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Exploring Education Policy Transformations and Agency in a Postcolonial Context

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Chapter 7

Exploring Education Policy Transformations and Agency in a Postcolonial Context: The Case of Launching the Preparation Scheme in Greenland in 1961



Simon Holleufer and Christian Ydesen

Using the prisms of post-colonial history together with the theoretical concepts of policy instruments and uploading and downloading, this chapter investigates how different actors in different arenas of the Danish-Greenlandic education system have emerged, interacted, and struggled to shape and develop policies and practices. The chapter focuses on a particular policy instrument called ‘the Preparation Scheme’ [*præparandarrangementet*] which was launched in 1961 and remained in operation until 1976. The purpose of the scheme was to identify promising Greenlandic children and send them on a one-year school stay in Denmark to boost their Danish language skills and prepare them as spearheads for the modernization of Greenland according to a Danish development trajectory. Analytically, the chapter explores the historical compositions of actors inhabiting the arenas in Copenhagen, Nuuk and the Greenlandic school districts in 1961 when the policy instrument was launched, and it investigates the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around such a new policy instrument. The chapter finds that a conducive environment for the enactment of the preparation scheme ranging from the centre to the periphery eventually came into existence. This environment was conditioned on the alignment of cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Nuuk, positioning Greenland as an object of a modernization process. In this way, the chapter adds to our knowledge about how a policy instrument is recontextualized in a downloading and subsequent uploading process in a post-colonial context.

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In reference to the school director's telegram 6093, I submit some information about the pupils from grades 6B and 7B, who, in my telegram 135, have been recommended to attend the experimental groups. First, the 7B pupils: in this class, there is a rather big group of similarly good pupils. We might as well have recommended 10 just as well as these six.¹

Introduction

The opening quote stems from the period 1953–1979, when Greenland had morphed from being a Danish colony into a county in Denmark. It is a clear example of local education actors – in this case, the head teacher in Julianehåb [*Qaqortoq*]² – struggling to decode and find meaning in a new policy instrument that had recently been rolled out by the higher echelons of the education system in Copenhagen and in Godthåb [*Nuuk*], the capital of Greenland. The focus of this chapter is to analyse the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around such a new policy instrument in the making.

The new policy instrument in question was the so-called Preparation Scheme [*præparandarrangementet*], which was launched in 1961 and remained in operation until 1976. The purpose of the scheme was to identify promising Greenlandic children and send them on a one-year school stay in Denmark to boost their Danish language skills and prepare them as spearheads for the modernization of Greenland according to a Danish development trajectory. Alternatively, Greenlandic children could be sent to preparation classes at a boarding school in Godthåb.³ Apart from practical considerations, such as the economy and number of places available in Denmark, this dual arrangement served the purpose of allowing for comparisons between the trajectories of children educated in Greenland versus those educated in Denmark. With the institutionalization of a selection process and its ensuing powerful effects on the future education possibilities of Greenlandic children, the preparation scheme can best be described as a high-stakes programme. During its lifetime, the preparation scheme involved some 1530 Greenlandic children who were sent to Denmark for 1 year (Jensen, 1997; Ydesen, 2010).

¹Letter from school inspector Christian Størmose (1920–1990) in Julianehåb [*Qaqortoq*] to the School Directorate in Godthåb, 29 May 1961, *Kultureqarnermut, Ilinniartitaanermut, Ilisimatusarnermut, Ilageeqarnermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik* [Department for Culture, Education, Research, and Church] (KIIN) Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961. All translations from Danish into English were by the authors, unless stated otherwise.

²We use the Danish place names because they were the official place names in the period covered in this chapter and are the names appearing in the archival sources used for this chapter. Today, Greenlandic place names are the official appellations. Greenlandic place names are in square brackets upon their first mention.

³From the school year 1965/1966 onward, all preparation pupils were sent to Denmark, until 1971/1972, when preparation classes were re-established in Greenland (Ydesen, 2011).

The whole idea behind the preparation scheme was permeated by distinct postcolonial imaginaries about attractive development trajectories and paths of modernization. However, as indicated in the opening quote, the identification of children for the preparation scheme seems to be permeated by distinct elements of contingency and coincidence. This element reflects how the launch and enactment of the preparation scheme could be described as a complex recontextualization process of policy ideals, policy contexts, and the development of new educational practices in both national and local contexts. In other words, the formulation, dissemination, and enactment of the preparation scheme serves as a relevant case to illuminate the nexuses between interrelated fields of education policy and practice (de Leeuw et al., 2008), as well as adding to our understanding of structure and agency in education policy processes.

Using the postcolonial setting of Greenlandic education in the 1960s as a prism, this chapter investigates how different actors in different arenas of the Danish-Greenlandic education system have emerged, interacted, and struggled to shape and develop nexuses between policy and practice in relation to the pupil selection process in the preparation scheme in 1961. In this sense, the chapter explores three research questions that connect with contemporary research literature, emphasizing the complexities (Ydesen, 2021) of education policy formation, as well as the inherent political dimension of policies and practices (Ozga, 2020):

- Which values and discourses about pupil selection criteria are in evidence in different arenas of the education system?
- Which priorities, agendas, and means were promoted in different arenas of the education system shaping the pupil selection processes?
- How can the recontextualization processes between the different arenas of the education system be understood?

To explore these questions, the chapter zooms in on the meaning-making surrounding the new policy instrument in the MfG in Copenhagen, the School Directorate in Godthåb, and the Greenlandic school districts. In terms of education policy research, exploring the launch, implementation, and enactment of the preparation scheme in 1961, including the roles of key actors, allows for an investigation of agency and politics and how they shaped nexuses of policy and practice in national, regional, and local arenas in the Danish–Greenlandic education system.

Theoretical Underpinnings, Methodology, and Chapter Structure

Theoretically, the chapter draws on postcolonial theory (Niedrig & Ydesen, 2011) to understand the historical context and mechanisms at play. A core feature of postcolonial theory is its focus on uneven distributions of power hinging on racial, ethnic, or cultural constructions of the other as inferior, deficient, and in need of

intervention. This is often described as processes of ‘othering’ taking place discursively and as part of a dispositif, understood in Foucauldian terms as a power–knowledge complex (Velho & Thomas-Olalde, 2011). This lens is suitable for understanding the power positions among actors and the value system behind and inherent in the selection process of the preparation scheme. Another feature of postcolonial theory is a focus on the centre–periphery dynamics leading to the development of new identities, practices, and cultural hybrids. As contended by Stoler and Cooper (1997), it is necessary to bring ‘metropole and colony, colonisers and colonised into one analytical field’ (p. 15). This dimension offers valuable insights for our analysis of how a new selection practice was developed in a postcolonial context, because it points to the constitutive interactions between arenas.

In congruence with the postcolonial lens and for a distinct focus on the interactions and influences across the three arenas – Copenhagen, Godthåb, and the Greenlandic school districts – we draw on the twin concept of uploading and downloading put forth by Prøitz (2015). These arenas constitute three distinct but interacting and mutually shaping spaces in which the policy–practice nexuses of the preparation scheme were developed. The arenas remain distinct, because they encompass different actors, authorities, mandates, and functions, as well as different speeds and experiences of time and urgencies.

Finally, to engage with the policy dimension of the preparation scheme, we use the theoretical concepts of policy instrument and instrument constituencies. In this sense, the chapter draws inspiration from the works of Lascoumes and LeGales (2007) and Simons and Voß (2018). These concepts permit the chapter to focus explicitly on the preparation scheme and the development of its selection process, including the recruitment of protagonists, the agency behind instrument design, the social enactment of instruments, and how the instrument came to shape the policy–practice nexuses across arenas according to their own logic.

We find the identified theoretical concepts heuristically compatible with each other, since they all have different foci and add supplementary perspectives. While the postcolonial lens offers insights into the contextual workings of the system, the other theoretical concepts allow us to focus on the preparation scheme and the interactions between arenas, respectively. The centre–periphery dynamics are epitomized in the uploading and downloading perspectives on the arenas.

In terms of chronology, we limit our investigation to cover only the first year of the preparation scheme, after the Copenhagen/Greenland arena had issued its basic guidelines for launching the scheme in general and assessing the children in particular. The year 1961 was when the scheme was developed, recontextualized and translated across arenas. In this sense, a focus on that year offers a privileged lens into understanding the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around a new policy instrument in the making.

The chapter draws on archival material harvested from the Greenlandic Department for Culture, Education, Research, and Church (KIIN Archive) and The Danish National Archives/Rigsarkivet (RA), as well as primary sources in the shape of reports from key events and historical publications from the leading actors of the

time. The KIIN Archive material consists of correspondence between the arenas, as well as concrete recommendations of pupils from the school districts.

In the next section, we introduce a case study to add important points about the context, with the purpose of establishing a necessary frame of analysis. An analysis of the downloading and uploading processes across the three arenas follows. The concluding discussion looks across the three arenas and engages with the research questions, presenting a summary of the insights gathered from this research endeavour.

Introducing the Case Study

Following a constitutional revision in 1953, Greenland effectively went from being a Danish colony to becoming an integrated county in the Kingdom of Denmark. This newly given status, at the time, was part of a decolonizing process after World War II, when the newly formed UN pushed its agenda globally. In 1955, the Directorate for Greenland was transformed into the Ministry for Greenland (MfG), signalling an era of more active and transformative policies in Greenland.

The Greenlandic education system consisted of 18 school districts – often coinciding with the old colonial districts (Gad, 1984) – organized under the auspices of the School Directorate in Godthåb. They were headed by a school inspector, and each comprised a teachers' council.⁴ Even though the MfG in Copenhagen held economic control and served as the highest authority in governing Greenland, the School Directorate achieved a significant degree of autonomy, such that the educational field stood out as a rather special case in the governing of Greenland. It was the only area with a local administration in Greenland, while all other areas had to 'ask homewards', as it was put; that is, consult the Danish executive (Ydesen, 2011; 1950 Education Act, §3). This autonomy was reflected in the authorization of the School Directorate to issue administration circulars without consulting the MfG.

This significant autonomy was partly due to a history of autonomy dating back to when the church ran the educational system, an autonomy rooted in the vast geographical distances in Greenland and the heterogeneous nature of Greenlandic schools. Moreover, being a large, nationwide institution, the educational system had long assumed a strong position within the administration of Greenland. However, part of the explanation can also be found in a lack of pedagogical competence in the MfG caused by scant contact between the MfG and the Danish Ministry of Education (Stærmose, 1960). Pedagogical expertise at the MfG relied heavily on the school inspectors they employed, who functioned as day-to-day liaison officers with the School Directorate in Godthåb and as ministerial advisors. The school inspectors mostly participated in the process of employing Danish teachers for the Greenlandic

⁴Grønlands Statistik, Statistisk Årbog, *Grønlands skolevæsen 1968–1969*, Nuuk, 1970, p. 6 f.

educational system and in the selection and preparation of teaching resources for Greenland (Jensen, 2001). These points clearly indicate that major decisions regarding the Greenlandic educational system – including decisions about curricula and assessments – were made by the School Directorate. From the perspective of local and remote schools in Greenland, however, the educational system remained a highly centralized system, not least because the School Directorate controlled budgeting, supplies and distribution, and personnel policies, as well as all building and maintenance activities (Jensen, 1998).

A key education issue in the 1950s was the expansion of the role of the Danish language in Greenland. The MfG pursued a policy of Greenlandic children needing to improve their Danish language skills to receive a higher educational level and to thereby become a more integrated part of Denmark (Ydesen, 2011). The ethnic Greenlandic school director Christian Berthelsen (1916–2015) wrote, ‘The road to further education for the young Greenlandic goes ... through a certain mastering of the Danish language’.⁵ In a retrospective article, Berthelsen (2008), reflecting on his time as school director in Godthåb, emphasized, ‘Time and time again, I was expressly told that my most important task was to teach the Danish language to the youth growing up’ (p. 13).

There was a clear postcolonial dimension to this policy. Many administrators in Greenland had strong modernization ambitions for Greenlandic society, and these ambitions were legitimated by an understanding of traditional Greenlandic culture being obsolete. An early example comes from the ethnic Dane Finn Gad (1911–1986), who was a historian and lecturer at the teacher’s college in Godthåb from 1937 to 1946. About Greenlandic culture, Gad (1946) wrote, ‘Just as the material culture has been able to evolve to a certain point and then reached a standstill, it is typical that also the spiritual culture has evolved to a certain point and then not one step further’ (p. 37). The quotation reveals a clear evolutionary, hierarchical view of culture that clearly places Greenlandic culture in an inferior position. Another example is provided by Berthelsen, who, in a 1972 report on the past 20 years of development in the Greenlandic educational system, constantly referred to the Greenlandic sealing society as ‘static’, to contrast it with the apparently ‘dynamic’ Danish industrialized society as a role model (p. 10). The same notion is also reflected in the writings of former educational psychologist and headmaster of the Greenlandic Teachers College, the ethnic Greenlandic Ingmar Egede (1930–2003): ‘many children and youngsters interpret the position of the Greenlandic language in school as an expression that the language, and thus the way of life, with which it is connected, is inferior’ (Egede, 1976, p. 16). Thus, a picture emerges of a postcolonial mindset shared within a group of administrators consisting of both ethnic Danes and an ethnic Greenlandic elite. As argued by Rud (2019), the Greenlandic elite had long been eager to achieve the same rights and opportunities as the Danes in terms of legal position, education, social mobility, political influence, and economy.

⁵ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 0670-05-01, 1966/67, sheet 4.

However, the implication was often that the Greenlandic elite had to make a ‘cultural leap’ to achieve these benefits.

However, besides the postcolonial dimension of the language policy in the Greenlandic education system, there was a material dimension. In the 1950s, there was a marked shortage of teachers, meaning that ethnic Danish teachers had to be employed in Greenland who could only teach in Danish, and therefore, over time, it became increasingly important for Greenlandic pupils to improve their Danish language skills.

By 1961, the privileged position of the Danish language in Greenland meant that the preparation scheme saw the light of day. Its purpose was, among others, to improve the Greenlandic children’s Danish language skills to enable them to pass the lower secondary school exam faster than children who went to school in Greenland.⁶ At the time, the language barriers between Greenlandic and Danish meant that it took 2–3 years more to produce a lower secondary school graduate in Greenland than in Denmark.⁷ When the scheme was first launched in 1961, it discursively professed the ‘home sending’ of 26 ethnic Greenlandic children (13 girls and 13 boys), who had to obtain 1 year of schooling in Denmark.⁸ Concurrently, the same number of children was selected to be schooled for 1 year in Godthåb, so the success of schooling in Denmark could be compared with the year of schooling in Greenland.⁹

The Greenlandic school system consisted of a four-year lower secondary school, in addition to a seven-year mandatory public school. It was a widespread opinion among teachers in Greenland – many of whom were ethnic Danish – that Greenlandic children did not possess the necessary maturity to enter lower secondary school, which is why a one- or two-year preparation class was added between the two modules, finishing with an entrance exam (Ydesen, 2011) (Fig. 7.1).¹⁰

Another key development was a scheme of streaming pupils in Greenland. The 1950 Education Act meant the division of pupils into A and B classes¹¹ after second grade at ‘feasible locations’ (§ 10). Two years later, in 1952, the scheme was implemented in the four major urban schools of Egedesminde [*Asiaat*], Julianehåb, Holsteinsborg [*Sisimiut*], and Godthåb (Jensen, 2001, p. 127).

The purpose of the streaming scheme was to create a stream (the B classes), where pupils would be taught several subjects in Danish. This stream was created for children who had a better starting point than others for learning Danish. Conversely, the A classes were intended for less-skilled Danish-speaking pupils, who would only be taught Danish as a foreign language (Gam, 1968; Rasmussen,

⁶RA, MfG, journalsager1957–89, nr. 1203-07-00 and KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961.

⁷KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

⁸KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

⁹KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961, sheet 2: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹⁰KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹¹The terms A and B classes do not refer to a ranking system, but reflect the streaming of children into non-academic [*almen*] and academic [*boglig*] classes.

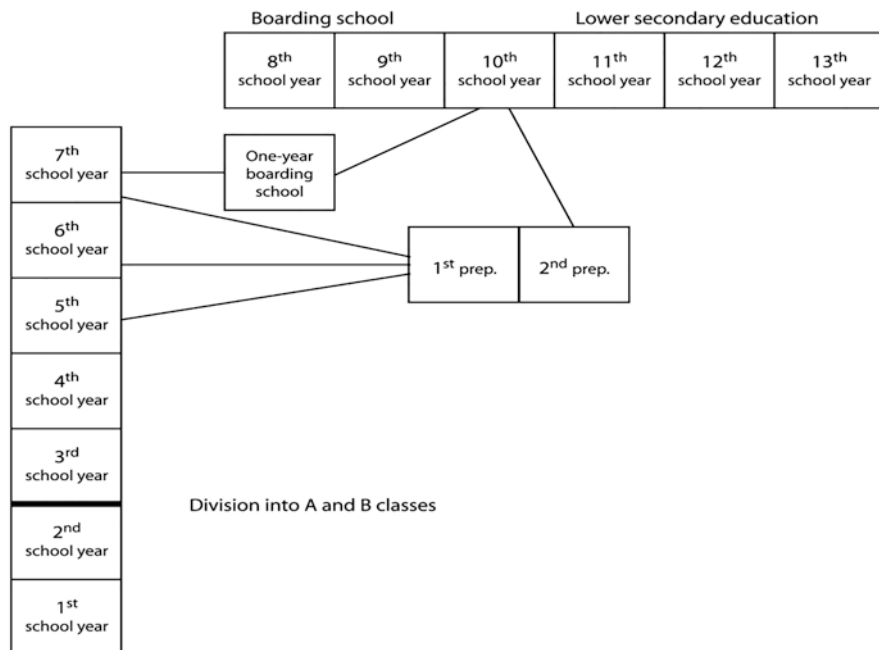


Fig. 7.1 The Greenlandic education system according to the 1950 Education Act. (Reproduced from Ydesen, 2011, p. 185)

2005). Since, at that time, Danish was the only language that could provide an entrance ticket to higher education, it also meant that the pupils placed in the B classes now suddenly gained an elitist status compared to their fellow pupils from the A classes (Ydesen, 2011).

The Copenhagen/Godthåb Arenas: Downloading the Preparation Scheme

The idea of sending Greenlandic children to Denmark for education was raised decades before the start of the scheme in 1961. As early as 1921, the idea of sending Greenlandic children to Denmark was put forth by the Danish geographer Sophie Petersen (1885–1965), and, during the 1959 Greenlandic National Congress, the issue was raised by Greenland's first school director, the ethnic Dane Mikael Gam (1901–1982) (Ydesen, 2011). Gam even proposed sending all children from the B classes to Denmark to promote a principle of bilingualism (Jensen, 2001). Thus, when the scheme started, political backing was secured, not least because Gam had become Danish Minister for Greenland in Copenhagen in 1960.

Nevertheless, Berthelsen, who took over the office of school director as Gam's successor in 1960, expressed serious concerns about the scheme. First, Berthelsen believed that the abrupt and profound change of environment could have damaging effects on some of the children. Second, he felt that his task was to secure and expand the Greenlandic school system in Greenland, not in Denmark. Third, Berthelsen doubted that the scheme would generate any cost reduction in Greenland, remaining unconvinced that the 350,000–400,000 DKK budget for the preparation scheme would not be better spent in Greenland. Fourth, Berthelsen found that the scheme of sending children on a one-year school trip to Denmark was 'an artificial intervention' in the Greenlandic school system. However, Berthelsen was put under pressure by the local teacher councils in Greenland and the MfG to endorse the preparation scheme, and eventually Berthelsen proved to be a loyal and careful civil servant who would not try to obstruct Gam's plans for the new scheme (Ydesen, 2011).

Berthelsen was, however, not the only one to raise concerns about the new scheme. In a pupil evaluation from Holsteinsborg in June 1961, explicit concerns were expressed about the psychological impact of the cultural 'repotting', as it was expressed.¹² So, while Berthelsen saw the preparation scheme as a temporary initiative, Gam saw the process as a more permanent program right from the start. Gam stated that 'if the plan is met with understanding, both from schools and parents, it is highly conceivable that it will continue in the years to come'.¹³ In this sense, the roll-out of the preparation scheme has a distinct top-down power component that clearly reflects a hierarchy between Copenhagen and Godthåb and perhaps even also gives an indication of the limits of how much power an ethnic Greenlandic civil servant could obtain.

The main operational component of the preparation scheme as a policy instrument was the development of a pupil selection process. This is where the values and discourses most vividly found an expression, but also where it is possible to find a glimpse of the priorities, agendas, and means inherent in the preparation scheme. Pupil selection criteria are at the core of the different enactments of the policy instrument – that is, the policy–practice nexuses – and they therefore constitute the content issued to be downloaded by subordinate arenas in the Danish–Greenlandic education system.

As indicated in the minutes from a central meeting at the MfG in June 1961, the development of pupil selection criteria for local schools was something that both the School Directorate in Godthåb and the MfG came up with together. In this sense, it does not make sense to distinguish between Copenhagen and Godthåb in the formulation phase of the preparation scheme. Instead, the selection criteria are the expression of the joint agenda and discourse of the administration permeated by a postcolonial mindset. The school director, Berthelsen, stated the overall and important guidelines to follow in the assessment process to be¹⁴

¹² KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961. This concern of Holsteinsborg was shared by many teachers in Greenland.

¹³ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, 1961, læg 2: Minutes from a Meeting in the MfG on 19 June 1961.

¹⁴ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Minutes from a MfG Meeting on 19 June 1961.

1. The pupils' endowments
2. Danish language proficiency
3. The parents' unequivocal support
4. The pupils' physical and mental stability

At first, the call was for the selection of 25 children, but the number was quite quickly changed to 26, to identify 13 boys and 13 girls. The number of children to be selected was defined by the economic frame of the scheme, as well as a consideration of gender composition. At the same time, the essential experimental nature of the scheme aiming to compare pupils at the Godthåb boarding school with pupils sent to Denmark was at the forefront of the scheme, right from the outset. This distinct experimental dimension of the scheme testifies to the social engineering approach taken by the authorities in this matter. The agenda was to identify the fastest and most efficient path to the modernization of Greenland in the image of Denmark. Berthelsen was a key arbiter in the scheme, holding independent authority as school director and tasked with communication, mediation, and liaison between the MfG in Copenhagen and the local schools in Greenland.

The fact that Berthelsen was the one formulating the selection guidelines indicates the autonomy of the School Directorate. In this sense, Berthelsen became a key co-constructor of the preparation scheme as formatted in the Copenhagen arena. One interpretation is that the centre–periphery relations became blurred. More specifically, however, the strong involvement of the School Directorate in the design of the preparation scheme is an indication that the centre–periphery relations follow a different recipe, which is better understood in terms of cultural scripts and priorities than along lines of ethnicity and bureaucratic hierarchies. Although the motives could have been different, the cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Godthåb seem to have common ground *vis-à-vis* Greenlandic culture, which was seen as inadequate for the world of tomorrow. It thus became an object of a modernization process, and this started with education and the school.

The Local School Arena

When news of the preparation scheme reached the local arena in Greenland, the schools found themselves with only an overall set of guidelines on how to evaluate and nominate their pupils. In other words, the guidelines often raised more questions than they answered. Being left with such a sparse set of guidelines to follow in the selection of school children for the scheme, in many cases the schools ended up downloading different interpretations on how to nominate their pupils. Consequently, the practices being adopted were far from aligned or unilateral across the Greenlandic school arena.

As demonstrated in Fig. 7.2, there was generally considerable discrepancy between the number of pupils nominated for a one-year school stay in Denmark and the number of pupils selected for the preparation scheme. This pattern could be interpreted as indicating that interest in participating in the preparation scheme was

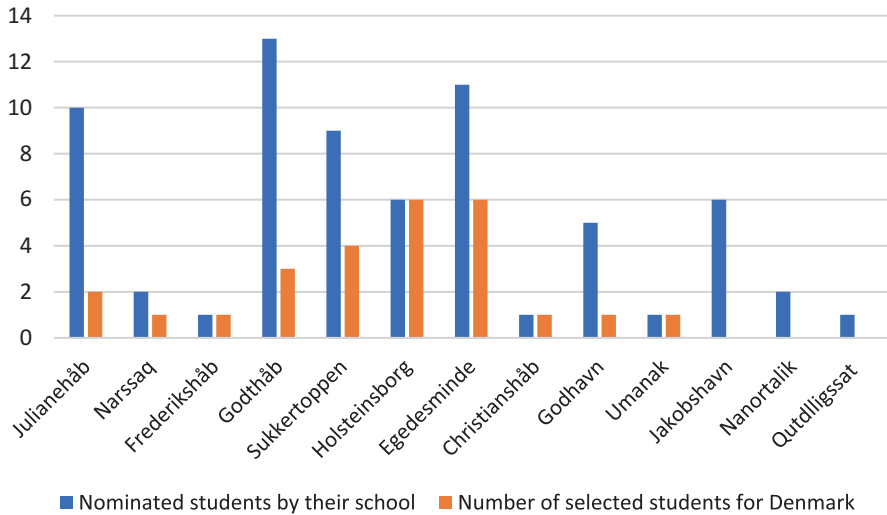


Fig. 7.2 Nomination and selection of school pupils for 1 year of schooling in Denmark

much greater than the actual number of places available. In this sense, an alignment of expectations between the different arenas had not taken place. The procedure was for the local schools to upload their pupil nominations in a prioritized ranking, and the School Directorate in Godthåb would then make the final selection of pupils. A total of 70 pupils from various schools around the country were nominated for the one-year school stay in Denmark, which the School Directorate would narrow down to 26. This procedure left the School Directorate with the deciding voice, and it clearly put the schools in a dependent position. Therefore, it is particularly interesting why some schools' nominations were severely reduced, while a few nominations precisely matched the number of final selections. Most notable is the school of Holsteinsborg, as shown in Fig. 7.2. To unpack these patterns and determine how the policy instrument was downloaded in the local school arena, it is necessary to delve into the archival communications from the local school arena to the Godthåb arena.

At the Sukkertoppen [*Maniitsoq*] school, a letter from the head teacher to the School Directorate in response to the call for the nomination of suitable pupils stated,

[The pupils] are nominated according to giftedness, based on the school's assessment. I have nominated them all for a stay in Denmark, because their parents all have been very interested and because I believe their proficiency levels are such that they will manage and because I consider them to be so mature that they should have a good chance of improving under different and foreign conditions. The pupils from 6b have also been listed in numerical order, but it is perhaps doubtful whether No. 1 and No. 2 are better than 3 and 4, but the first two are much more Danish speaking and influenced, so I believe that the school's nomination covers the selection quite well.¹⁵

¹⁵ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the school of Sukkertoppen, 29 May 1961.

First, it is noteworthy that the school argues along the lines of the guidelines issued by the Copenhagen/Godthåb arena. It emphasizes the support of the parents and the pupils' endowments. However, the response also reveals a lack of precision in ranking the nominated pupils. In this case, giftedness is a key indicator, while the postcolonial mindset also comes to the fore when 'Danish speaking and influenced' is used as an argument for selecting children. This indicates that the schools were left with significant room for interpretation and local assessments. This interpretation is substantiated in the communications from other schools.

The uploading from the Julianehåb school expressed severe doubts about how many pupils they could nominate, and they therefore decided to send a list of 10 pupil names, with a remark that they could just as easily have nominated 10 more pupils (see the opening quote). The school seems to have experienced great difficulty in prioritizing a ranking of the recommended pupils. Therefore, it added a comment recommending that some pupils be assessed similarly, since they were found to be equally talented. Again, the element of local assessments comes to the fore, but the attempt to maximize the number of pupils being selected from Julianehåb could even be seen as an attempt to redefine the criteria anchored in local needs and priorities. On the other hand, the letter from Julianehåb does emphasize the two best-ranked pupils, who were described as much more proficient than the other pupils. Eventually, the School Directorate chose to select precisely those two pupils for the school stay in Denmark, which indicates that pupil endowment seems to have been a key criterion in the preparation scheme.

In the smaller town of Nanortalik, the school nominated only two pupils for the scheme. Compared to Julianehåb, which had nominated 10 pupils, the picture emerging from Nanortalik is very different. An interesting explanation for this reverse picture is found in the letter from Nanortalik to Berthelsen. The letter tells a story about how the Julianehåb head teacher, Stærmosé, had been involved in the Nanortalik nominations:

The head teacher from Julianehåb took part in testing the pupils and said that we should write the following about the pupils, 'Just before the arrival of your telegram 6093, we had an entry exam for the boarding school conducted by School Inspector Stærmosé, Julianehåb. I therefore asked the school inspector if he thought there were obvious cases in this district. He replied that I should nominate the tested pupils from this school not as obvious, but as fairly good cases. Out of these there were only three whose parents unambiguously wanted it'.¹⁶

The quote clearly indicates that Stærmosé exerted influence in the nomination process of pupils from Nanortalik. It therefore becomes relevant to identify what seems like a shadow criterion in the nomination process, namely, the power play between the schools and districts in Greenland. Stærmosé, an ethnic Dane, was a man with great influence and power in the Greenlandic education arena. In 1957, he became the convenor of all teachers in Greenland¹⁷ and, in 1961, he became the

¹⁶KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the School of Nanortalik, 31 May 1961.

¹⁷*Atuagagdliutit*, 97(22), 16 (24 October 1957).

school consultant with the MfG,¹⁸ which allowed him to operate as a cross-arena arbiter wielding considerable capital in the Danish–Greenlandic education system. It is striking how Stærmosé found it possible to nominate only two pupils from Nanortalik, while his own school in Julianehåb could easily have nominated 20 pupils. This case with Stærmosé also indicates that gatekeeping also had some kind of influence in the selection process, or at least it seems to be the case in the most southern part of Greenland, where both schools/towns were located.

A different aspect that could also have played a role in the nomination process is that of the economy. Berthelsen felt the great distances between all the small towns in Greenland were causing problems in terms of resource distribution and education standards and, therefore, also for the modernization project of Greenland. In a 1963 meeting at the School Directorate, Berthelsen is quoted in the minutes as having said, ‘I suppose it must be considered as wishful thinking to stop the population growth in the remote areas, let alone achieve that half the population of the remote areas would leave the areas (...).¹⁹ It is therefore reasonable to assume that the economy and geography played a role in the preparation scheme.²⁰ As reflected in the November 1960 planning meeting for the preparation scheme, ‘the School Director noted that the expenses associated with a one-year school stay in Denmark had been estimated at 350,000–400,000 DKK per year’.²¹ However, that cost could have been higher for children coming from remote areas, because of transportation expenses, and that would have had implications for the spending ceiling of the preparation scheme.²²

As indicated, Holsteinsborg school is an interesting case, because it was successful in having all their nominated pupils selected. Apparently, the school also had doubts about how many pupils could be afforded for a year of schooling in Denmark. The school decided to recommend six pupils for the scheme. Interestingly, the school decided to make a special recommendation for the Godthåb classes, rather than just for the Denmark classes:

¹⁸ *Atuagagdliutit*, 101(15), 18 (13 July 1961).

¹⁹ RA, MfG, journalsager 1957–89, nr. 1200-01-03: Minutes from a Meeting in the School Directorate in Greenland on 11 December 1963. The urge to depopulate the remote areas of Greenland is also reflected in the extensive Danish government reports of 1950 and 1960. In 2022, the Danish Broadcasting Corporation revealed that some 4500 Greenlandic girls and women had contraceptive intrauterine devices inserted against their will or without their consent in the 1960s and 1970s. The rationale behind this procedure was increasing expenses for the Danish state in Greenland. In June 2022, the Danish Ministry of Health launched an independent investigation into what happened during what has now been dubbed the spiral scandal. See <https://www.dr.dk/lyd/p1/spiralkampagnen>

²⁰ It should be duly mentioned that the administrators of the preparation scheme in the 1970s gave children from remote areas preference, since they were seen as being most in need of Danish language skills (Ydesen, 2011).

²¹ KIIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1960: Minutes from the School Directorate meeting in Greenland Monday, 21 November 1960.

²² *Ibid*

Of course, there are too many pupils for these experiments, but we hope that some of the pupils recommended for the first lower secondary school grade will be directly accepted. Here we ignore the regular recommendation and add the following comments: Godthåb 1–4 are recommended here because their Danish language skills are so good that they are not in urgent need of the extra training a school stay in Denmark would give them.²³

Thus, in the Holsteinsborg letter, it is possible to find another reinterpretation and intention of the initial scheme of the MfG. Instead of nominating their most skilled pupils for the one-year stay in Denmark, they selected these to go to Godthåb and then selected their next best pupils to go to Denmark. This selection was based on an argument that the next best pupils would benefit more from a stay in Denmark. The example of Holsteinsborg shows how the selection process could be interpreted very differently, and it clearly demonstrates agency in terms of uploading its own policy about which pupils would benefit most from a school stay in Denmark. The Holsteinsborg approach even seems to have been the most successful in terms of having its wishes fulfilled.

The very different policy enactments reflected in the uploading responses to Godthåb indicate that several concerns were important to the local schools, including the parents' wishes, teachers' assessments, and the general promotion of the community by putting as many pupils on the modernization track as possible. At the same time, the analysis indicates the existence of shadow criteria in the nomination and selection processes, where the postcolonial mindset is revealed. We have seen indications of power play between schools, strategic calculations of how to best push one's agenda, and local interpretations, priorities, and assessments, but also how the somewhat random influence of parents would sometimes tip the balance in favour of their child. In a telegram from the school director to the MfG dated 27 June 1961, it is highlighted how 'many parents want to send their children on a school trip to Denmark'.²⁴ The response resonates with the responses from both Godhavn [*Qeqertarsuaq*] and Sukkertoppen of parents pushing the school to nominate their children. In this sense, a picture can be drawn where the parents were generally positively disposed towards sending their children to Denmark. The sources contain several parental complaints about rejections, and, in some cases, the parents even offered to pay for the school trip themselves (Ydesen, 2011).

The Godthåb/Copenhagen Arenas: Uploading the Preparation Scheme

In this section, we investigate how the uploads from the local school arena were processed and reshaped by the School Directorate in Godthåb and uploaded to the Copenhagen arena. Starting with insight into Berthelsen's own selection process of

²³ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Nominations from the school of Holsteinsborg, 3 June 1961.

²⁴ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961.

the pupils, it is possible to obtain a better perspective of how he interpreted his own guidelines and how he downloaded the expectations of the kind of pupils he was supposed to select.

On 17 July 1961, Berthelsen wrote a letter to the MfG that addressed his selection of the 26 pupils. In this letter it becomes clear that the uploaded agendas from the various schools did not directly affect Berthelsen's selection process enough to steer him away from his own understandings and agenda. What becomes very explicit in Berthelsen's upload is a wish to select the most European/civilized children for the one-year school stay. In his letter, he is focused on pointing out how Greenlandic children, apart from those living in the south of Greenland, are not familiar with so-called European conditions:

Conditions in the southern part of Greenland seem more civilized. A profession such as sheep breeding is not well known outside the Julianehåb area. Children from the northern part of Greenland are more familiar with the stricter climatic conditions, while the conditions in the south provide greater opportunities for the introduction of European-style conditions.²⁵

In a theoretical lens, the discourse about Greenlandic children in the quote certainly contains a considerable degree of othering, where the otherness of Greenlandic children – in light of a notion of Europeanness – seems to be increasing on a continuum from the centre to the periphery. Berthelsen's remarks appears almost apologetic for the pupils' non-Europeanness. This is perhaps to align expectations with the MfG. Berthelsen continues,

For all school children, it applies – as already mentioned – that they are much closer to nature in everyday life and, to the children, the schools in Denmark will seem very orderly and beautiful ... the children will discover that time with minutes and seconds play a dominant role in Denmark, while, in Greenland, people have a somewhat lighter attitude to being late, for example, for meals. They will find that everything in Denmark is minutely planned.²⁶

The focus on the comparison between very strict Danish punctuality versus a more unstructured time perception among Greenlanders reveals that the criteria of being civilized, punctual, and European are central for the final selection of the candidates of the preparation scheme. Given a closer look at the schools from which most children were selected, it becomes clear that most of them came from the larger urban schools operating with a B stream (most notably Holsteinsborg). This is a clear indication that Berthelsen saw these children as those best suited to fit into a Danish context.

In a postcolonial lens, the upload from Berthelsen is interesting, because it indicates that he felt a need to even make reservations vis-à-vis the MfG about the best pupils he could find. It seems that not even children who lived up to the

²⁵ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Letter to the MfG about which pupils the school director selected for the one-year school stay in Denmark, 17 July 1961.

²⁶ KIIN Archive, j.nr. 949.3, sheet 2, 1961: Letter to the MfG about which pupils the school director selected for the one-year school stay in Denmark, 17 July 1961.

selection criteria were deemed to be equal to the Danish standards of being civilized. What Berthelsen provided in this sense were 26 children who were perhaps best positioned to make the cultural leap from Greenlandishness to Danishness. In his retrospective article from 1976, Ingmar Egede wrote the following about the Greenlandic education system: ‘Planning and development have happened on Western European conditions and the carriers of societal functions are Danes and the few Greenlanders who have made the big cultural leap’ (p. 10). In this sense, the upload from Berthelsen to the MfG reflects a selection process in which the children considered most apt to make the cultural leap – and who would minimize the risks identified by Berthelsen in his initial concerns about the preparation scheme – were selected.

Concluding Discussion: Looking across the Arenas

In this concluding discussion, we return to our purpose with the chapter, to analyse the emergence of policy–practice nexuses revolving around a new policy instrument, using the context and case of the 1961 preparation scheme in Greenland as our object of analysis.

Through our analysis, we have demonstrated how a policy instrument was recontextualized in a downloading and subsequent uploading process between the MfG in Copenhagen, the School Directorate in Godthåb, and the local school districts in Greenland. In this sense, the context displays a clear centre–periphery dimension that also entailed a salient power dimension. In the initial negotiations about the roll-out of the policy instrument, school director Berthelsen expressed serious concerns about the expediency of the scheme. Berthelsen was backed by voices from the local school districts. In this process, the MfG stood firm, and the plans for rolling out the preparation scheme were upheld. Once the decision had been made, the new policy instrument seems to have broadly gained a keen instrument constituency across the arenas. Berthelsen and other leading actors, such as Stærmose, played important roles and exerted considerable agency in the enactment of the policy instrument. It is important to note that the instrument constituency of the preparation scheme was not limited to these leading actors. Instead, local teachers, school leaders, and even parents subscribed to the core idea of the preparation scheme, namely, the one-year school stay in Denmark to improve Greenlandic children’s Danish language skills and thus put them in a privileged position as vital cogs in the modernization of Greenlandic society in the image of Denmark.

The political construction of the policy instrument and the emergence of an instrument constituency cannot be understood without considering the distinct postcolonial setting of the Greenlandic education system in the 1960s. The postcolonial compass meant the establishment of a cultural hierarchy placing

Danish culture at the top and Greenlandic culture at the bottom. The value yardstick upholding this hierarchy consisted of desires for modernization, progress, industrialization, economic growth, and prosperity. Although, there could be disagreement about how these goals should be achieved between Greenland and Denmark, these desires had long been shared by the Greenlandic elite, and, in this sense, a rather conducive environment for the enactment of the preparation scheme ranging from the centre to the periphery eventually came into existence. We have argued that the underlying condition for this to happen was an alignment of the cultural scripts between Copenhagen and Godthåb, positioning Greenland as an object of a modernization process. Education and schooling were at the forefront of this process.

However, even though the ideas and goals of the preparation scheme resonated across the arenas, this did not mean that the recontextualization process would run smoothly or encompass aligned agendas and shared understandings. Our analysis has demonstrated several different interpretations and considerations in – and between – the MfG/Godthåb and school district arenas. This finding testifies to the agency of key actors seeking to modify the policy instrument and push their own agendas by exploiting ambiguities and creating arguments that would benefit local interests and agendas. In the arena of the School Directorate, it is notable that Berthelsen greatly reduced the number of pupils recommended by the school districts for the preparation scheme in accordance with the 26-pupil ceiling of the programme. Some schools' recommendations, however, were modified more than others. In this sense, Holsteinsborg stands out as the only district with a match between the number of pupils recommended and the final number of pupils selected.

Our focus on the pupil selection criteria has revealed several interesting findings arising in the intersections and downloading/uploading processes between arenas. Local schools received the selection criteria issued by the School Directorate in very different ways, and they pursued different strategies in their uploading to the Godthåb arena, not least because of local idiosyncrasies and the vast geographical distances in Greenland. Even so, a picture emerges of local schools being generally concerned with the parents' wishes, teachers' assessments, and the general promotion of the community by having as many suitable pupils selected in the preparation scheme as possible. At the same time, the analysis indicates the existence of shadow criteria in the nomination and selection processes, where we have seen indications of power play between schools, gatekeepers, and strategic calculations about how to best push one's agenda. Berthelsen went to great lengths to align expectations with the MfG in his upload of the final selections. It is plausible that Berthelsen tried to compensate for some of his initial concerns about the preparation scheme in his selection. Again, the postcolonial setting comes strongly to the fore in Berthelsen's correspondence to the MfG, where the otherness of Greenlandic children – in light of a notion of Europeanness – seems to be increasing on a continuum from the geographical centre to the periphery.

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