

# Policy Purposes and Principals' Perceptions of New Evaluation Procedures

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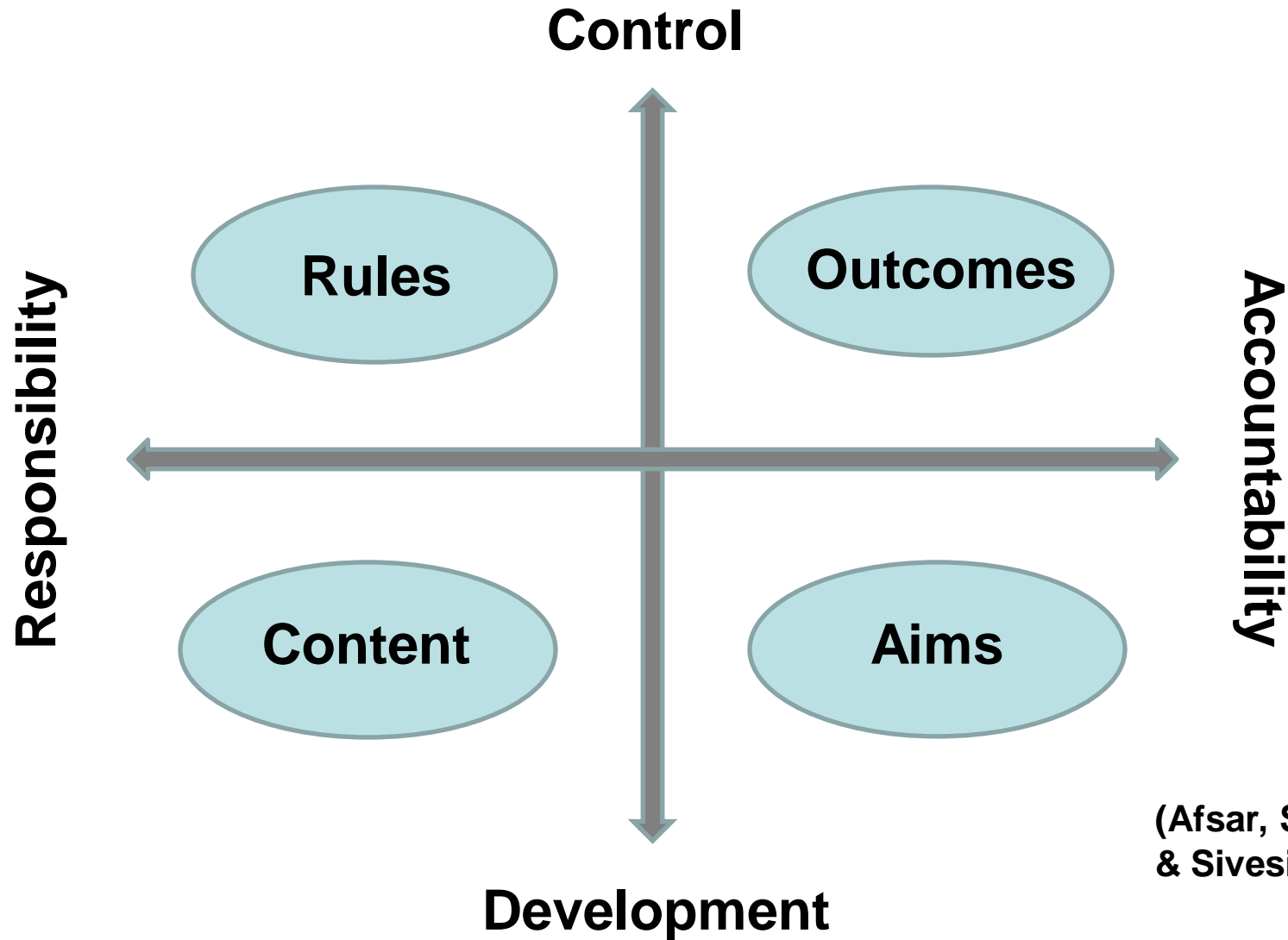


# Background

- A national evaluation system was introduced in 2005
- OECD review in 1988
- A long period of "muddling through"
- PISA shock



# Changes / tensions in the Norw. education policy



(Afsar, Skedsmo  
& Sivesind, 2006)



# Focus and methodological approach



## Focus on policy tools:

- a technical as well as a social device which has been designed to influence the processes between the governing and the governed
- concretised in terms of applying certain techniques or methods, and tools to regulate
- the use of evaluation implies some kind of social control which will impact on ways of perceiving, understanding and responding to different expectations
- modes of regulation

(Lascoumes & Le Gales, 2007)



## Discourse

- the meaning of policy purposes, and the justifications for the choices made, are constituted through discourse (Ball, 1994)
- discourses can therefore be seen as representing practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1977)
- a danger that the tools are constituted through discourses in ways that may conceal or undermine their “real” modes of regulation



# Focus and methodological approach continues

## ➡ Principals' perceptions of evaluation policy

- A survey among Norwegian principals from 2005
- 540 principals from primary and lower secondary schools responded
- Response rate: 64%
- Structural Equation Modeling



# Policy purposes...

“...to contribute to quality development on all levels of the compulsory education with respect to adapted teaching, and improved learning outcomes for the individual student”

(The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2005b. My translation).



# Policy purposes...

“The national system of evaluation represents a system change which indicates that governing and control is replaced by trust and confidence that the teacher, the principal and the municipality, defined as the “school owner”, will know how to initiate good learning processes within the frames of the national curriculum.”

(White Paper No 30, *Culture for Learning* 2003-2004, My translation)



<b>Tools</b>	<b>Purposes</b>
<b>Screening tests</b>	To reveal the needs for support and adapted teaching related to the individual student as well as the schools
<b>Local tests (summative and formative assessment)</b>	To reveal the level of student achievement with respect to central subject areas as a basis to help the individual student to improve
<b>Information material</b>	Material provided by the National Directorate for Education and Training to help teachers, school leaders and municipalities using the system for learning and development purposes
<b>National tests</b>	<p>To investigate the extent to which students' achievements are coherent with the aims of competencies in the national curriculum</p> <p>To inform students, teachers, parents, school leaders, municipalities, regional authorities and national authorities about the level of achievement as a foundation for improving and development</p>
<b>The School-leaving Examination and the Craft Certificate</b>	Summative evaluation intended to inform the society, employers and education institutions about the achieved level of competency
<b>International comparative achievement studies</b>	<p>To evaluate and compare the level of achievement of Norwegian students to the level of achievement of students in other countries.</p> <p>To form the basis for policy formulation and to develop national quality indicators</p>

(Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2005, My translation)

# Findings from the document analysis

- Important distinction between providing and using information to improve
- Two policy agendas:
  - 1) Provide information to gain oversight and monitor outcomes
  - 2) Use the information as a basis for further improvement and development
- The use of verbs, i.e. “revealing”, “mapping” and “investigating” indicate neutral processes of providing information
- This makes the processes seem to comprise data gathering methods, while concealing the parts which include analysis, interpretation and construction of meaning
- Reflexivity?
- Comparability is a key element

(Skedsmo, Forthcoming 2009)



# Principals' perceptions of evaluation tools

Variables	No sign.	Low degree	Certain degree	High degree	Very high degree	Missing
Diagnostic tests (B3a)	1,9%	7%	39,5%	46,1	5,5%	11
Tests initiated by the municipalities (B3b)	39,3%	21,9%	27,1%	10%	1,7%	79
National evaluation by the students focusing on learning environments (B3d)	15,2%	33,3%	40,7	10,1%	0,8%	26
National tests (B3e)	14,2%	35,5%	38	11,8%	0,6%	13
Evaluation by the students focusing on e.g. learning environments (B3f)	7,2%	19%	46,5	25,8%	1,6%	24
Prepared supervision/dialogs between the teachers and the students (B3g)	0,4%	1,5%	14,6	62,7%	20,8%	7
Dialogs with parents and students (B3h)	0%	1,1%	17	63%	18,9%	5
<b>N = 461-535</b>						

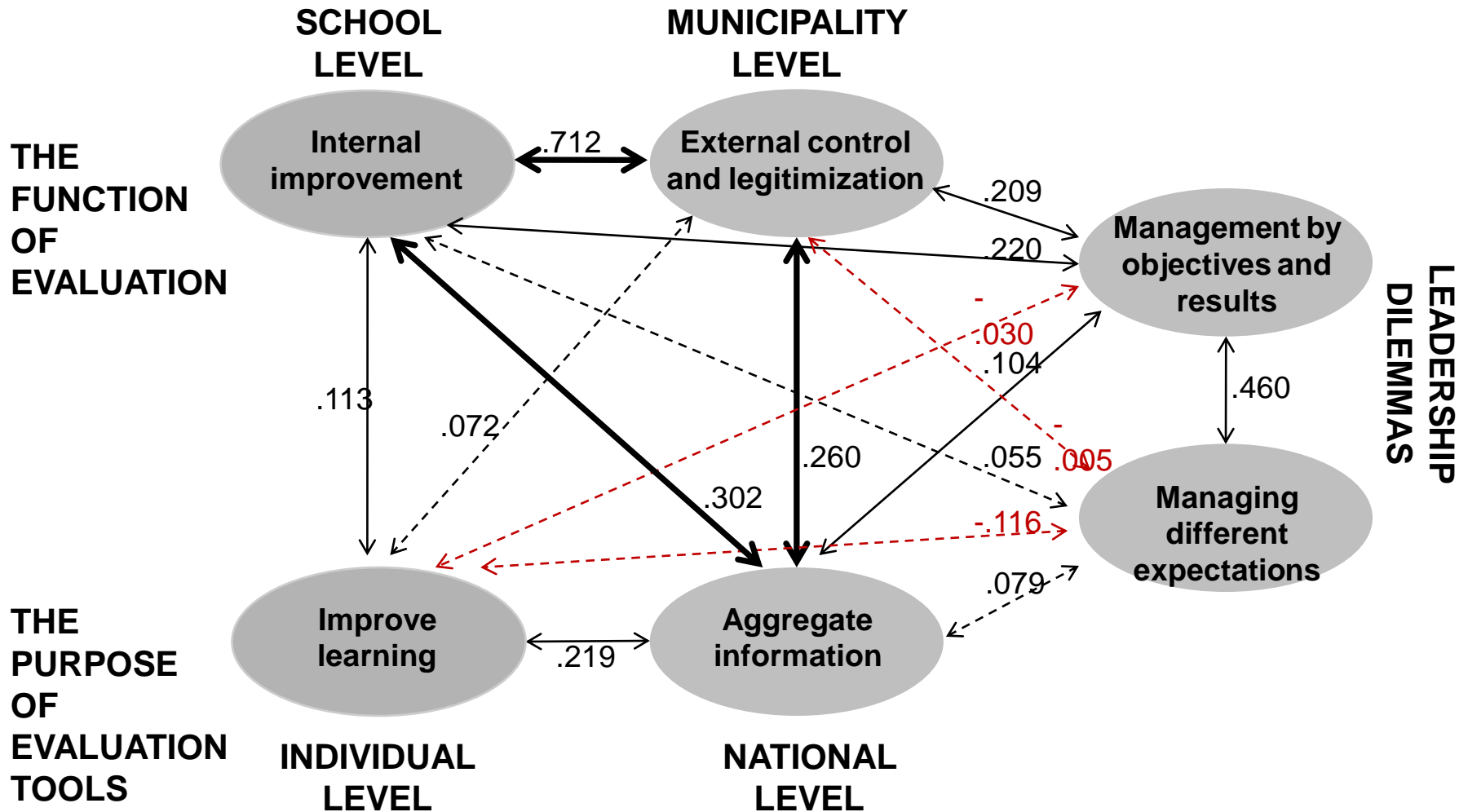


# Principals' perceptions of tensions and dilemmas

Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing
Tensions between loyalty to my employers and the need to take part in the public discourse about the lack of resources (C4a)	9,5	20,7	16,6	31,7	21,5	4
Tensions between my loyalty to the expectations of my employers and the priorities made at school (C4b)	22,5	25,5	22,3	23,6	6	7
The pressure to be loyal to my employers limits my right to participate critically in the public discourse about schooling (C4c)	23,6	25,8	20,6	20,6	9,5	5
Ethical dilemmas that have made me consider resigning from my job as a school leader (C4d)	49,3	20,1	10,6	13,1	6,9	4
Difficult to determine what constitutes success (C4e)	11,6	24,1	13,8	40,9	9,5	5
Tensions in prioritizing important goals for the school (C4f)	6,3	22	13,2	41,6	16,8	4
Tensions between ad hoc problem-solving and strategic planning (C4g)	7,1	25,8	23,9	35,5	7,7	5
Tensions between the need to be present at school and the need to participate outside school (C4h)	3	5,6	8,9	37,6	44,9	3
Tensions between the expectations of parents and my priorities as a principal (C4i)	18,7	28,6	17,6	28,2	6,9	5



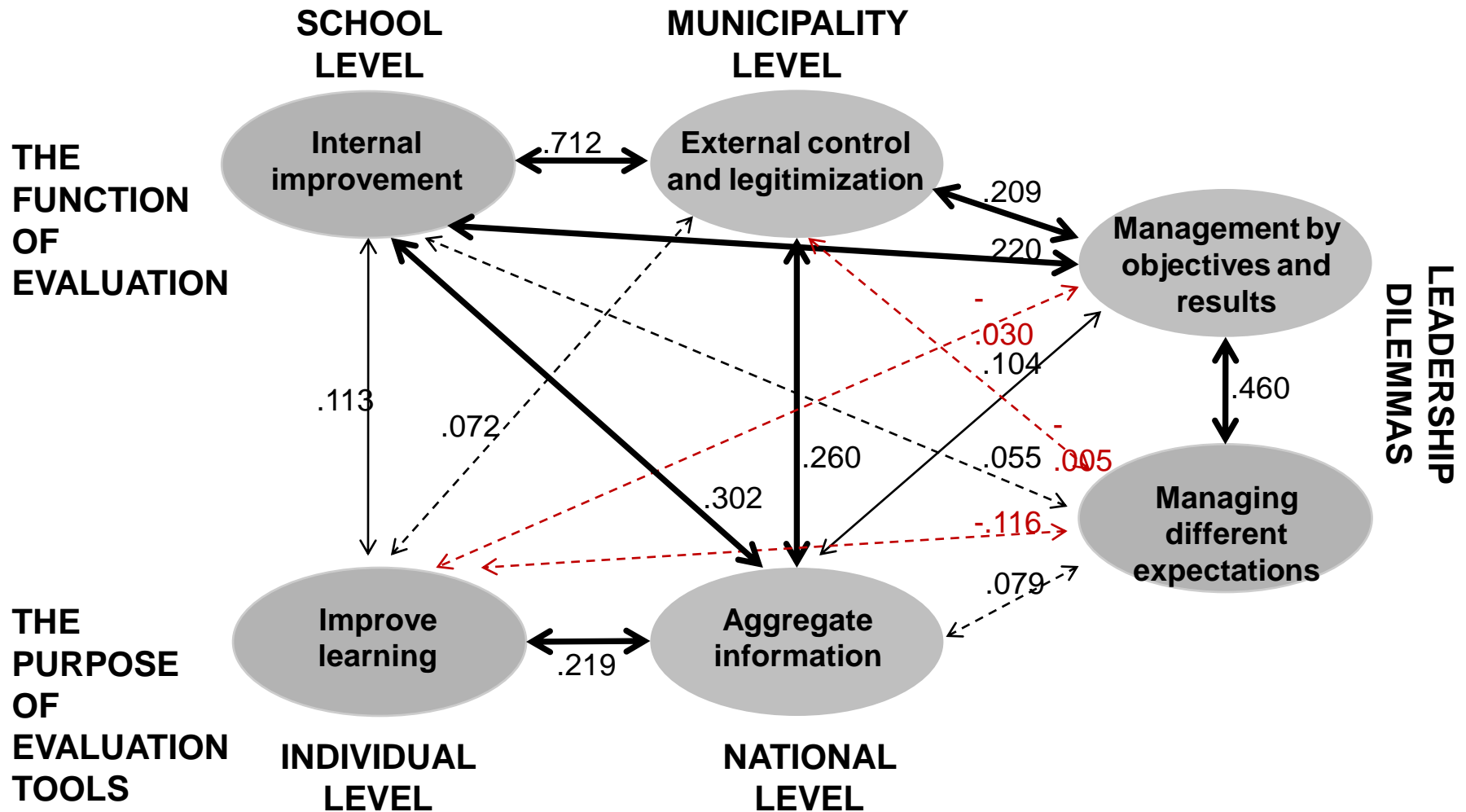
# Findings from the quantitative analysis



(Skedsmo, Forthcoming 2009)



# Findings from the quantitative analysis



(Skedsmo, Forthcoming 2009)



# Problematic issues and inconsistencies

## The policy purposes:

A dominating improvement agenda, monitoring elements are concealed



## The principals' perceptions:

An administrative oriented system

No clear differentiation between the needs of the individual student and the needs of the system



Dialogue based tools needed to support students

What about the use of outcomes?

Comparisons instead of evaluating according to national aims

(Skedsmo, Forthcoming 2009)



# Thank you for the attention

