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## Danish secondary schools 1880–1950: national legislative framework and local implementation

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses and compares local people's and communities' strategies when implementing a national legislative framework in secondary schools in Denmark, 1880–1950, focusing particularly on the history of the school creation and survival process. For the purposes of this study, three different kinds of cities with secondary schools are examined: a traditional market town, a new provincial town, and a railway town. The article explains how headmasters and school managers in different education landscapes acted in these contexts and found a niche in the local education market amongst other local schools, thereby securing the existence of the school. In all three cases, the municipality played an important role in the survival of the venture school. However, it was also important to maintain a good relationship with the parents who provided the school with the pupils and the communities to which the school belonged.

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### Introduction

In the period between 1850 and 1920, the Danish education system was characterized by liberalization and privatization. Politicians did not consider the provision of education for all to be a public duty; their remit was merely to provide basic education to peasants and working class children. It was expected that society's wealthier classes would provide their own offspring with an education that suited their children's future place in society (Larsen, Nørr, & Sonne, 2013; pp. 132–133; Coninck-Smith, 2000; 115–116). This stance originated in the policy of this period, characterized by liberal waves of the adoption of Denmark's first free constitution of 1849, and politicians' desire to break with the regulatory powers of the state and eliminate monopolies. This was especially the case in the 1850s and 1860s, where politicians saved on government spending, abolished guilds, removed customs barriers and encouraged the abolition of tenant farmers in favour of freehold (Hvidt, 1990, pp. 63, 92, 106). In the educational field too, liberalization and privatization took place. The duty to attend the common school (*skolepligt*) was replaced with the duty to receive education (*undervisningspligt*) and the state confined itself to enacting national guidelines and to conducting supervision, thus leaving the creation of new educational models and new institutions to private and local initiatives (Gjerløff & Jacobsen, 2014; pp. 66–67, 70, 125–129; Larsen, 2010a, p. 131). This led to the creation of education markets (Beadie, 2008, p. 49), whereby local actors and communities gained a

crucial role in the implementation of the national education legislation and the development of new types of schools, adapted to the needs of the local 'customers'.

One such manifestation was the secondary school (*realskole*), later known as the middle and secondary school (*mellem-og realskole*). During the past decades of the 1800s and the first decades of the 1900s, many secondary schools were established, not merely in market towns (*købstæder*) but also in the many new railway towns (*stationsbyer*) that arose as a consequence of the expansion of the railway (Stilling, 1987). The state confined itself to issuing regulations on the secondary school exam (*realeksamen*); one that was meant to equip the student for his or her future job within public administration or in a trade or craft (Larsen, 2010a, p. 131). The implementation of the provisions was left to local actors and local communities acting in the local education markets. The schools were either established on a private basis as venture schools; that is, a school that depends entirely on tuition and operates as the business of an independent teacher, or as a common school that operates under the control of the municipality and region councils and is funded by local taxes (Beadie, 2008, p. 48). The founders implemented national legislation in order to meet the community's demand for instruction in commercially valuable subjects for their children (Beadie, 2008, p. 49) but they also became actors in the community's education market (Larsen, 2010b, p. 282).

However, the local context was not the same, resulting in different implementations of the national framework. The local contexts created various opportunities and challenges for each school in the local education market. The local community and the individuals behind the school were obliged to develop a strategy in order to survive in this market. In railway towns, a secondary school could offer a commercial, valuable education above the level of the village common school (*landsbyskolen*), thus ensuring new ‘customers’. In the towns, the school had to find a niche while competing with the municipality’s common schools and, in some places, also with the grammar school (*lærd skole*). As the municipalities were establishing secondary schools in the years after the 1903 Grammar School Act (*almenskoleloven*), venture secondary schools were exposed to serious competition (Larsen, 2010b, p. 282).

In the following sections, I will analyse and compare the strategies that local stakeholders filed when they implemented the national legislative framework, becoming actors in the education market and creating a new secondary school or ensuring the school’s continued existence. The article places special emphasis on the history of the school creation process: what type of local school landscape existed; why there was room for a venture school at this location and the conditions given by the municipality to the venture school. The focus will be on the period 1880–1950, which saw the emergence of secondary schools and encompassed their heyday. For the purposes of this study, I have selected three types of different education landscapes with secondary schools: (1) the traditional market town with a mix of common and venture secondary schools, girls’ schools and a state grammar school; (2) the new provincial town with a venture and a common secondary school and (3) the railway town with a common school and a venture secondary school. The source material varies from town to town due to the local contexts and actors, but the intention is to show the national legislation’s local variety of implementations.

## Background

By the fall of absolutism in 1848, the political landscape consisted of two main groups: the National Liberals (*de nationalliberale*), whose constituents comprised the bourgeoisie and urban upper population, and the Friends of Farmers (*Bondevennerne/Venstre*), with an electoral base in the rural districts. The idea of freedom and reducing the powers of the absolutist state were major themes in both parties (Hvidt, 1990, pp. 65–77).

This influenced their educational thoughts and views regarding the significant roles in the educational field played by private and local initiatives,

when the national school legislation was implemented, or when new types of schools emerged and were constructed. The Friends of Farmers, especially, wanted better opportunities for the formation of venture schools and more freedom in school matters, so that parents and local communities could stand more freely in relation to pedagogical methods and the school curriculum. This was also intended to increase parents’ influence on school matters, including when children should attend school or help at home (Gjerløff & Jacobsen, 2014, pp. 70–72). Therefore, the 1855 Free School Act (*friskoleloven*) declared that parents could choose between educating their children at the common school, a venture school, or by home schooling (Bodenstein, 1982; pp. 222–271; Gjerløff & Jacobsen, 2014; pp. 125–129). In this period, the creation of venture teacher training colleges was allowed, and royal teacher training colleges lost their monopoly on examination rights: henceforth, a state examination commission had to examine all candidates, regardless of whether they had prepared at a state college or privately (Gjerløff & Jacobsen, 2014, pp. 136–138).

Education for adolescents was also affected by ideas of liberalization and privatization. Therefore, new grammar schools arose through private initiatives and they were given the right to hold examinations (Larsen, 2003; pp. 125–126; Nørr, 1998; pp. 40–41, 45, 135–142). From the second half of the 1800s, technical and commercial schools emerged in the cities: they were founded through the initiative of local artisan associations or trade associations to respond to the demand for commercial skills. In the century’s last two decades, in particular, the number of schools grew as a result of the 1889 Apprentices Act (*lærlingeloven*), as this instructed master craftsmen and merchants to provide practical, as well as theoretical, training for their apprentices (Lind Hansen, 1995; pp. 42–54, 84–87; Rasmussen, 1969; pp. 35–37).

The first secondary schools (*borgerdydskoler*) in Denmark emerged in the 1780s as a product of the Enlightenment’s rationalism and optimism. The schools were initiated by the Copenhagen bourgeoisie and were funded by school fees and private contributions. Schools were meant to undertake the educational needs that were not addressed by existing educational institutions, and to give bourgeoisie children the skills required for their future work in society as merchants, craftsmen or officials (Larsen, 2010a, p. 81).

Although secondary schools were a part of the 1814 Town School Act (*skoleanordningen for købstæderne*), it was only from the 1830s that interest and economic fundamentals of secondary schools outside the capital were created. The purpose of the schools was partly to mould the students into good,

enlightened citizens who would actively participate in society, and partly to educate them towards future work in commerce, crafts or industry (Larsen, 2010a, pp. 82–97). After a trial period, the government lessened these somewhat high expectations and issued four revised examination regulations in the 1850s. The new purpose of the secondary school was education for boys aged 12–15 years (1st–4th *realklasse*, corresponding to 6th–9th grade in Denmark), to prepare them for employment in the civil service, in a bank or as a merchant (Larsen, 2010a, pp. 97–101).

In 1881, four different forms of exams were merged into one; the General Preparation Exam (*almindelig forberedelseseksamen*), which gave rise to many secondary schools in the local education markets. In 1881, there were 10 municipality secondary schools, growing to 23 schools by 1901. Growth in the venture sector was considerably larger: 16 venture secondary schools in 1881 and 129 in 1901 (Larsen, 2010a, p. 107). At the beginning of the 1900s, the typical secondary school was a venture school in a borough or an urban area (provincial or railway town), erected in the 1880s or 1890s (Larsen, 2010b, p. 282).

With the 1903 Grammar School Act, the secondary school became a part of the system of higher education schools (*højere alment skoler*), which included the upper grades and the grammar school (6th–12th grade in Denmark). The lower grades of the secondary schools formed a new four-year middle school (*mellemskolen*) (6th–9th grade in Denmark), after which one could attend the one-year secondary class (*realklassen*) or the three-year grammar school (Larsen, 2010a, pp. 110–123). The middle school was a subject of debate and criticism throughout the following decades, as its position regarding the public schools' upper grades was not clarified. In addition, compulsory education included only 1st–7th grade, resulting in high dropout rates in the middle school's upper grades because children had to work (Larsen, 2010a, pp. 123–130).

### The classic market town: Randers

As mentioned, different kinds of education markets emerged due to a variety of local contexts. This influenced the secondary schools, as we will see in the three examples. The first is Randers in Jutland, a classic Danish market town consisting of a leading bourgeoisie and a working class (Hyldgaard et al., 2002, pp. 89–150). During the 1800s, following a long stagnation period, Danish towns developed into modern cities as a result of industrialization, which also meant large population growth (Christensen, 2007).

In 1850, Randers had a population of 7338 people, increasing to 20,057 in 1901, rendering it

the fifth-largest provincial town. The population growth was due to a high number of workers from rural areas relocating to the city's many new businesses. From the 1890s, Randers' industry achieved its major breakthrough: at the turn of the century, trade and industry were the dominant industries. The infrastructural conditions also contributed to the city's rapid development: it offered a well-located port, where even larger ships could dock, and a state railway in 1862 (Hyldgaard et al., 2002, pp. 89–150).

Like many other towns, the municipality's common school (*borger-og almueskole*) was segregated by social class and gender with a free school (*friskole*) for the city's poor children and a fee-paying school with (*borgerskole*) for the bourgeoisie. Both schools were divided into departments for girls and boys (Jacobsen, 1915, pp. 39–64). Alongside the municipality school system, there were a number of schools and educational offers. Until the early 1900s, there were 15–20 venture schools, most of which were small establishments led by women teaching the youngest children. In the 1899/1900 school year, 37% of school children were taught in one of the city's 19 venture schools (Larsen, 2010b, p. 284).

### 1850–1900: the city's first secondary schools

In Randers, there had been a venture-based secondary school in the 1830s and 1840s, but it did not have the right to hold examinations (Jacobsen, 1915, pp. 32–34). In 1852, a girls' school was founded in the city. This venture school was bought by Marie Nisted in 1885. Miss Nisted's Girls' School achieved examination rights in 1890, at which the time it had 78 students (Undervisningsinspektionen for Mellem-og Realskoler, 1890). Nisted's School held examinations until the 1912/13 school year and closed in 1923. It will not be a part of this study.

Therefore, a venture school with examination rights did not exist in Randers in the 1860s, although the middle and upper classes wanted a qualifying exam for their sons and daughters, as the common school could not provide such an exam. In addition, traditionally, the bourgeoisie did not want their children to attend school with working class children and therefore they enrolled their children in venture schools (Larsen, 2010b, pp. 284–286). This paved the way for the establishment of a venture school in Randers with examination rights.

The city's first venture school with exam rights, Randers Private Secondary School, was founded in 1869. Lieutenant Henrik Steffens Helms had participated in the Danish-Prussian War of 1864 and was now looking for a career. In 1869, Helms took over a venture school in Randers that did not succeed due the manager's lack of skills. Mr

Helms consolidated the school and in 1872, it achieved examination rights (Kultusministeriet, 1871). The following year, he acquired a property and furnished the rear building as a school building, and in 1874 he bought the largest school for girls. In order to succeed in the education market, he offered qualifying exams, new classrooms and education aimed at girls, and he focused on children from the surrounding rural areas, where it was not possible to obtain secondary education. Helms' schools did not provide enough financial surplus, and he chose to sell them in 1879 (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 1914; Helms, 1912; pp. 209–226; Wallberg-Andersen, 1994; pp. 7–8).

Randers acquired its second venture school for girls in 1876, when Miss Charlotte la Cour founded a higher girls' school. She began with two students, but quickly achieved a solid foundation in the local education market because she focused on bourgeois daughters who were given the opportunity to receive an education. From the mid 1890s, the school had 76 pupils and was given the right to hold examinations in 1892 (La Cours Skole, 1901, pp. 3–4).

Finally, there was Randers State Grammar School (*Randers Lærde Skole*), a state academy enrolling secondary students from the school year 1858/59. In 1862, the first students finished their secondary education there (Hill-Madsen et al., 1992, p. 104).

### **1900–1950: the development of a school system**

At the beginning of the 20th century, there were four options for secondary education in Randers: the state grammar school and the three venture schools. The three venture schools had each found a niche that secured their existence in the local education market; however, the venture schools were to face much competition from the common school in years to come. With the new local school plan of 1907, the municipality offered a free common school: a smaller department with school fees existed until 1923. New schools were built and an existing school expanded. Furthermore, the city established a municipal youth school and a municipal dental clinic (Christensen, 1940, pp. 9–65; Jacobsen, 1915; pp. 72–77).

The development continued in the 1930s, when the city introduced school doctors, school meals, and holiday camps. The city also chose to establish a common middle and secondary school in 1908, so city youths could pass intermediate and secondary exams at the city's common school. From 1919, there were no school fees (Larsen, 2010b, pp. 286–287). This development is also seen in other Danish cities, where venture schools lost pupils as the local authorities expanded the common school system with new schools and facilities, more teachers and more subjects, and as school fees gradually disappeared (Coninck-Smith, 2000).

The expansion of the common school system in Randers meant that increasing numbers of children attended the common school, whilst many of the venture schools without examination rights closed. At the beginning of the 1920s, 15% of children attended a venture school: in 1935, it was merely 8%. This development, and especially free education in the city schools, also affected the local education market and, in particular, the number of venture school pupils. The three venture schools lost 150 pupils from 1921/22 to 1926/27. In contrast, the common middle school grew, especially after school fees were abolished (*Årsberetninger Randers kommunale skolevæsen, 1899–1957*; Larsen, 2010b, p. 287).

The venture schools handled the municipal competition differently by taking advantage of the opportunities embedded in the national legislation in order to survive in the local education market. In 1898, Christensen-Dalsgaard bought Randers Secondary School and quickly expanded it to become the largest venture secondary school in the town. One can point to several reasons for this development. Here was a school characterized by modern school thoughts and with a young energetic leader; e.g. he was a fierce opponent of physical punishment. In addition, the school continued to focus on pupils from the surrounding rural districts lacking schools with examination rights (*Årsberetninger Randers kommunale skolevæsen, 1899–1957*; Larsen, 2010b; pp. 287–288). In that way, C. Christensen-Dalsgaard could compensate for the common school attracting more pupils due to free schooling. The venture school felt the competition, however, and from the early 1930s there was a noticeable reduction in pupil numbers (*Årsberetninger Randers kommunale skolevæsen*); evidently, Mr Christensen-Dalsgaard did not manage to attract pupils. However, this decade was marked by the international crisis and a decline in Danish birth rates, which meant fewer schoolchildren (Larsen, 2010b, p. 289).

Miss la Cour managed her school until 1912, when Miss Ploug took over. She managed to attract more students, partly due to the fact that the city's other school for girls, Nisted's School, no longer held examination rights. The school reached a peak in 1921–22 with 250 students. Ploug was headmistress until 1919, when Marie Moldenhawer joined as co-manager until PE Wassmann took over in 1922 (*Årsberetning la Cour School, 1876–1927*; Birkebæk, 2009; pp. 10–27). Like the other private schools, la Cour's school experienced a fall in the number of pupils, due to competition from the common school. The decline in the early 1940s was more serious.

In 1940/41, the school had 106 students, but had merely 62 pupils in 1941/42: the school received only six new students and no one from the rural districts

(Årsberetninger Randers kommunale skolevæsen, 1899–1957). The decline was due Mr Wassmann's enthusiasm for German language and culture, which got him into trouble after the German occupation of Denmark in 1940. He took a part time job as an interpreter for the German commander in Randers. Therefore, he was seen as pro-German and parents withdrew their children (Undervisningsinspektionen for Mellem- og Realskoler, 1927–1949). Political opinions could destabilize a school's economic foundation if the parents felt that the headmaster or headmistress had views that did not comply with the majority view. Else Bie, a teacher at the school, wrote to the Office for State Inspection of Secondary Education. She believed that if the decline continued, the school would have to close. She therefore considered buying the school if the State Inspection Office would transfer the examination rights to her. After receiving prior approval, she bought the school (Birkebæk, 2009, pp. 36–43; Undervisningsinspektionen for Mellem- og Realskoler, 1927–1949). The number of pupils grew from Miss Bie's first year as headmistress and in the following years the pupils returned (Årsberetninger Randers kommunale skolevæsen; Birkebæk, 2009, pp. 43–48).

Westrup's Secondary School was founded in 1876 as a small venture school. In 1909, it was taken over by Knud Westrup. Even though there were other venture schools, and despite the grammar school's secondary class, there was a market for Westrup's school and it quickly doubled the number of pupils (Årsberetninger Westrups Realskole, 1910–1939). Like the other venture schools, the school was affected by the free common school and declining birth rates. From 1934/35, however, the school experienced progress due to the new co-manager J.P. Westrup, a nephew of Mr Westrup who understood how to act in the education market. He moved the school to new buildings: the new premises allowed a greater uptake, affecting the other venture schools that then lost pupils to Westrup. In the years around 1940, Westrup's school was one of the largest venture schools in Randers. He also attracted students from la Cour's School as the parents chose to move their children (Årsberetninger Westrups Realskole, 1909–1939; Årsberetning Rytters Realskole, 1943). Westrup Jr. managed the school until 1942, when it was taken over by A. Rytter. Mr Rytter's management period was short-lived due to personal problems, and in 1945 he sold the school to Miss Bie at la Cour's School. The two schools then merged (Undervisningsinspektionen for Mellem- og Realskoler, 1927–1949).

### **Randers 1850–1950**

In most market towns, there was a multitude of schools, and in some places there was also a public grammar school. It was therefore important for a

headmaster to find a niche for his or her school: this could be a school for the city's female youth or a secondary school for children from rural areas lacking schools offering extended education. It was also important to maintain a good relationship with the parents who provided the school with pupils and with the communities to which the school belonged. If a head teacher held strong political views that deviated from the consensus, the response came in the form of declining numbers of pupils and challenges to the school's continued existence in the education market.

### **The new town: Esbjerg**

During the 19th century, new cities arose. The new urban communities were either villages that evolved into towns, or new built cities: it was common for the new cities to become industrial centres or market destinations for the surrounding districts (Stilling, 1987). In the northern part of Zealand, textile factories and the iron industry meant the growth of an urban community of Frederiksværk, while paper production and an iron foundry laid the foundation for Silkeborg, in the central parts of Jutland. On the southwest coast of Jutland, Esbjerg was established as a new city after the construction of a port.

In 1873, the port of Esbjerg opened with the aim of launching agricultural exports to Britain and a railway to the new port was built in the following year. These factors increased the number of inhabitants. In 1864, Esbjerg had 13 residents, but as a result of the port, a new urban community grew at great speed, and in 1901 there were 13,355 inhabitants. In 1894, Esbjerg was separated from Jerne-Skads Municipality and became an independent municipality (Bruhn, 1994, pp. 51–168).

The town became a city with large fishing, commercial and industrial companies, and there was a large working class contingent. This meant that the Social Democrats had a strong foothold in the city. From 1905, the party held the majority in the city council and, from 1921, the party occupied the post as mayor (Bruhn, 1994, pp. 278–301). In contrast to Randers, for example, Esbjerg therefore became a socialist municipality (*kommunesocialistisk by*). In Denmark, the concept of municipal socialism included a series of welfare reforms in the period 1900–20, with the Social Democrats as the driving force. The city began by taking over the means of transport, establishing role model institutions in education, health and welfare, etc. In the educational field, the reforms included free schooling, school dentists, school doctors and school meals in the efforts to strengthen common schools for all children, thereby marginalising venture schooling (Kolstrup, 1996, 55–67).

### 1870–1905: the emergence of a school system

Esbjerg's rapid development from a collection of houses to a city also created an impact on the local education landscape. By 1870, the parish council had already granted 20 *rigsdaler* to a woman who had begun to teach in Esbjerg. However, the residents considered their children were not receiving an adequate education, and therefore they took the initiative to ask the municipality to establish a school. The politicians were dilatory because they believed that the settlement was only temporary and that there was no reason to spend money on a school. As a temporary solution, Langvad opened a venture school in 1873 with 60 pupils. As the population increased, and an urban community developed, the municipality took over Mr Langvad's school in 1876 (Adolphsen, 1997, pp. 11–30; Coninck-Smith, 2000, pp. 118–147, 185–186, 420).

There were also venture schools in Esbjerg, next to the common school, but they did not play a significant part in the city's education landscape, as was the case in Randers and other towns, where there was a bourgeoisie who sent their children to venture schools. In addition, Esbjerg city council's active school policy and especially, the Social Democrats' wish to make the common school the one and only school (Coninck-Smith, 2000, p. 146), made it difficult for individuals to act in the local education market. In the period 1880–1914, 27 different venture schools existed in the city, most of them with fewer than 20 pupils, but they closed during the first two decades of the 1900s. In 1902, there had been seven venture schools with 349 pupils; 20 years later, four schools remained, with 219 pupils (Årsberetninger Esbjerg kommunale skolevæsen, 1902–1970; Coninck-Smith, 2000, pp. 124–125).

In 1883, customs inspector VV Hassing organized a meeting to discuss the establishment of a new school (Bruhn, 1983, p. 9). Mr Hassing belonged to a group of civil service men and self-employed people in the town who wanted more comprehensive education for their children with more subjects offered than in the public school. Although the municipality ran a school, the parents felt that it could not deliver the 'education goods' they demanded from the education market, and they took the initiative to establish themselves on the market by opening a new venture school. Fifteen families, with their 35 children, made a pledge to enrol their children, thereby securing sufficient 'customers' for the new school, Esbjerg Secondary School (*Esbjerg Realskole*) (Bruhn, 1983, p. 9).

In 1886, a new headmaster was hired, but he was not a particularly good teacher as his pupils failed their exams. The headmaster resigned after a few years and handed the school to Esbjerg Secondary School Inc., which was formed at the request of

local parents to reorganize the school and secure a better economic foundation (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 9–13). A new manager, Rübner-Petersen, was hired, an area of land was purchased and a new school building was built. The pupil roll increased, and in the years following the turn of the century, the school had between 250 and 280 pupils (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 13–18). The growing number of pupils was due to both the city's growing population and a developing group of civil servants and self-employed people who formed the core of the parental group. In addition to this, Mr Rübner-Petersen was a capable headmaster and achieved the examination right in 1891 (Bruhn, 1983, p. 15).

Besides venture schools, vocational training for boys and young men was established by local initiatives to meet the demand for technical and commercial skills. One of the city's industrial enterprises became the initiator of the first technical school in 1883: the Esbjerg Craftsman Association (*håndværkerforening*) took over the school a few years later and built a new school building (Trap, 1904b, p. 712). The Esbjerg Trade Association (*handelsstandsforening*) also opened a business school in 1898 and had approximately 100 students a few years later (Trap, 1904b, p. 712).

As Esbjerg increasingly assumed the character of a town, the city council wanted a common secondary school in order to obtain urban and cultural status. The Social Democrats were against venture schools but they realized that the possibility of obtaining a grammar school had to be linked to the venture school (Bruhn, 1983, p. 21). From 1897 to 1902, Esbjerg Secondary School had a special grammar school class due to their plans to create a grammar school on a venture basis. Mr Rübner-Petersen was promised that the secondary school could obtain grammar classes. Therefore, the Social Democratic-dominated city council collaborated with the venture school because the council needed the school's teaching qualifications and prior approval. The first grammar school class opened in 1906 (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 21–24; Rübner-Petersen, 1914, pp. 11–14).

### 1900–1950: municipal secondary school and venture schools

During the two first decades of the 1900s, the schools of Esbjerg transformed from being village schools to borough schools, mainly because the city grew but also because the Social Democrats had visions for the city's school system. This led to the establishment of a common middle and secondary school in 1905 where pupils received free schooling and books: the aim was more working class children obtaining an education beyond the compulsory elementary level. In 1910,

30% attended middle school in Esbjerg (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 20–21; Adolphsen, 1997, pp. 55–79). The venture secondary school's board was anxious that the public school would take all the best children and teachers. The city's Social Democrats, however, felt that the workers' children should have as good an education as possible and would, in principle, have liked as many children as possible to attend the common middle school (Adolphsen, 1997, pp. 55–79).

In 1919–20, the government and a number of municipalities took over 20 venture grammar schools due to the schools' financial problems. The acquisition also included Esbjerg Grammar and Secondary School, renamed Esbjerg State School (Larsen, 2003, p. 138). The state school had no preparation classes for children aged 7–14, presenting a problem for a group of parents. Even though they had the option of enlisting their children in the common school, the parents had no wish to do so, as they wanted to uphold a venture school for these grades. The group therefore established The Parents' School (*Forældreskolen*), in 1920, as a preparatory school for the Esbjerg State School (Bruhn, 1983, p. 37). The Parents' School had about 150 students in the beginning, but then the number of pupils began to fall and there were few enrolments due to competition in the education market. The headmaster considered closing the school, whilst the following headmaster combined the establishment with his own school (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 28–33).

The Esbjerg Social Democrats harboured scepticism about the Parents' School, as they had done concerning Esbjerg Secondary School. Several Social Democrats wanted the municipality to take over the secondary school and they wrote repeatedly critical pieces about the school in the local newspapers (Kolstrup, 1996, p. 113). The relationship between the school and the municipality improved from the 1940s because the school helped to mitigate the pressure on public schools when the German armed forces seized common schools during the occupation of Denmark 1940–45. Esbjerg City Council had to rent space at the Parents' School and the school developed from 79 pupils in 1940 to 151 pupils in 1945, continuing to grow after the war. The increasing number of pupils meant that the school expanded with an exam department (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 35–36).

The creation of an exam department was not always without problems, as a historian has noted. A venture school with an exam department could easily gain the predicate that if one could not succeed at the state or common school, one could 'buy' an exam at the venture school. It was therefore important to have a good academic reputation in the education market, an established position regarding teachers and a firm stance against parents' demands so that the school could show that requirements were

as high as in the common schools (Bruhn, 1983, p. 37).

In the 1950s, there was a growing desire to change the school's status in order to become economically independent. The move towards becoming self-governing was also promoted by the state. The 1959 School Financial Support Act provided for subsidies to cover the expenses of transforming a venture secondary school into a self-governing institution so that private people did not earn money on schooling. In 1959, the school became a self-governing institution and still exists today (Bruhn, 1983, pp. 27–41).

### **Esbjerg 1870–1950**

In the new provincial city, it was crucial for the school's existence that it could offer an education that the common school could not provide. The municipality played an important role in the venture school's survival. In Esbjerg, the Social Democrats were the prime movers behind a large expansion of the common school system, including free schooling. The venture school was secured by bourgeoisie parents who did not want their children to attend the local school. The secondary school did, however, stress that children at the school received a solid education so it could not be claimed that one could buy an exam in the venture school.

### **The railway town: Jyderup**

The third example, the town of Jyderup in Northwest Zealand, is a good example of the 151 railway towns that emerged in the decades around 1900. A railway town is defined (Stilling, 1987, p. 14) as a more close settlement that emerged, in the second half of the 1800s and the early 1900s, outside coastal areas and often close to a railway. Education markets arose, and boarding schools, folk high school, secondary schools and technical schools put their mark on the new towns' urban social structure and development. The secondary school became a symbol of a town's position within the railway town hierarchy (Stilling, 1987, pp. 462–463). In the 151 railway towns, there were secondary schools in 75 cities; in most places, the secondary school was established after the opening of the railway and the emerging of a market town (Larsen & Nørr, 2010, pp. 330, 462–463).

It was also the case in Jyderup. Agriculture had been the primary occupation in the village but this changed with the opening of the Copenhagen Kalundborg Railway in 1874, when the city became a town and the dominant settlement in the municipality. This also led to a rapid population increase from 909 persons in 1850 to 1355 in 1901 (Trap, 1954, p. 447). The majority of industrial and commercial enterprises in the parish were placed in the town, which had a post

office, a police station, convalescent homes, hotels, merchants, etc. in the 1890s. Jyderup remained the dominant settlement of the parish well into the 1900s (Trap, 1904a; pp. 443–444, 1954, pp. 446–449).

At the beginning of the 1890s, the common school in Jyderup was divided into a senior class (10–14 years of age) and a junior class (7–10 years of age). It was spread over a boys' department and a girls' department (Danske Kancelli, 1839–1847; Kultusministeriet, 1901–1910). The senior boy class went to school two days a week during the summer and four days in the winter, and the junior boy class vice versa. The girls attended three days a week. In addition, 41 pupils received private lessons or attended venture schools in the parish of Jyderup (Kultusministeriet, 1890).

### **Jyderup Private Secondary School**

The village school formed the education landscape in the municipality when, in 1894, the college student Lambek established a secondary school in Jyderup (Meddelelser, 1898–1899, pp. 132, 193). His reasons for choosing Jyderup are unknown, but the education landscape was good compared to other secondary schools in the area with existing secondary schools 20–30kms away. Mr Lambek had thus found a 'hole' in the education market in the northwest parts of Zealand. He also decided to place the school in a railway town, where there would probably be more 'customers' for secondary education than in the rural areas, and the railroad gave nearby pupils a good opportunity for easy travel to Jyderup.

In 1894, Jyderup Secondary School began in a villa that had been bought by five prominent local men with a grocer at the helm: the villa was rented to Mr Lambek (Meddelelser, 1898–1899, pp. 132, 193). In this way, a new headmaster could start in the education market without taking on huge financial risks. Mr Lambek's time as manager was short and in 1897, Laage took over the lease and the school collections: he had a background as a secondary school manager. During 1898, a limited company was formed, once again with the grocer as the central figure, and took over the property in order to secure the economic foundation. The company built an additional building in 1898 containing classrooms and a gym hall (Meddelelser, 1898–1899, pp. 132, 193).

The school had a preparation class and 1st–4th secondary classes. The school curriculum was typical for secondary schools: Danish, Religion, Writing, Drawing, History, English, German, Maths, Biology, Gymnastics and Singing, and the girls studied Needlework (Meddelelser, 1898–1899, pp. 132, 193). The school fees were 6–10 *kroner* per month: there were four scholarships thanks to local donations. Furthermore, the school offered three scholarships

at a reduced cost. The teaching staff consisted of the headmaster, two teachers and three part-time teachers (Meddelelser, 1898–1899, pp. 132, 193).

The State Inspection Officer, Mr Rønning, visited the school in 1898 and 1899 to ascertain whether the school should be awarded examination rights. A positive statement from the State Inspection Officer was necessary in order to obtain this right and thereby the right to sell 'education goods'. His overall assessment at his first visit was that the school was in an unfinished state and that the school should not be granted the right to examinations (Kultusministeriet, 1898; Undervisningsinspektionen for mellem- og realskoler, 1899a). Some months later, he visited the school once more. There had been some improvements, and he recommended assigning examination rights, though only for a year, because the school facilities and school collections were satisfactory and because Mr Laage had previously been a headmaster of a secondary school (Undervisningsinspektionen for mellem-og realskoler, 1899b).

### **Consolidating the school**

The class intended to form the 4th grade, following the 1899 summer exams, was not academically successful: more time was required before the students would be ready to pass exams. The school therefore decided to hold spring exams instead of summer exams. In that way, the 1900 summer exams could be avoided and the 1901 March–April exams could be targeted (Meddelelser, 1899–1900, p. 215). Mr Laage stated that in a school with pupils especially from rural districts, it was best if the school year began in May, as May and November were the old rural changeover months (*skiftedage*). These months were therefore perceived as milestones where new life cycles started or ended (Meddelelser, 1899–1900, p. 215). Thus, the school adapted to the local way of living.

Mr Laage agreed with the female leader of Jyderup's venture school for young children that her school was to be connected to the secondary school, so that the lower classes of her school became a preparatory school for children of primary school age (Meddelelser, 1899–1900, p. 215). In that way, Mr Laage could offer schooling for children of all ages, and thereby enhance his chances in the local education market.

Although the school offered elementary grades, it was primarily a middle and secondary school. Examining the distribution of pupils at each grade in the 1913–54 period, the preparatory classes amounted to around 30% of the pupils. Most pupils went to the middle school or were in the secondary class (*Årsberetninger Jyderup Realskole, 1906–1959*). Similarly to many other secondary schools, Jyderup School had problems with dropouts in the middle school, when the children were confirmed in church at the age of 14 and were thereby no longer obliged to

attend school. Most pupils in Jyderup went to the 1st–3rd middle school classes, i.e. for students aged 11–14 years, while few attended the 4th class and the secondary class. (Årsberetninger Jyderup Realskole, 1906–1959). In this way, the school became an establishment for children of the age for mandatory schooling and not for children who had to pass an exam in order to continue studying or be employed in a job that required formal training.

In 1899/1900, the school comprised 56 students (Meddelelser, 1899–1900, p. 235). 43 of these pupils were sons of officials, or trades and craftsman: this was a typical profile for secondary schools of the period. The majority of pupils came from Jyderup, but the school also recruited pupils from the local area. Student information from 1913 (Årsberetning Jyderup Realskole, 1913), in conjunction with a study from 1953 (Skolestørrelse, 1955, p. 30), shows that the school did not only recruit pupils from Jyderup Parish and the neighbouring communities, but also from the towns along the railway.

Similarly to Randers and Esbjerg, pupil numbers can be followed from 1905/06 to 1947/48 through the annual school reports. At the beginning, there were 62 students, whose numbers grew so steadily that in 1909, the school had to build an extension and hire an extra teacher (Årsberetning Jyderup Realskole, 1909). A temporary peak was reached in the school year of 1923/24 with 174 students. After that, the number of pupils fell. The development turned in the 1930s, but there was a growth in pupil numbers, especially in the years during and after the German occupation (Årsberetninger Jyderup Realskole, 1906–1959). The large birth cohorts of the 1940s can explain part of the increase but that may not be the whole explanation. The large amounts of new pupils may also have been created by a desire to continue schooling, as the village establishment did not offer the skills or training necessary for pupils to qualify for grammar school in order to continue studying, or for jobs requiring special skills.

Jyderup Secondary School was in existence until 1982 when it closed due to financial problems when the number of pupils declined.

### ***Jyderup Private Secondary School 1890–1950***

In the railway town of Jyderup, it is apparent how a venture secondary school in a rural area secured its existence in the education market on several levels: by placing the school in an area where no other secondary schools existed in advance; by locating the school in the railway town, which made it easier for pupils to get to school, by situating it where there were people who wanted more advanced training and by focusing on pupils from within the local

area. Although the secondary school had primary classes, it was first and foremost a secondary school offering education that was not available in the local village schools.

### **Conclusion**

This article has analysed and compared the strategies that actors in the local education market employed when they implemented national legislation in secondary schools during the period 1880–1950; the period of secondary schools' emergence and their heyday. The state issued examination regulations, whilst the implementation itself was left up to local actors and communities when a new secondary school was established or its continued existence assured. The local contexts were, however, different. This resulted in different implementations of the legal framework and in various opportunities and challenges for each secondary school in the local education market, as seen in the three examples: the traditional market town with a mix of common and venture schools, the new provincial town with a venture and a strong common school and in the railway town with a venture school. The examples show how stakeholders in the local education market implemented the national legislative framework for secondary schools.

In most market towns, there was a group of citizens who traditionally placed their children into a venture or a secondary school, partly because the venture school provided a better standard of education than the common school, if the children were to continue studying, and partly because they did not want their children to be taught together with children from the lower classes. This opened up an education market where a headteacher could aim his or her school towards educating the town's female youth or children from rural areas lacking schools offering extended education.

In the new provincial cities offering industry and trade, there was a market for commercial and technical skills. This resulted in the establishment of secondary schools, technical schools and business schools on a venture basis to meet the demands that the common school could not provide. However, in cities where the Social Democrats were the prime movers in the expansion of common and free schools, the result was venture schools playing a minor role in the city's school system.

In the railway towns arising in the latter part of the 19th century, venture schools could secure their place in the local education market by locating the school in an area with no existing secondary schools and thereby avoiding competition. There were civil servants, tradesmen and others in the railway town who wanted more advanced training for their children. The location of

the school in a railway town made it easier for ‘the customers’ from the local area to get to school.

The different local conditions thus influenced the implementation process. This resulted in a diversity of secondary schools with not merely one form of secondary schooling but many variations, depending on the education landscape and the opportunities the education market gave to teachers, parents and other actors.

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