



**Norwegian Superintendents as Mediators of Change Initiatives**

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**Abstract**

The underlying theoretical argument in this article views municipal school superintendents in the Nordic context as middle managers in organizational theory terminology. Empirical support for this discussion emerges from national data collected among Norwegian school superintendents in 2009. Findings show that the actual work and leadership functions of Norwegian school superintendents match theoretical properties of middle managers fairly well. Findings also suggest school superintendents actively mediate tensions embedded in the current Norwegian educational policy stream. Specifically, central aims derived from accountability discourse are filtered out and translated into traditional school development and pedagogical leadership discourse at the local managerial level.

*Keywords:* superintendent work roles, middle management theory, boundary spanning, mediation

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3 Drawing on middle management theory (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997), this article  
4 suggests that school superintendents can be conceived as middle managers in the local school  
5 governance line that connect the top apex of the municipality (i.e. school district)  
6 organization with the operating level of schools. In the Nordic context, a school  
7 superintendent is defined by three characteristics: First, he or she is responsible for primary  
8 education within the entire municipality and thus the unity of command of the school  
9 principals in hierarchical terms. Second, the superintendent is also subordinated to a political  
10 board (Johansson, Moos, Nihlfors, Paulsen, & Risku, 2011). Finally, at least in the  
11 Norwegian context, the superintendent is also directly coupled to the top apex of the  
12 municipality hierarchy through permanent membership in the municipal CEO's senior  
13 leadership team. They are therefore uniquely positioned to mediate between the strategic and  
14 the operative levels of the school governance line in their municipality organization due to  
15 this unique position.  
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32 Moreover, in line with research on middle managers' political influence in  
33 professional bureaucracies, holders of middle level leadership position might strengthen their  
34 basis for professional influences by utilizing boundary spanning opportunities due to their  
35 legitimate access to a range of social and political networks, (Pappas, Flaherty, &  
36 Wooldridge, 2003; Pappas, Flaherty, & Wooldridge, 2004). Yet, this mixed role position  
37 constitutes several sources of influence by mediating policy and change initiatives towards  
38 school principals and teachers. Empirical data analyzed in this current article is drawn from a  
39 national superintendent survey undertaken in late 2009.  
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### 50 **The Norwegian Educational System at a Glance**

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52 Building on Lundgren's (1990) analytical framework, the model in Figure 1 below  
53 portrays the complexities involved in the three-level school governance system in Norway.  
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55 First, the governance chain spans three system levels, all with a legitimate base of powers and  
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3 authorities (Aasen et al., 2012). Between the state level and the school level is found the  
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5 municipalities, 428 in all, that constitutes the entrepreneurial core of the Norwegian welfare  
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7 state, a main feature also found in the other Nordic countries (Johansson et al., 2013).  
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10 Additionally, at each of the three levels, decision makers and leadership actors are imposed  
11  
12 by both political and professional demands. Taken together, the model shows eight different  
13  
14 types of actors that all exert some influence on policy- making, decision-making processes,  
15  
16 management and leadership in schools. Moreover, the model visualizes some of the  
17  
18 complexities involved in the school superintendent's work role (Nihlfors, 2003).  
19

20  
21 A range of studies of reform implementation indicates that a straightforward top-  
22  
23 down implementation of change initiatives seldom takes place in practical educational life  
24  
25 (Ball, 1994; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Datnow, 2002). Rather, state initiatives tend to be mediated  
26  
27 by brokerage actors that connect other actors involved in the school governance chain. On a  
28  
29 general basis, mediation is defined by Gould and Fernandez (1989) as a "process by which  
30  
31 intermediary actors facilitate transactions between other actors lacking access to or trust in  
32  
33 another" (Gould & Fernandez, 1989, p. 91). Mediation can thus be understood as a relation  
34  
35 between three types of actors, where two of them are parties in a hierarchy or a network, and  
36  
37 where the third actor works as a broker. For example, it is possible for a municipal  
38  
39 superintendent to mediate conflicts between demands from the municipality's top  
40  
41 administrative layer and the school principals. Likewise, a superintendent can mediate  
42  
43 conflicts between the school board and the professionals at the "street level" of the schools.  
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47 ((INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE))  
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50 As illustrated in figure 1 above, the superintendent in the municipality (actor F) can  
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52 fairly well serve as a mediator in the relationship between the state (player B) and  
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54 professionals (actor G) in Figure 1 model. Similarly, superintendents (actor F) mediate  
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3 between parents' interests (actor H) and teachers (actor G) and between the local school  
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5 politicians (actor E) and teachers (actor G).  
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### 7 8 **Superintendents Conceived as Middle Managers**

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10 Most definitions of middle management build on Thompson's (1967) distinction  
11  
12 between three levels of the organization, respectively the technical (operational), managerial,  
13  
14 and institutional (strategic). Middle managers thus "perform a coordinating role where they  
15  
16 mediate, negotiate and interpret connections between the organization's institutional  
17  
18 (strategic) and technical (operational) level" (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997, p. 466). This  
19  
20 mediating role constitutes a significant potential for exerting social influence downwards as  
21  
22 well as upwards (March & Simon, 1958; Pappas et al., 2003). From their mediating position,  
23  
24 middle managers also operate the external boundaries of the organization, for example  
25  
26 through regular contacts with customers and suppliers (Thompson, 1967), professional  
27  
28 stakeholders (Mintzberg, 1993), and the local civic community (Busher, 2006). These general  
29  
30 properties are found in most organizational prototypes (Mintzberg, 1980). However, the term  
31  
32 middle manager also embraces context-specific properties (Currie & Procter, 2005).  
33  
34 Particularly, it is the definition of the lower boundaries of the middle manager's jurisdiction,  
35  
36 i.e. the interface towards the people that she or he is responsible for as personnel manager,  
37  
38 that is context specific and differs across various organization types (Pinsonneault &  
39  
40 Kraemer, 1997). Being a middle manager is thus a pure analytical issue, and as noted, "it is  
41  
42 therefore important to define who we are talking about when discussing the middle manager"  
43  
44 (Currie & Procter, 2001, p.109).  
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### 49 50 **Boundary Spanning Opportunities in Superintendent's Work Role**

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52 Following the noted premises in middle management theory, also as explicated in the  
53  
54 model in figure 1, school superintendents in Norwegian municipalities are by implication  
55  
56 boundary spanners (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Mintzberg, 1980), that is agents that in their  
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3 daily work cross internal as well as external organizational boundaries (Tushman & Scanlan,  
4  
5 1981). Boundary spanning individuals thus play an important role in the internal diffusion of  
6  
7 information, knowledge and ideas across organizational boundaries (Schwab, Ungson, &  
8  
9 Brown, 1985). But boundary spanning also encompasses externally oriented activities, such  
10  
11 as scanning, mapping and constructing a picture of the environments, including predicting  
12  
13 future trouble spots or potential allies (Daft & Weick, 1984). Through these crossover  
14  
15 activities carried out by middle managers, people that work in different functional units may  
16  
17 be linked together, or internal milieus may be linked closer to important spots in the external  
18  
19 environments (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Possible outcomes from effective utilization of  
20  
21 boundary spanning opportunities by superintendents are several.  
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24  
25 First, effective boundary spanning may contribute to the organization's learning  
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27 capacity because boundary spanners then contribute to the diffusion of critical knowledge  
28  
29 (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Second, research into middle management in corporate  
30  
31 organizations (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Rouleau, 2005) as well professional bureaucracies  
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33 (Pappas et al., 2003; Pappas et al., 2004) suggests that middle managers that score high on  
34  
35 boundary spanning exert stronger influence on their work environments than the counterparts.  
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37 Thus, there is a potent source of social influence for superintendents embedded in boundary  
38  
39 spanning activities (Pawłowski & Robey, 2004).  
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#### 42 **Mediation as Leadership Function**

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45 In his early work, Mintzberg (1993) noted that middle managers play key roles at the  
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47 external boundaries operating “between the professionals inside and interest parties—  
48  
49 governments, client associations and so on—on the outside” (Mintzberg, 1993, p.195). And  
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51 they are positioned to maintain close relationships to outside stakeholders that might grant  
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53 financial support or moral legitimacy, described by Mintzberg as “maintaining liaison  
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55 contacts acting as figurehead and spokesman in a public relation capacity, negotiating with  
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3 outside agencies“ (ibid, p. 195). In theoretical terms, middle managers construct a series of  
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5 links to the outside world through their day-to-day practices, and these linkages support  
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7 mediation resulting in “internal sense-making . . . through translation of stakeholder  
8  
9 positions, disciplining clients, justifying changes” (Rouleau, 2005, p.1438). Specifically, the  
10  
11 reviewed literature on middle management, also from the educational sector, points to four  
12  
13 forms of mediating practices: coordinator (Gould & Fernandez, 1989), gatekeeper (Tushman  
14  
15 & Katz, 1980), advocate (Busher, 2005; Busher & Harris, 1999), and liaison (Mintzberg,  
16  
17 1993). Based on the model in figure 1, this current paper suggests mediation to be a  
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19 prevalent leadership function for municipal superintendents. Following, the four mediating  
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21 roles briefly described above are illustrated in Figure 2 below.  
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25 ((INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE))  
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28 ***The gatekeeper dimension.*** Gatekeeper function denotes a broker role, where the  
29  
30 broker is a member of the same subgroup or political system that the players affected by this  
31  
32 mediation. The term gatekeeper is used most often to describe individual players who have  
33  
34 position power to select and protect against other members of the same system (Tushman &  
35  
36 Katz, 1980; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). An important conceptual nuance is that agents are  
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38 bound to the same social system, for example the education sector in a municipality, and the  
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40 ties between the gatekeeper and the other members are formalized. A formal leader, for  
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42 example, act as a door opener, by selecting from the flow of external influences what issues  
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44 he or she will set the agenda for the group that he or she is responsible.  
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48 By utilizing the gatekeeper position, it is possible for superintendents in the  
49  
50 governance line to decide that some input issues or currents can be locked out (door locks),  
51  
52 while others can be admitted (door open). This form of selection is important for  
53  
54 organizational learning since the gatekeeper identifies relevant information, determines what  
55  
56 is considered most relevant, and then puts it on the agenda in the staff group (Pawlowski &  
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3 Robey, 2004). Furthermore, it is demonstrated that also in ethical and value-based sides of  
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5 school leadership gatekeeping is an important feature because unwanted items that violate the  
6  
7 standards of professional group or organization's values are excluded (door locks). This form  
8  
9 of buffering is present in educational organization when for example principals insist that  
10  
11 environmental stakeholders, such as community groups, social service agencies, media or  
12  
13 parents, make their initial contact with them rather than with teachers (DiPaolo & Tschannen-  
14  
15 Moran, 2005). As noted by Ogawa (1996) when reviewing the literature on the subject  
16  
17 concluded that “research consistently demonstrates that teachers expect principals to shield  
18  
19 them from undue parental influence and that principals do perform this function” (Ogawa,  
20  
21 1996, p. 13). Buffering has also shown to be a consistent mediating strategy among middle  
22  
23 leaders in secondary schools (Harris, Jamieson, & Russ, 1995), and thus, it is a central  
24  
25 expectation across most professionals that their middle managers should shield them from  
26  
27 some categories of outside demands and pressures. This theoretical point can easily be  
28  
29 transferred to the superintendent’s position in the school governance chain. Moreover,  
30  
31 organizational theorists have for some time pointed out that buffering is a central strategic  
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33 function, protecting the organizational system from external disturbance, and thereby  
34  
35 considered a rational response pattern (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Scott, 2003; Yan & Louis,  
36  
37 1999).

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43 Middle managers then function as guards or gatekeepers in order to deliberately select  
44  
45 what kind of external demands that should be prioritized and matched with internal resources  
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47 (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Needless to say, the argument lies close to the decoupling  
48  
49 proposition well known as a cornerstone in new institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977;  
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51 Scott & Meyer, 1991), a premise that has been extensively used as theoretical framework in  
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53 the study of public sector reforms in Scandinavia (Brunsson & Olsen, 1993)  
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***The coordinator dimension.*** A local coordinator is an entity operating in a limited geographical area such as a municipality. The conceptual point of coordination as mediating function is that interactions takes place when the same analysis level between actors belonging to the same sub group or the same political system. At the middle level in an organizational hierarchy, the term denotes a role as *change intermediary*, aiming to help professional colleagues to make sense out of external feedback and change initiatives (Balogun, 2003). Helping colleagues to make sense out of confusing and complex situations related to teaching is a frequently described category of the middle manager’s work. The term *sense giving* is used to conceptualize these activities, highlighting that the point is not for the middle managers to make sense for their own understanding. Rather, the key point is to *give sense*, in terms of helping others, to understanding change initiatives and demands (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rouleau, 2005). As noted by Balogun (2003), “The middle managers were not only having to work their way through their own personal transition as change progressed, but also help their staff through their transitions” (Balogun, 2003, p. 76). A nested function is categorized as *facilitation of learning*. The point here is to create enabling conditions for the superintendent’s school principals to assure that that learning can be enhanced. Through the utilization of their access to external information, middle managers can provide their professional colleagues with new ideas, good practices or alternative solutions (Balogun & Johnson, 2004).

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***The advocate dimension.*** The third form of mediator function is often called the advocate (Gould & Fernandez, 1989). Influence channel signifies that a formal actor represents a group to another in the same organizational hierarchy, for example superintendents acting as attorney for the basic education sector—the teachers and principals within the management domain in the municipality. Specifically, we found in our data that this was a systematic cover in terms of the superintendent acting as an advocate setting

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3 agenda and channeling interests to the school board or school committee in the municipality.  
4  
5 Similarly, school superintendents act as advocate for school interests in the senior  
6  
7 management team in the municipality hierarchy. Primary sources of influence associated with  
8  
9 that mediation function is the specialist knowledge of a distinct domain and the resources that  
10  
11 can be mobilized from the group they represent. Together, these data indicate the active use  
12  
13 of legal function to mediate between professional interests and municipal governance agenda.  
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15

16 ***The liaison dimension.*** A fourth mediating function is described by the liaison  
17  
18 metaphor that can be operationalized in two categories. The first category, where the player  
19  
20 does not have the primary relation to any of the groups associated (Gould & Fernandez,  
21  
22 1989), is then to be a broker by virtue of her or his position of trust on both sides of the table.  
23  
24 Player C, the county governor of education, exercises such a function. The second category is  
25  
26 a formal party that is also included in external networks, and the term liaison reflects that the  
27  
28 operator has confidence across these organizational boundaries (Busher, 2006).  
29  
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32 When liaison players are also key players in these networks, there also exists an  
33  
34 increasing influence both upwards and downwards in the hierarchy (Pappas et al., 2003). For  
35  
36 example, principals and school leaders exercise this form of arbitration or mediation.  
37  
38 Common to both categories of structural position is that the influence is conditional trust, in  
39  
40 particular associated with the matching level of knowledge on both sides of the relational  
41  
42 chains (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).  
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### 45 **Summary of Findings**

46  
47 This section presents a summary of findings from the national superintendent study  
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49 analyzed in the light of middle management theory presented above. Several of the points  
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51 represent various forms of mismatch between expectations for superintendents and their  
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53 actual practices towards school principals, a process that can be understood as mediation.  
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### **Mismatch between Central Policy Aims and Task Preferences**

The systemic curriculum reform Knowledge Promotion (2006) was accompanied by the introduction of national tests for primary education in 2005, the rankings and results of which are made publicly available. The backdrop was the Norwegian “PISA shocks” after the OECD polls in 2001, 2004 and 2006, exposing a level of student achievement below what was expected and demanded (Kjærnsli, 2007; Kjærnsli, Lie, Olsen, & Turmo, 2004). Moreover, a National Quality Assurance System (NQAS) established in 2005 for the purpose of improving primary and secondary school achievements (Skedsmo, 2009). Regional state directors, one per county, were also given the authority to undertake supervision of municipalities and schools structured round a yearly quality report. In this policy environment, it was expected that school superintendents conducted follow-up of student assessments and that national tests were high on their task priorities, but our data shows that this is definitely not the case. However, the data from the superintendent study shows, on contrary, follow-up, inspection and monitoring of student learning, test results, assessments and evaluation are typical low-scorers in their task priorities, which indicates that superintendents act as active gatekeepers in decision making processes associated which kind of tasks that should be ranked high, and conversely, which tasks that can be downplayed or even neglected.

### **Mismatching Agendas in the Leadership Chain**

The survey instrument offers an insight to ranked tasks and prioritizations in the relationship between the individual superintendent and the school principals that are subordinated to him or her. This broad theme is captured by means of open-ended response categories, where the superintendents in the sample are asked to rank their three most important tasks in relationship to their school principals. Two hundred forty-seven out of 291 responded to this open question; their response rates appear within seven categories (see

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3 Table 1) identified as (a) quality management, (b) human resource management, (c) financial  
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5 management, (d) administration and coordination, (e) pedagogical leadership and school  
6  
7 improvement, (f) student learning oriented tasks, and (g) strategic leadership. As shown in  
8  
9 Table 1, each main category is specified in terms of a number of subcategories. Categories  
10  
11 and subcategories are interpreted and classified according to verbal responses given by the  
12  
13 superintendents. These are multi-responses, and the some of the respondents did not specify  
14  
15 more than two categories when they described the ranked tasks in relationships with their  
16  
17 school principals.  
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21 ((INSERT TABLE 1 HERE))  
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23 The categorized responses in Table 1 show first that the *quality management* theme is  
24  
25 only modestly represented in the superintendents' descriptive data about their ranked agendas  
26  
27 with their school principals, counting for 89 out of 747 (11.97%) responses. Also within this  
28  
29 theme is a tendency in the superintendents' rhetoric to avoid the control aspect in favor of the  
30  
31 more soft laden terms such as quality development and quality system development. Second,  
32  
33 administrative themes in total load 433 out of 747 (59.97%) responses, which display a  
34  
35 relatively strong administrative work profile among the superintendents in the sample. Third,  
36  
37 pedagogical leadership and school development tasks reported count for 238 responses  
38  
39 (31.86%) of the total, which represents a strong orientation towards the professional domain  
40  
41 of the sector. Fourth, tasks related to the end product of schooling (e.g., pupil achievement,  
42  
43 school climate, special needs and learning environment) are only modestly represented in the  
44  
45 bulk of self-reported categories: 49 out of 747 responses (6.56%). The responses do not  
46  
47 display a strong direct focus on student learning in the daily task priorities in the dialogue  
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49 with school principals. And parental involvement activities are close to absent on the agenda,  
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51 which is corresponds with other published work on the theme (Bæck, 2010; Paulsen, 2012)  
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3 On contrary, the open responses support the image of an administrative and  
4 pedagogical leadership profile that shelter quality control, accountability, and the state-  
5 initiated quality supervision from the school principals. Moreover, the quality management  
6 focus is weak as is the focus on student achievements. In contrast, the prioritized tasks and  
7 agendas in the direct leadership dialogue reflect a pedagogical discourse with focus on school  
8 development and pedagogical leadership. Although bearing in mind that the data are based  
9 on self-reported statements about organizational behavior, the presented findings about task  
10 preferences and leadership dialogue with the school principal show a gap between policy  
11 makers' preferences and superintendents' task preferences when it comes to managerial  
12 accountability (e.g. inspection, quality assurance, follow-up of student achievement data) as  
13 well as the relationship to the parent side. Both policy domains are relatively high on the  
14 policy agenda, however, systematically low-scorers in the superintendents' preference  
15 structure.

### 31 **Lost in Translation**

32  
33 Respondents in the 2009 superintendent sample were asked to rank respectively the  
34 five most important tasks in their job, the five most time-consuming tasks, and finally the five  
35 tasks they found most interesting. Rankings were collected by multiple-response questions  
36 based on predefined response categories. The latter point might be noteworthy since the  
37 number of alternative choices is restricted by the stock of available categories. Appendix  
38 presents the three most ranked task areas.

39  
40 Note that superintendent responses revealed that *planning and goal formulation* tasks  
41 are the most frequent number one category. *Pedagogical leadership* is the second most  
42 ranked task, and *leading change processes* follows in third place among the most important  
43 tasks of the superintendent job. Shifting to the next theme captured by the ranking questions  
44 of five most time-consuming tasks, *budgeting and financial management* is the most frequent  
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3 chosen number and thus ranks first. In other words, the superintendents in the sample  
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5 perceive that the group of financial management tasks is the most time-consuming, and these  
6  
7 task areas are accompanied by *leading change processes* and *planning and goal formulation*  
8  
9 as the second and third most frequent time-consumers during a normal work-period. Finally,  
10  
11 the three most interesting tasks for superintendents were, in ranked order, *leading change*  
12  
13 *processes*, *planning and goal formulation* and *pedagogical leadership*.  
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17 A noteworthy finding in the data on task preferences and task perceptions is the  
18  
19 systematic low scoring of *evaluation and testing*, paired with *external relationships to*  
20  
21 *parents and parent relationships*. Despite the high prioritization, these two task domains are  
22  
23 given in policy documents at the rhetoric level<sup>1</sup>, it seems that they are systematically  
24  
25 downplayed in the day-to-day work situations described by the superintendents in the sample.  
26  
27 Parental involvements are also here close to absent.  
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### 29 30 **Mediating High Profiled Change Initiative**

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32 The findings presented in this article show a pattern of mediation at the local level of  
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34 the Norwegian school governance system (i.e. the municipalities). Both data on task  
35  
36 preference structure and self-constructed answers on the leadership dialogue with the school  
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38 principal level give rise to an assumption that when state policies meet the local level,  
39  
40 something happens. Specifically, the low preference of quality assurance practices,  
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42 accountability demands towards school principals, inspection and monitoring of student  
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44 achievements and follow-up of national test performances are noteworthy. Furthermore, the  
45  
46 data give rise to an assumption that state policies are transferred to local priorities through  
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48 mediation processes at the administrative part of local school government. More specific, the  
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50 data indicate that superintendents actively filter out, buffer, and translate central school aims  
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52 in their daily dialogues with the school leaders that are subordinated to them. Moreover, at  
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<sup>1</sup> See for example the national curriculum Knowledge Promotion (2006)

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3 the rhetoric level, the presented data supports an image that superintendents use soft language  
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5 when they express their priorities in change management and leadership. This finding can  
6  
7 fairly well be linked to the consistent finding that superintendents in the sample have a  
8  
9 typical educational career path: They worked within education most of their career, are  
10  
11 educated and trained school professionals, and to a low extent are influenced by generalist  
12  
13 management rhetoric. The data collected also showed that superintendents are largely  
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15 included in external professional networks with counterparts in other municipalities, such as  
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17 experts, consultants, and academics. These ties provide an information advantage and can be  
18  
19 used to mediate in conflicts.  
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### 22 23 **Discussion**

24  
25 The study underscores the local level as an active part in the Norwegian school  
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27 governance system, in conjunction with a body of research showing municipalities as *the*  
28  
29 important entrepreneurial level of the Norwegian welfare state (Baldersheim & Ståhlberg,  
30  
31 1994; Fimreite & Lægreid, 2005). However, despite the fact that the study indicates a more  
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33 active school policy transformation in Norwegian municipalities, the local level is under-  
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35 investigated as a playground of school governance, supporting the argument of more  
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37 extensive research, especially on how school principals and teachers perceive the policy  
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39 transformations and the school owners' capacities in the municipal sector.  
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### 42 43 **Middle Management Theory: Relevant Perspective?**

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45 An underlying motive of this changer was to analyze and discuss the applicability of  
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47 middle management theory as a useful perspective for the study of school superintendent  
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49 behavior, particularly related to how they exert social and political influence upwards as well  
50  
51 as downwards. The exploratory empirical investigation, labeled "*in search for the*  
52  
53 *superintendent*", shows a management and leadership role that on one hand is compatible  
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55 with conceptual definitions of superintendents from other national systems (Bredeson, Klar,  
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3 & Johansson, 2009). Moreover, the role content and leadership functions are concurrent with  
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5 the ones of a middle manager in large complex organizations (Mintzberg, 1993). Since  
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7 mediation is at the center point of middle managers' influence, as documented in research on  
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9 professional bureaucracies (Pappas et al., 2003; Printy, 2008), this line of theory building is  
10  
11 assumed to be useful for future research on school superintendents—at least within the  
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13 Nordic context. Especially, the upward relationship, to what extent superintendent exerts  
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15 upwards influence, paired with network engagement, is worth investigating further.  
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### 18 **Limitations of the Study**

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20 The findings presented here must be viewed in the light of several limitations. First,  
21  
22 the theoretical issues taken up in the paper—mediation, buffering, and transformation of  
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24 central policies towards the school level—are complex and multi-faceted, whereas the data  
25  
26 collected for this study is descriptive in nature. Thus, findings only give rise to tentative  
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28 conclusions that must be matched with more robust datasets, other secondary sources, and  
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30 follow-up studies. Second, data on network relationships and collaboration upwards towards  
31  
32 the CEO's team as well as downwards towards the school principals are solely based on the  
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34 superintendents' self-reports. Data collected on both the upper and lower levels of the  
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36 superintendents' work domain is needed to fulfill the picture.  
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## Appendix: Task Preference Structure of Superintendents

<b>Most important tasks</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Most</i>				<i>Least</i>	
Contact with the inhabitants	10	9	11	4	8	<b>42</b>
Building and construction issues	7	3	10	5	11	<b>36</b>
Human resource management	13	10	11	13	10	<b>57</b>
<b>Planning and goal formulation</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Budgeting and financial management</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>Change processes in primary education</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Pedagogical leadership</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>182</b>
Human resource development	15	29	28	25	24	<b>121</b>
Competence management and recruitment	16	18	31	33	31	<b>129</b>
Law issues	8	13	7	11	15	<b>54</b>
Policy implementation	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>141</b>
Evaluation and testing of student skills	6	5	12	12	17	<b>52</b>
Contact with parents and parent representatives	4	5	2	9	12	<b>32</b>
						<b>1442</b>

<b>Most time-consuming tasks</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Most</i>				<i>Least</i>	
Contact with the inhabitants	11	1	6	4	6	<b>28</b>
Building and construction issues	5	8	11	12	12	<b>48</b>
Human resource management	21	31	15	24	12	<b>103</b>
<b>Planning and goal formulation</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Budgeting and financial management</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Change processes in primary education</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>Pedagogical leadership</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>142</b>
Human resource development	6	11	11	12	21	<b>61</b>
Competence management and recruitment	13	20	16	36	14	<b>99</b>
Law issues	10	11	19	12	23	<b>75</b>
<b>Policy implementation</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>201</b>
Evaluation and testing of student skills	5	5	6	8	16	<b>40</b>
Contact with parents and parent representatives	2	3	3	6	15	<b>29</b>
						<b>1380</b>

<b>Five most interesting tasks ranked</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<i>Most</i>				<i>Least</i>	
Contact with the inhabitants	9	6	3	3	8	<b>29</b>
Building and construction issues	6	3	5	6	8	<b>28</b>
Human resource management	7	11	12	11	11	<b>52</b>
<b>Planning and goal formulation</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>205</b>
Budgeting and financial management	15	21	30	33	37	<b>136</b>
<b>Change processes in primary education</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>226</b>
<b>Pedagogical leadership</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>200</b>
Human resource development	10	32	33	39	8	<b>122</b>
Competence management and recruitment	4	24	38	36	31	<b>133</b>
Law issues	10	2	6	6	14	<b>38</b>
Policy implementation	9	17	21	41	28	<b>116</b>
Evaluation and testing of student skills	9	8	15	14	21	<b>67</b>
Contact with parents and parent representatives	4	9	5	9	10	<b>37</b>
						<b>1389</b>



**Table 1:**  
**Ranked Tasks in Superintendents' Relationship with Their School Principals**

<b>Task categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b><i>QUALITY MANAGEMENT</i></b>		
Quality development	33	4.42
Quality system development	15	2.01
Quality control and quality assurance	12	1.61
Control, reporting and follow up of national policy	29	3.88
	<b>89</b>	<b>11.91</b>
<b><i>HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</i></b>		
Competence development of school staff	88	11.78
Recruitment and Human Resource Management	50	6.69
Meetings with school principals	11	1.47
	<b>149</b>	<b>19.95</b>
<b><i>FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</i></b>		
Budgeting and resource allocation	33	4.42
Financial management	89	11.91
	<b>122</b>	<b>16.33</b>
<b><i>ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATION</i></b>		
Secretary unit for policy board	2	0.27
Coordination, law issues and daily administration	51	6.83
School buildings	3	0.40
Internal and external communication / information	6	0.80
Management by Objectives	11	1.47
	<b>73</b>	<b>9.77</b>
<b><i>PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT</i></b>		
Supervision, support and guidance of school leaders	74	9.91
Pedagogical leadership	16	2.14
School development	91	12.18
Team development school principals	5	0.67
School leadership development	37	4.95
Developmental projects	11	1.47
Efforts for shared sense of purpose among staff	4	0.54
	<b>238</b>	<b>31.86</b>
<b><i>STUDENT LEARNING ORIENTATED TASKS</i></b>		
Adapted learning /children with special needs	8	1.07
Subject issues	3	0.40
Improvement of pupils' learning achievement	10	1.34
School climate and learning environment for pupils	11	1.47
Follow up of national test data	17	2.28
	<b>49</b>	<b>6.56</b>
<b><i>STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP</i></b>		
External collaboration with parents and stakeholders	11	1.47
Organizational development	14	1.86
Strategic analysis and forecasting	2	0.27
	<b>27</b>	<b>3.61</b>

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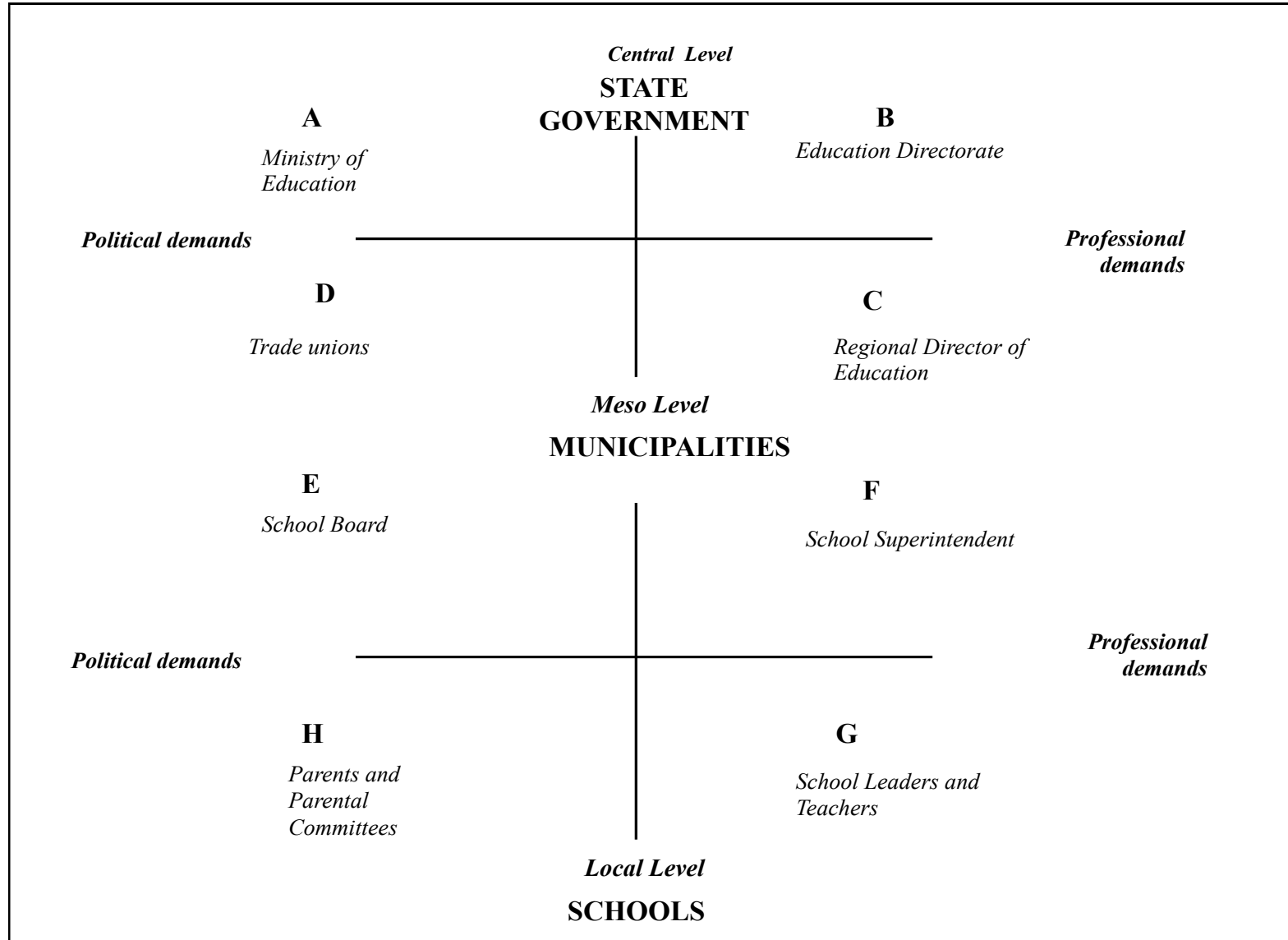
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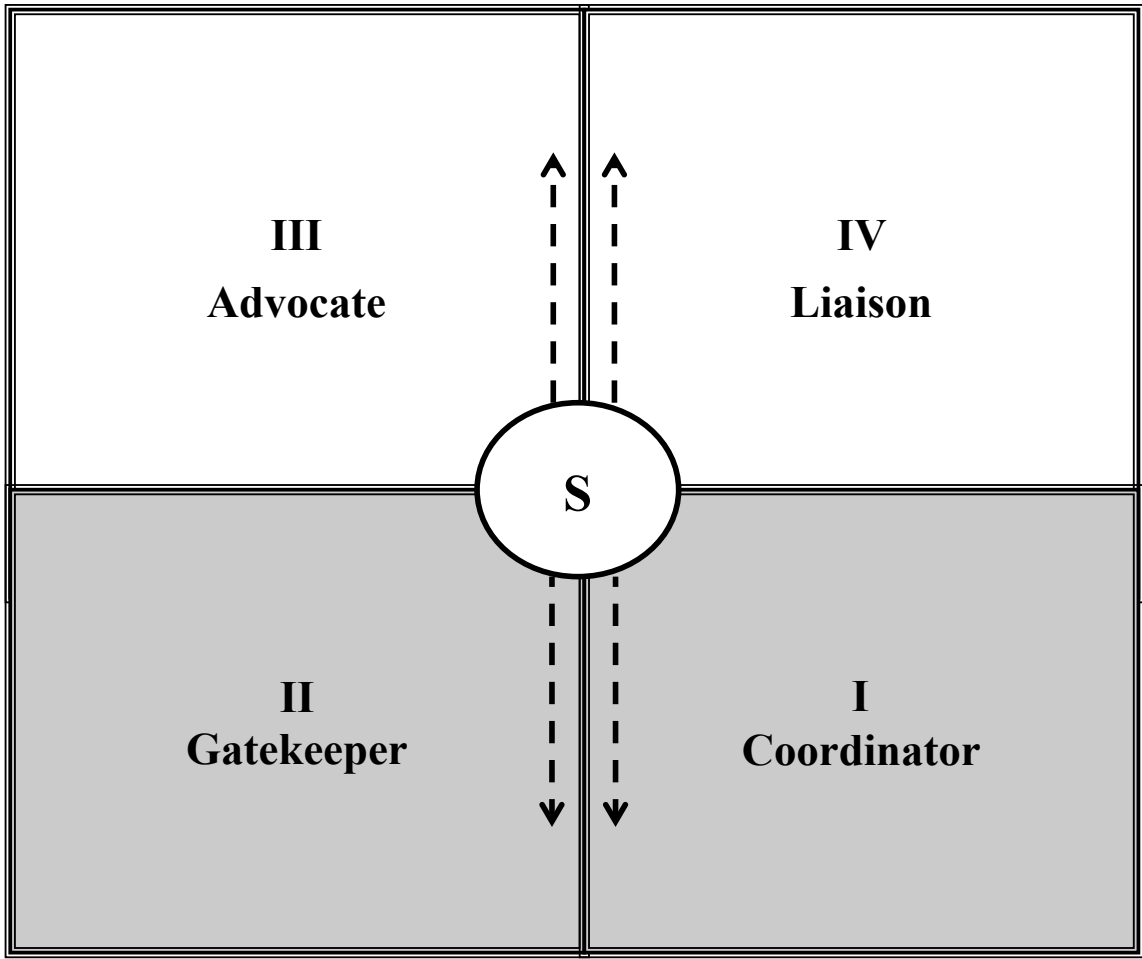
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# Figure 2: Four mediating functions performed by school superintendents



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