WRITING PRACTICES IN DANISH SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Writing to learn, learning to write

- Phase I
  Pilot study 2009-2010
  3 researchers, no external funding, focus grade 9, contacts with students.
- Phase II
  Full scale project 2010-2014
  10 researchers, external research grant, focus grades 10-12, expanded design.

Two connected presentations

1. Project aims, scope and design
2. Project status Feb. 2011
   - Methodological advances
   - Pilot study: preliminary findings

The national research context

- The Danish Council for Independent Research/Humanities, calling for applications based on researchers' own initiatives
- International review process
- 'Writing to learn, learning to write', appr. USD 1,5 mill.
- A breakthrough of writing as a field of research in Denmark
- Contribution to Nordic tradition of writing research concerned with writing in educational contexts
- In dialogue with international resource group of researchers at annual seminars

WRITING TO LEARN,
LEARNING TO WRITE

Literacy and disciplinarity

in Danish upper secondary education

Research questions

Basic assumptions – the new conditions for writing:

- 'The new textual society'
- The discursive turn in disciplinary didactics

What do these new conditions mean for

- the position, function and nature of writing in teaching practice?
- students' writing – and schools' interpretation of students' needs for experience, resources and skills in writing?
- the didactics and the disciplinarity of subjects?

Theoretical perspectives

- Socio cultural tradition (Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1998)
  mediational means
- New literacy studies (Barton, 1994;, Street, 1984)
  literacy events
- Social semiotics (Kress, 1997; 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996)
  multi modal notion of text and writing
- Theory of writing and identity (Ivanič, 1998)
  writer biography, identity
- Disciplinary didactics, discursive turn (Ongstad 2006, Cope & Kalantzis 1993, Lemke 1990)
  didactization
- Functional theory of writing (Bakhtin, 1986, Berge 2005, Berge et al., 2007)
  utterance, act of writing, writing wheel

Methodology

- Ethnographical data collection methods
- Analytical units
  - Constellations of literacy events
  - Discourse transformations
  - Chains of texts
- Shared data via open access to common electronic bank

Project design

- Longitudinal studies from a student perspective
  - 1+3 years, 7 students at 6 different schools
- Thematic studies from a subject perspective
  - Danish, foreign languages, social sciences, mathematics, biology and chemistry, religion, multi subject coursework

Project group

- Inter-disciplinary
  - researchers in text and writing
  - researchers in the didactics of social sciences, mathematics, biology, foreign languages, Danish
- Inter-institutional
  - University of Southern Denmark, University of Aarhus, Roskilde University
- 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, 2 PhD students

Pilot study

Content

- Methodology
  - Etnographical methodology
  - Methodological advances
  - Perspectives of analysis
- Preliminary findings

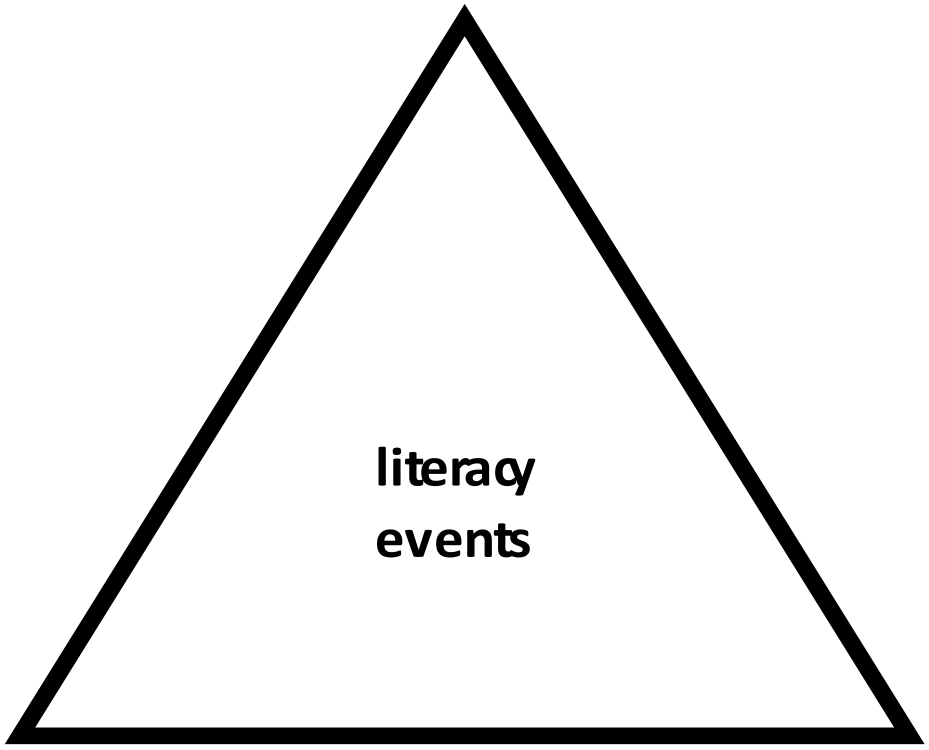
Ethnographical methodology

- Data:
  - Observations (inside and outside classrooms)
  - Writing instructions
  - Student texts
  - Teacher responses
  - Interviews (students and teachers

  - Finding informants for the longitudinal study

Model for analyzing literacy events in school

Academic subjects and other disciplines

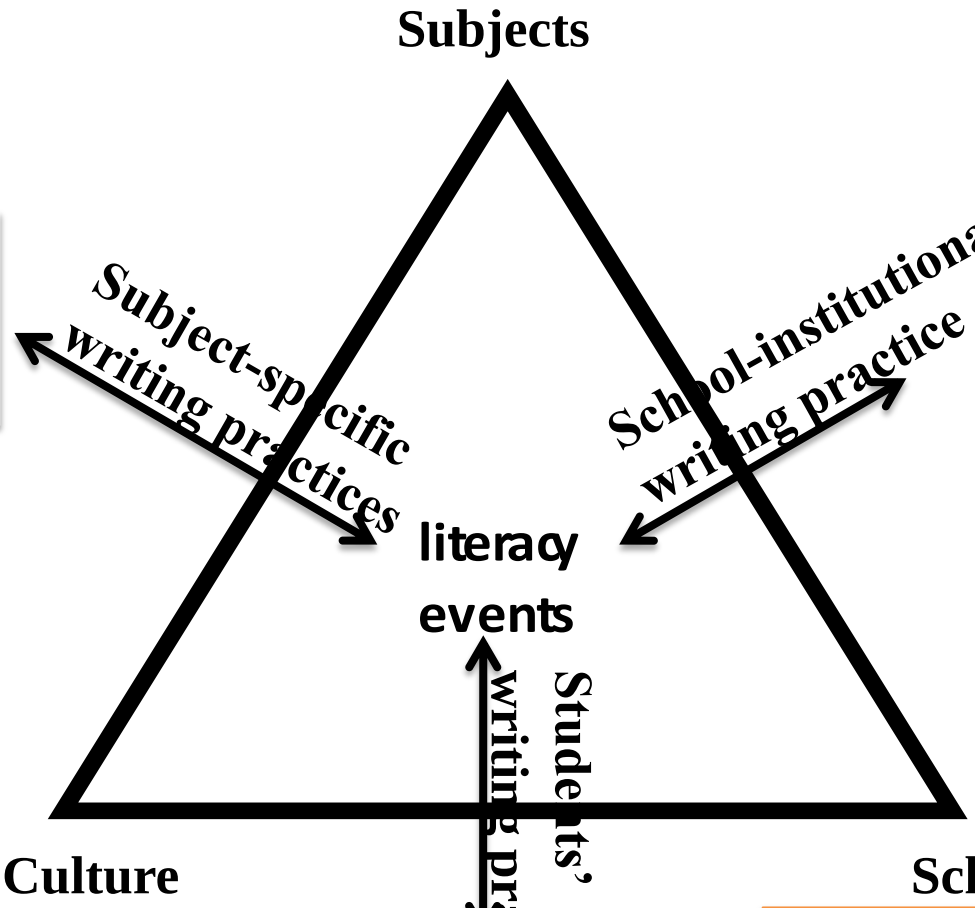


Family, peers, leisure pursuits

Legislation, Ministry, Syllabus, Local school authorities etc.

Model for analyzing literacy events in school

Academic subjects and other disciplines



Teachers' subject-related writing cultures

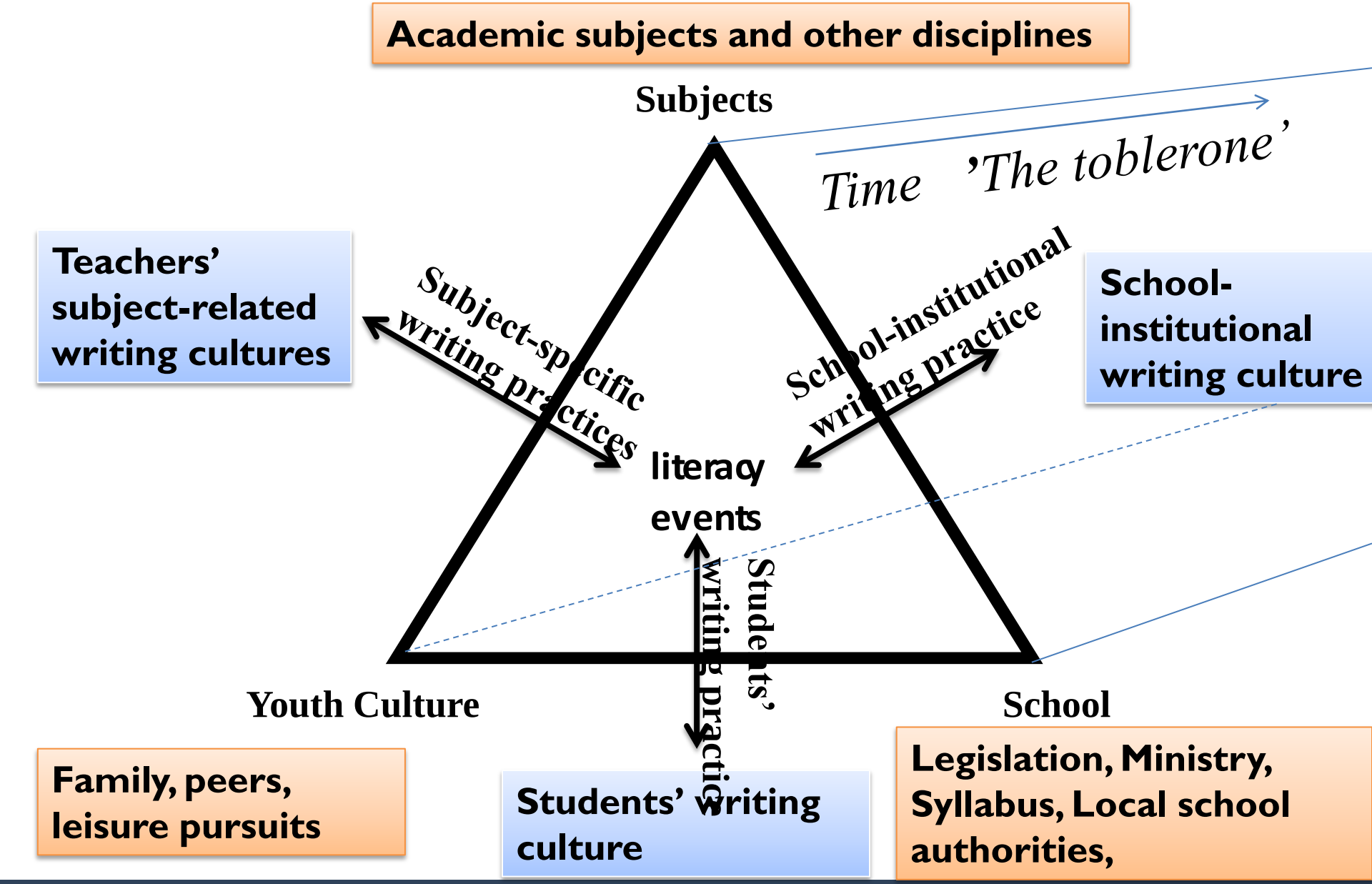
School-institutional writing culture

Family, peers, leisure pursuits

Students' writing cultures

Legislation, Ministry, Syllabus, Local school authorities,

Model for analyzing literacy events in school



Model for analyzing longitudinal studies

Perspective / Basic analytical unit	**Textual** Chains of texts	**Discoursal** Transformations of discourses	**Literacy** Constellations of literacy events
Writing instruction	…		
Student text			
Teacher response			
Student interview			

Preliminary findings in the pilot project

- About:
  - Testing the analytical framework
  - Broad trends in grade 9 school settings
- The three analytical perspectives
  - Subject-specific writing cultures
  - School writing cultures
  - Student writing cultures

Subject-specific writing cultures (two schools analyzed)

- Dominance of same writing culture in all subjects
- *Storing knowledge* and in some cases *structuring knowledge* was the purpose of around half of the registered literacy events
- Dominance of *reporting* and *reproducing* writing. *Argumentative* writing was almost absent, and we found relatively little *communicative* writing.
- In problem-based coursework we found widespread use of various semiotic resources and a variation in writing purposes and forms of writing

School writing cultures (two schools analyzed)

"East school"	"Southwest school"
Domination of *strategic purposes* in writing (preparing exam). *Sharp boundaries* between writing in the disciplines Danish (the mothertongue subject) has main responsibility for developing student literacy. Written work in other disciplines mainly supports oral activities Not teacher cooperation in *reading* and *writing*.	*Variation* in strategic, ritual and communicative purposes in assignments/writing instructions *Soft boundaries* betweeen writing in the disciplines *Teacher cooperation* having a dobble function, a) aimed at development of written work in disciplines b) aimed towards educational counselling of students A literacy-oriented school

Students' writing cultures

Does your school take interest in your electronic media writing ? N= 215 (all nine graders at the three schools)	Girl	Boy	total
I don't use electronic media	0,0	1,4	0,7
No, it's as if writing in and writing outside school belongs to quite different worlds	50,0	56,8	53,3
Yes, quite often teachers take an interest in my electronic media writing	1,3	2,7	2,0
Don't know	25,0	21,6	23,3

Thank you!

Please contact us if you are interested in our presentations and other material about the project.

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