4 schools: motivation, ability and christian inspiration of teachers

- 4 schools: same criteria + acceptance of special educational concept of school

Dismissal of teachers: rarely

Redeployment of tenured teachers:

- Redeployment committee in 21 zones:

- 2 directors (SB)

- 2 members of trade unions

- HM loose power

- 4 policy patterns:

1) 3 schools: cannot recruit new teachers

2) 4 schools: to protect own personnel teachers have to teach more

**3) 1 school: HM takes teachers of list before meeting of Redeployment
Committee**

4) 1 school: HM takes temporary teachers on probation

3) Rationalization and programming

-Law prescribes + freedom of schools

-Rationalization: abolition of classes and fields of education with very few pupils (→ abolition of schools)

-Programming: expansion of fields of education

- Change of rules in 1986: schools could keep fields of education, even below some standards

- Formal procedure

State Schools

Private schools

- Actual procedure

Private	State
Discussion in school	Discussion in school
RCC (advice) DPCC	Administrative Board (decisive decisions)
Minister	Minister

-Main figure

- private : HM + co-ordinator + consult of SB + teachers

- state : HM

Policy in 1980-1987

- 2 schools had to rationalize

- 6 schools programmed

	Rationalization	Non-rationalization
Programming	policy towards the optimum	policy of expansion C D E H J K
Non-programming	policy of abolition A B	policy of protection F G I L

- **Coordination of policy between schools failed in spite of procedure**
- **From the standpoint of group of schools**
 - **superfluous programming**
- **wrong programming**
- **gap: forgotten options, classes, fields of study**

- **Influencing factors of policy:**
 - 1) **law + NSKO**
 - 2) **fields of study**
 - Academic Schools → policy of protection**
 - Technical schools → policy of expansion**
 - 3) **State schools → policy of abolition**
 - Private schools → policy of expansion**
 - 4) **Birth rate; geographical position**

Conclusion

- **School management is possible/contingent**
- **HM is key figure**
- **Decentralization is more the result of saving necessity than of policy vision**
- **Schools are more interested in own survival**
- **Schools became more powerful**
- **Different position of HM in state/private school**
- **The more complex the school environment the more autonomous the HM**
- **Decentralization → HM are not certain about the policy to follow**
- **Big schools give HM more certainty**
- **Austerity policy of government and declining birth rate have diminished autonomy of HM**

This study is published as:

DEVOS, G., P. VANDENBERGHE & J.C. VERHOEVEN (1989)
Schoolbeleid; mogelijkheden en grenzen; een empirisch onderzoek.
Leuven/Amersfoort: Acco