WRITING CULTURES IN DANISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Part I and II

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Overview

- **Part 1 Research framework and main findings**
- **Part 2: Empirical findings from a comparative case study**
- Questions, comments, discussion

Part 1:

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND MAIN FINDINGS

Introducing WLLW

Starting points: Two assumptions about 'new conditions'

- 'The new writing society'
  (Karlsson 2006; see also e.g. Bazerman 2008; MacArthur et al. 2006; Kress 2003)

- A 'discursive turn' in the understanding of teaching and learning/'Didaktik' (Ongstad, 2006, Prior 1998)

Research questions: What do these new conditions mean for

- the ways *school* writing is understood and realized in teaching practices

- *students'* writing trajectories and the patterns of identification with and negotiation of literacies

- the disciplinary writing/Didaktik of school *subjects?*
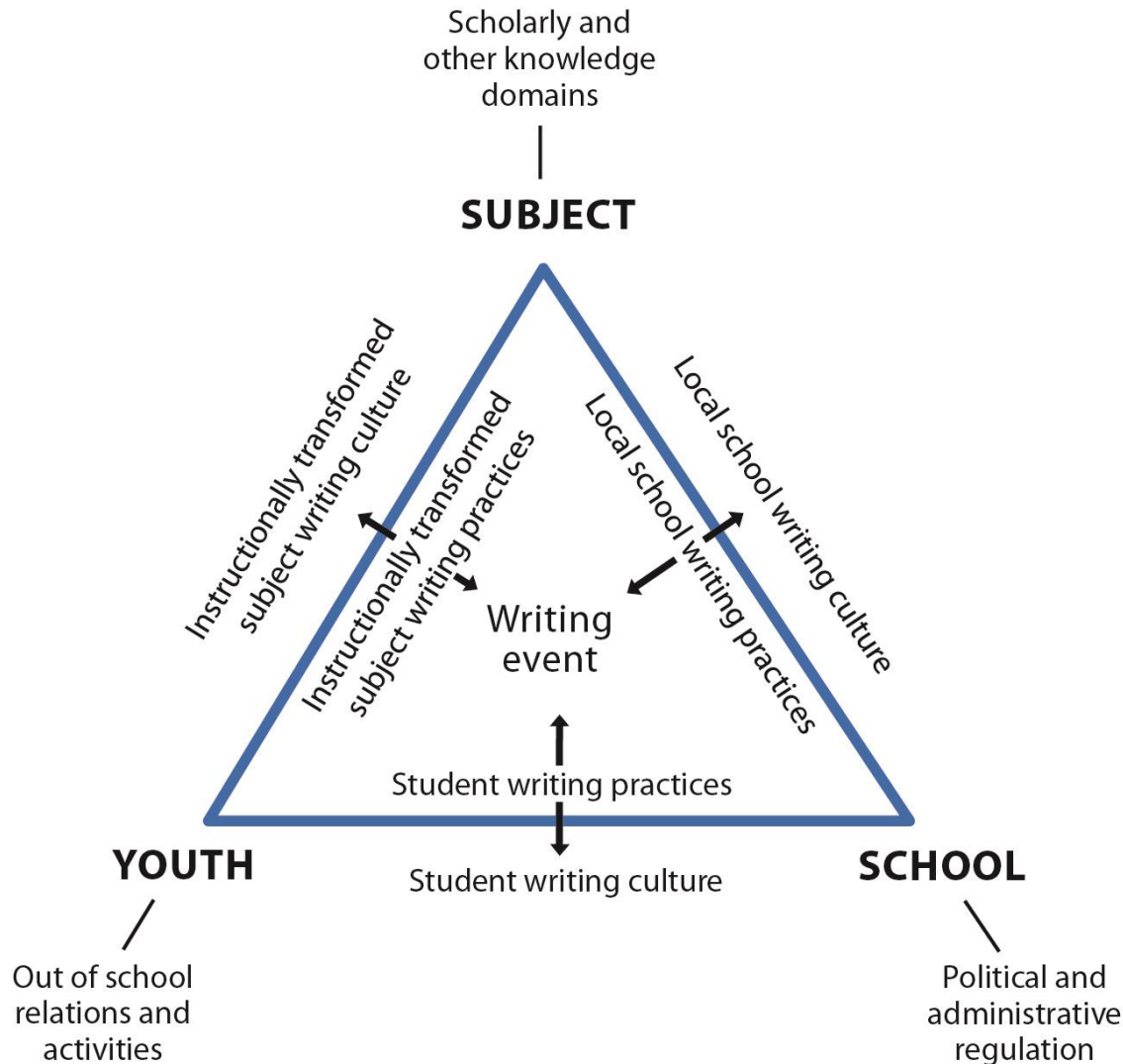
Research design and data sources

- Pilot study 2009-2010
  - 3 researchers, no external funding, focus grade 9 (age 15), recruiting of participating students for longitudinal study

- Full scale study 2010-2014
  - 10 researchers, research grant, focus grades 10-12, expanded design, 6 students' writing in longitudinal perspective and thematic disciplinary studies. A total of 20 students and 13 schools

- Ethnographic methodology of data generation
  - Classroom and virtual participant observations; collecting writing prompts; (assignment tasks); students' assignments and other writing; teacher feedback; interviews, particularly with students; other contextual data on meso and macro level; small-scale surveys at participating schools

Theoretical framework

The sociocultural tradition in literacy studies (Vygotsky 1986, Bakhtin 1986; cf. also Prior 2006)

- *[se abstract: to perspektiver]*

Modelling the research object

Scholarly and other knowledge domains

SUBJECT

Instructionally transformed subject writing culture

Instructionally transformed subject writing practices

Local school writing culture

Local school writing practices

Writing event

Student writing practices

YOUTH

Student writing culture

SCHOOL

Out of school relations and activities

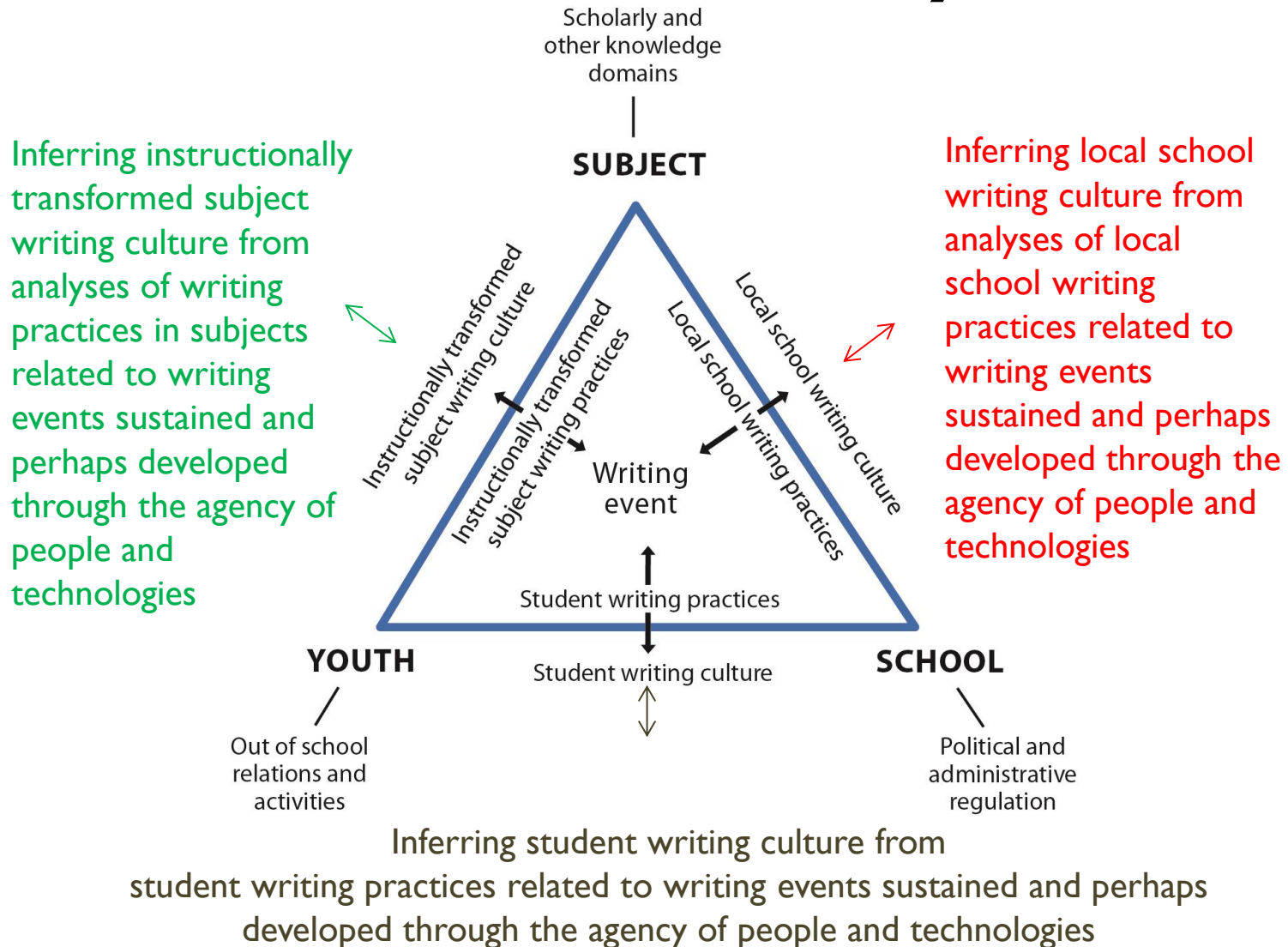Political and administrative regulation

Part 2:

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS FROM A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

The Case study

- Three cases being explored in the pilot study; The East School, The South West School, and The North West school

- Criterion for case selection: 'convenience principle' (Bryman 2004) → initially, case types were unclear, but seemed to be exemplifying cases

- Research question: *What characterises the writing culture in Danish secondary education as in the case of three schools?*

- My hypothesis is that the writing culture at The South West School could be characterized as 'literacy interested'

How to analyze writing culture at the three schools in year 9

Scholarly and other knowledge domains

SUBJECT

Inferring instructionally transformed subject writing culture from analyses of writing practices in subjects related to writing events sustained and perhaps developed through the agency of people and technologies

Inferring local school writing culture from analyses of local school writing practices related to writing events sustained and perhaps developed through the agency of people and technologies

Instructionally transformed subject writing culture

Instructionally transformed subject writing practices

Local school writing culture

Local school writing practices

Writing event

Student writing practices

Student writing culture

YOUTH

SCHOOL

Out of school relations and activities

Political and administrative regulation

Inferring student writing culture from student writing practices related to writing events sustained and perhaps developed through the agency of people and technologies

Local school writing practices

- **Physical practices** co-shaping writing; they include observations of regular use of traditional 'classroom' with tables, shelves, and a blackboard (not a Smartboard), for writing

- **Institutional practices**, include well structured teams and development projects on literacy; e.g. field notes from first meeting with teachers and head of school reflecting development project about *reading* literacy in the subjects published in internal publication

- **Organized-communicative practices in class**, including teamwork on 'complex communicative practices'; e.g. combining pedagogical and subject-related disciplinary goals, as observed in social science/history class

- **Technological practices**, dominated by analogue technologies (book, paper, pencil) and a bit of experimenting with digital technologies

Inferring
local school writing culture

- Students' writing development is acknowledged / valorized as important on a school level

- It is considered important that students write in *all* subjects, and all teachers are positioned – and position themselves – as writing teachers

- The head of school and teachers acknowledge that writing should be integrated in meaningful ways in each subject; they share a critical understanding of the test regime

- Teachers in all subjects are considered to be agents in the process of contributing to a further development of writing and literacy

- Writing is most dominantly understood, monomodally, as verbal writing; albeit some reflection on multimodal writing is observed

- Transparency, integration and reflection are key metaphors of the local school writing culture

Comparisons with two other cases

- We argue that the local school writing culture at The South West School differs from the local school writing culture at the two other cases, both in qualitative and quantitative ways

- For example, The South West School has the highest score in almost all subjects in terms of students writing assignments and receiving feedback from the teacher

	Sydvestskolen %	Nordvestskolen %	Østskolen %
Dansk	100,0	100,0	100,0
Engelsk	96,2	100,0	98,0
Tysk	81,1	68,8	44,0
Fransk	0,0	2,1	24,0
Matematik	81,1	72,9	50,0
Historie	60,4	14,6	42,0
Samfundsfag	69,8	12,5	28,0
Religion	49,1	47,9	34,0
Geografi	86,8	6,2	38,0
Biologi	79,2	10,4	46,0
Fysik	96,2	4,2	12,0
Idræt	3,8	0,0	0,0
Andre (skriv)	3,8	2,1	0,0

Tabel 5.7. I hvilke fag skriver du afsluttede tekster, som afleveres og rettes af læreren? (gerne flere kryds)

Writing practices in subjects

- **Writing practices in Physics/chemistry**
  - Note writing; report writing, including record writing of experiments; teacher offers student differentiation in the writing prompts and feedback; some focus on 'form'/structure, ICT and multimodality

- **Writing practices in Danish**
  - Note writing; assignments in different genres; national tests, answering questions; productive work with 'other forms of representation'; reports; feedback focuses on genre awareness, among other things

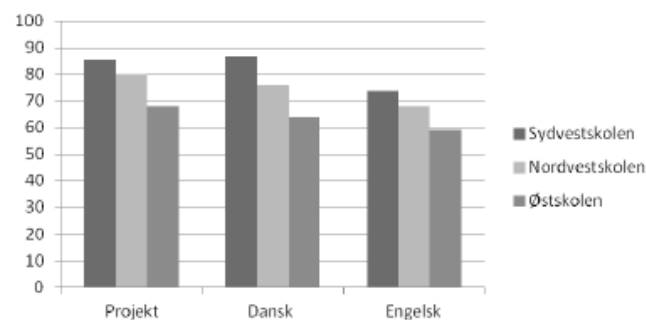# Inferring instructionally transformed writing culture in 9a

- Teachers attempt to integrate writing in the subjects in ways that are complementary with the rationales / 'Didaktik' of the subjects and the specific students they are confronted with in class.

- Teachers openly acknowledge that they could be more proficient in terms of integrating writing in the subjects, particularly when it is related to new digital technologies

- However, teachers do attempt to experiment and share experiences and reflections on how to further develop writing in the subjects, acknowledging that there are both differences and similarities in the writing practices of different subjects

- → teachers' *comparative* subject-related literacy competence
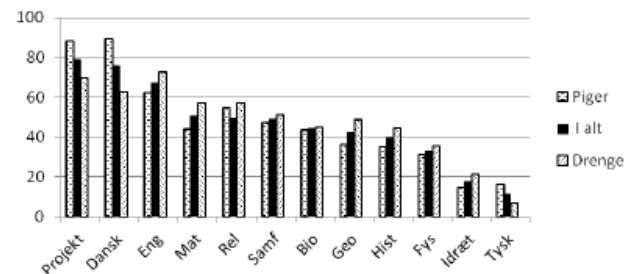
Student writing practices

- Before analysing: Analytical meta-reflections
    - Student writing culture and practices appear more diverse and less 'stable' than the other two types of writing culture, not surprisingly considering the primary agents within this culture – young people and students – and their relation to the domain of youth and out of school practices
- In the following, student writing practices are analysed on three levels:
    - As the larger group of all year 9 students (through survey)
    - As the group of students in class 9a (through observations and documents);
    - as a first person-perspective of particular students in 9a (through observations, documents, interviews)

Student writing practices: Year 9 level

- Similarities (patterns of homogeneity):
  - a high percentage of students write assignments, and are pleased about writing in subjects, remarkably more than at the two other cases;
  - students do a lot a out school writing, particularly on social media and in games;
  - Students find that there is a huge discrepancy between out of school writing and school writing

- Differences (patterns of heterogeneity)
  - The survey suggest that different groups of students 'align', differently with different types of subject writing
  - E.g. differences in terms of gender and writing pleasure

Figur 5.11. Populære skrivefag hos et flertal af elever – fordelt på skoler

Figur 5.9. Skriveglæde i fag fordelt på køn

Student writing practices: Class level

- Different strategies, related to groups of students, in terms of alignment with local school writing practices and instructionally transformed writing practices
  - Regular observations of 'accomodation' and 'opposition' (Chase, in Ivanic); no real signs of 'resistance'
  - Accomodation: e.g. writing the notes and assignments prompted by teachers; however, with differences in terms of quantity and quality
  - Opposition: e.g. boys replacing verbal logs practice, which they don't identify with, with videologs; or students suggesting a rethinking of the design of report about a country in Geography (a well established genre)
- Student reflexivity on writing practices may lead to an alternation ('didactization') of the instructionally transformed writing culture

Student writing practices: A first person perspective

Skilsmisse.

- Students construe a personal understanding of student writing practices and culture 'negotiating', or integrating, the domains of Youth and School

- 'Youth' in student writing practices:
  - Eg. Helle and peer write a project about divorces, which they have experienced; Martin combines a personal interest in digital culture and athletics, which influences the discourse of his writing of biology reports in grade 9 (and later in upper-sec. education)

- 'School' in student writing practices
  - E.g. Amalie's strategic / instrumental writing reflecting exams, the demands of education, and her own ambitions

Inferring student writing culture

- Similarities and differences are found in student writing practices

- What dominates is a high degree of student identification with 'the possibilities of selfhood' made possible in this school context and this specific class

Conclusion about The South West School's writing culture

- The South West School writing culture could be characterized as 'literacy interested'
    - In terms of school writing culture: transparency, integration, reflection
    - In terms of subject writing culture: differentiation; experiments; development of teachers' subject-related and comparative writing competence
    - In terms of student writing culture: students identifying with a broad range of possibilities for selfhood through writing
    - Much more 'literacy interested' compared to the two other cases

An unusual case of an ideological model of literacy?

- The case could be interpreted as a case reflecting an 'ideological' (Street 1984) understanding of literacy, in the sense that it understands literacy as situated, ideological and reflecting social practices on local meso and broader macro levels

- Such a finding is unusual compared to findings in other research (e.g. Maybin 2013; Gee 2007, 2010)

- 'Literacy interested' does not mean 'literacy/media saturated'

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