

Work Commitment in Public Organizations

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Work Commitment
in Public Organizations

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

Public employees' work decisions and behaviors are the effective expression of public policies (Lipsky, 1980; Riccucci, 2005), and the legitimacy of public organizations thus builds on public employees' commitment to acting in the interests of their organization and the members of the public their organization serves (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991; Perry & Wise, 1990; Romzek, 1990). On this background ensuring public employees' work commitment is arguably an inherently democratic concern of most welfare states as well as a paramount task for public managers. So far, however, our knowledge on how public managers can affect employees' work commitment and how employees' work commitment affects organizational performance is very sparse (Meyer et al., 2002; Solinger et al., 2008). This dissertation therefore sheds light on some critical questions that remain unanswered: How can public managers work strategically with employees' commitment? What promotes and impedes the development of employees' commitment in public organizations? And finally, how do managerial efforts and employees' commitment ultimately affect organizational performance?

The dissertation focuses on two types of work commitment, namely organizational commitment and goal commitment. Commitment is defined in terms of the relative strength of employees' identification with and involvement in either a particular organization or its goals (Mowday et al., 1982: 27). So far, studies on employees' work commitment have focused on determinants or correlates of commitment such as employees' individual characteristics (e.g. age, gender, tenure, education and ability), their perception of job characteristics (e.g. autonomy, scope variation and difficulty) and their attitudes toward various aspects of their work experience (e.g. satisfaction with their pay, job and colleagues) (for an overview see e.g. Mathieu & Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis). Moreover, previous studies on employees' work commitment have mostly been carried out within private organizations (with certain early exceptions, e.g. Balfour & Wechsler, 1996 and Angle & Perry, 1981). Only recently have public administration scholars shown interest in the issue (e.g. Stazyk et al., 2011 and Park & Rainey, 2007). As noted by Stazyk and colleagues (2011: 604) employees' work commitment is, however, particularly salient to public management since public managers are constrained by the limiting influence of pecuniary incentives in the public sector and thus often reliant on normative and solidary inducements to shape employee attitudes and behaviors (see also Balfour & Wechsler, 1996; Moyni-

han, 2010; Romzek, 1990). The first aim of this dissertation is therefore to assess the relationship between internal managerial efforts of accentuating organizational goals and values and public employees' work commitment.

The relationship between public management and organizational performance is often described as a 'black box' by public administration scholars and policy makers alike (O'Toole & Meier, 2011; Rainey, 2009; Boyne et al., 2006). In particular, how the relationships that managers develop with their employees shape performance is still considered uncharted territory (Favero et al., 2014). Reflecting this more general notion, we also know little about what public employees' work commitment means to organizational performance. Existing studies concerned with the performance implications of employees' work commitment are mainly delimited to assessments of retention and absenteeism, individual task performance or subjective self-reports of in-role and extra role behavior (Ricketta, 2002; Park & Rainey, 2007). The implications of employees' work commitment for organizational effectiveness, and thereby the actual consequences for the recipients of the service they deliver have, so far been neglected. Therefore, the often-endorsed tenet that public employees' work commitment has a positive influence on organizational performance is left unsubstantiated. More recent studies suggest that the institutional context characteristics of public organizations might impose hard conditions for the effects of employees' work commitment on organizational performance (Stazyk et al., 2011; Wright, 2004; Steinhaus & Perry, 1996). For instance, both high external control and bureaucratic red tape are found to reduce public employees' work commitment (Stazyk et al., 2011). Hence, relying on an assumption of positive performance effects of public employees' work commitment for not only employee-related outputs, but also organizational outcomes, imposes a great risk of fallacy. On this background, the second and final aim of this dissertation is to assess the association between public employees' work commitment and organizational performance.

To increase our understanding of the relationship between public management, employees' work commitment and organizational performance, the dissertation addresses the following research questions: *What is the relationship between public management and employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment, respectively, and what are the implications for organizational performance?* The dissertation comprises the following five papers, which all contribute to answering these questions:

- A. Staniok, Camilla Denager & Christian Bøtcher Jacobsen (2016). *Sharing the Fire: The Relationship between Public Managers' and Employees' Organizational Commitment and the Role of Transforma-*

- tional Leadership Congruence. *Manuscript invited for 2nd revise and resubmit at International Public Management Journal*.
- B. Staniok, Camilla Denager (2016). Going Against the Tide? Assessing the Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Performance in Public Organizations. *Conference paper accepted for presentation at the Public Management Research Conference 2016*.
 - C. Staniok, Camilla Denager (2015). Goal Prioritization and Commitment in Public Organizations: Exploring the Effects of Goal Conflict. *Forthcoming in International Journal of Public Administration*.
 - D. Staniok, Camilla Denager (2016). Co-determination as a Road to Goal Commitment: Managing Danish High Schools. *Forthcoming in Politica 48(2)* (title translated from Danish).
 - E. Staniok, Camilla Denager (2016). Performance Implications of Public Managers' Goal Prioritization: An Empirical Test of the Link between Internal Management and Organizational Performance. *Manuscript in review at International Journal of Public Administration*.

Paper A and B focus on employees' *organizational commitment*. Based on the argument that managers, due to their central position and authority within the organization, serve as critical role models to their employees (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Christensen et al., 2009; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010), paper A investigates the relationship between public managers' organizational commitment and employees' organizational commitment. Moreover the paper examines the role of transformational leadership for this relationship, and based on the literature on self-other agreement, looks at both the degree of transformational leadership and the congruence in manager-intended and employee-perceived transformational leadership (Bass & Reggio, 2006; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). Paper B examines the relationship between managers' and employees' organizational commitment and organizational performance. The paper theoretically elaborates on the existing theoretical arguments and empirical findings within the literature concerning the relationship between organizational commitment and performance outputs (e.g. Park & Rainey, 2007; Balfour & Wechsler, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982), and on this background empirically tests proposed theoretical expectations on how organizational commitment relates to both quality and quantity criteria for organizational performance outcomes (Andersen et al., 2016).

Paper C, D and E focus on employees' *goal commitment*. Building on the arguments from Goal Setting Theory about specification and formulation of goals as being crucial for goal achievement (Locke & Latham, 1990; Latham et al., 2008), paper C and D investigate the relationship between public managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. The papers

moreover look at how this relationship depends on the degree of goal conflict (paper C) and employees' perception of co-determination (paper D). Finally, paper E investigates the relationship between managerial goal prioritization, employees' goal commitment and organizational performance and elaborates on the on-going discussion of goal displacement in public organizations (Bohte & Meier, 2002).

The more specific literatures and theoretical expectations addressed in the papers are presented in more depth in Chapter 2, which furthermore specifies the cohesion of the individual papers and their contributions to the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The following section briefly presents the empirical context and methodology of the five papers. Next, the contributions of the individual papers are summarized in an overall model. Finally, an overview of the content of the dissertation ties up this introductory chapter.

1.1. Empirical Context and Methodology

The theoretical expectations on employees' work commitment in public organizations are investigated empirically in the area of higher secondary education in Denmark. The advantages of this empirical setting are more carefully described in the individual papers. On a general note, however, in order to ensure considerable variation in the independent variables as well as reasonable grounds for comparability across organizations, the selection of the empirical context has been based on three criteria in particular.

First, Danish high schools were chosen because they have considerable decision-making authority and substantial room for different managerial strategies at the school level as they are self-governing institutions with school boards responsible for the overall direction of the schools. Second, Danish high schools have a relatively simple management structure, where most principals handle personnel management and engage with teachers on a daily basis. Principals can thus be expected to exert considerable influence on the teachers. Finally, Danish high schools have comparable performance outcomes as they all produce more or less identical services. The area of higher secondary education in Denmark is, however, also a highly institutionalized field with strong professional norms and Chapter 4 thus returns to this issue in a discussion on the drawbacks pertaining to this choice of empirical context and its consequences for generalizability to other areas of the public sector as well as other political and geographical contexts. Table 1.1 below lists the papers in relation to their main contribution, dependent variable, study type and the samples used in the analyses.

All studies are based on quantitative analyses of two parallel surveys (2012) to all Danish principals and teachers in higher secondary education, including 1) STX high schools, the general educational program, 2) HHX high schools, the commercial/business program, and 3) HTX high schools, the technical examination program. The different high schools within the area have program differences, but they all share the objective of providing students with general education and knowledge qualifying them to access higher education. Paper D combines quantitative and qualitative data and methods in order to explore the concept of employee co-determination in the specific context of higher secondary education. Paper B and E, which focus on organizational performance, use measures based on archival data on high schools' completion rates, student grades and students' socio-demographic background (here aggregated on school level, data from 2011, 2012 2013). All archival data has been obtained from Statistics Denmark, which among other things collects and compiles data on all Danish high schools and high school students. The measures and methods applied in the different studies are discussed in the individual papers, and the more general advantages and shortcomings of the methodological choices made throughout the dissertation (e.g. research design and types of variables used in the studies) are discussed in the final chapter of the dissertation.

Table 1.1. Specification on the papers in the dissertation

Short title*	Main contribution	Dependent variable	Study type	Sample**
A Organizational Commitment and Transformational Leadership	Investigates the association between managers' and employees' organizational commitment and the role of transformational leadership	Employees' organizational commitment	Quantitative	74 principals 1467 teachers
B Organizational Commitment and Performance	Investigates the performance effects of managers' and employees' organizational commitment	Organizational performance (academic level and completion rate)	Quantitative	87 principals 2112 teachers
C Goal Prioritization, Commitment and Conflict	Conceptualizes a value-based approach to goal commitment and investigates the effects of goal conflict	Employees' goal commitment	Quantitative	73 principals 1464 teachers
D Goal Prioritization, Commitment and Co-determination	Investigates the meaning and effects of employee co-determination both qualitatively and quantitatively	Employees' goal commitment	Qualitative	5 principals 5 teachers
E Goal Prioritization, Commitment and Performance	Investigates the performance effects of managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment	Organizational performance (completion rate)	Quantitative	73 principals 1353 teachers
			Quantitative	87 principals 2112 teachers

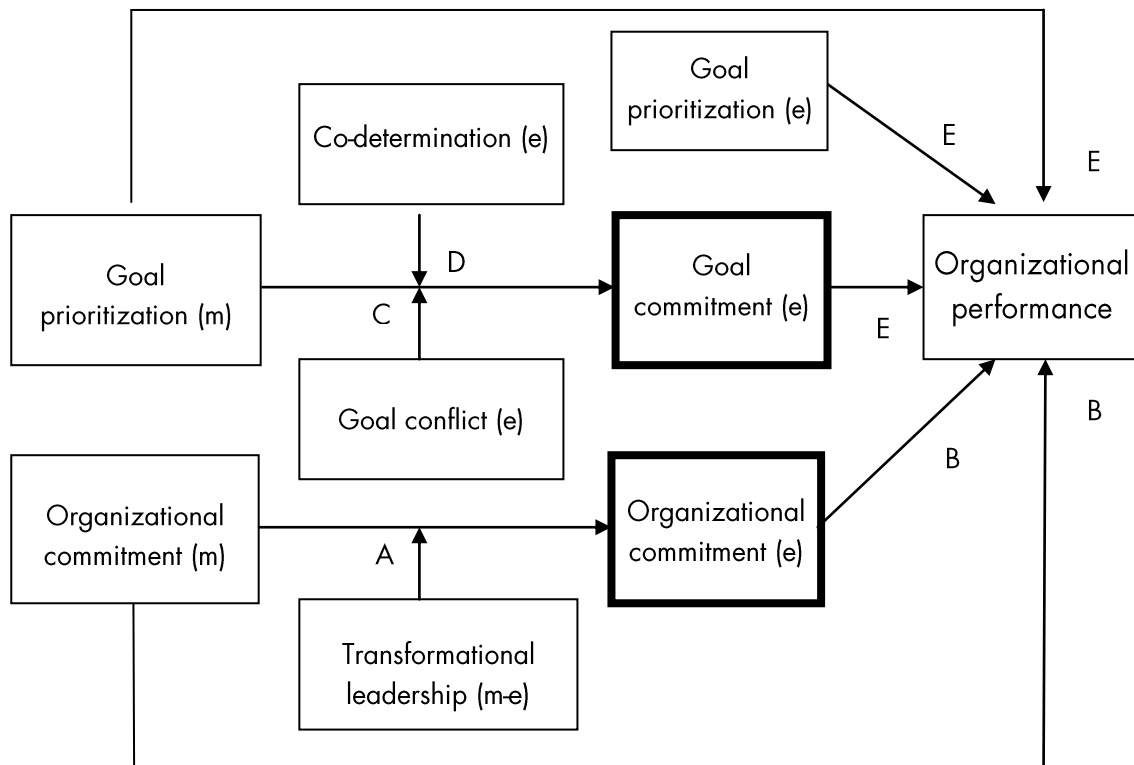
* The letters A-E in the table will be used as a paper reference throughout the dissertation.

** Papers A, C and D are only based on respondents from STX high schools whereas study B and E is based on STX, HHX and HTX high schools. Although papers are based on the same dataset, the number of respondents differs in the analyses due to variations in missing responses on the different measures.

1.2. Contributions and Overview

The papers investigate either how public managers through their own organizational commitment and their goal prioritization can affect employees' work commitment, or how this relates to organizational performance. Figure 1.1 depicts the overall model of the dissertation and illustrates the contributions of the individual papers (referring to the alphabetizing in Table 1.1). As the figure shows, the papers of the dissertation focus on intra-organizational processes that expectedly connect public managers' organizational commitment and goal prioritization to employees' work commitment and organizational performance. The figure also illustrates how the papers of the dissertation further include variables that can be argued to influence exactly these relationships, that is, managers' transformational leadership and employees' perception of goal conflict and co-determination.

Figure 1.1. Overview of the contributions of the papers in the dissertation*



* Note: (m) denotes manager, (e) denotes employee and (m-e) denotes manager and employee.

The *theoretical contribution* of this dissertation is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the role of employees' work commitment in public organizations. The framework assesses both how managers can affect employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment through their

own organizational commitment and goal prioritization, and how this can be expected to affect organizational performance. So far, the literature on work commitment has been criticized for being atheoretical, which has led to calls for ‘theory-based’ models of commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sollinger et al., 2008).

The *methodological contribution* of the dissertation is to provide varied analyses of the intra-organizational workings of work commitment and methodologically robust tests of the proposed relationships. So far, studies have primarily focused on employee commitment, neglecting the potential performance implications of managers’ commitment and leadership. Moreover the performance implications of employees’ work commitment have mainly been investigated empirically by the use of subjective measures (self- and manager-reported measures) (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2002). The multi-level set-up in the studies, which combines measurements of commitment and leadership on different levels of the organization along with the objective performance measures and insights from qualitative interviews, thus explicitly addresses some of the existing pit-falls in the literature.

Lastly, as mentioned at the outset of this introductory chapter, frontline public service employees can be seen as ‘the real policy makers’ (Lipsky, 1980; Riccucci, 2005), and ensuring that public policies are actually followed through by these employees is thus a critical task for public managers. In the aftermath of New Public Management, efforts to find alternatives to the market-like approaches of organizing and incentivizing public employees are warranted (e.g. Moynihan, 2010; Moynihan & Pandey, 2010; Pollitt, 2013). This dissertation contributes to this question and *public management practice* in general by suggesting how managing employees’ work commitment by accentuating the organizational goals and values may be a fruitful means to this end in a public sector context.

1.2.1. Roadmap

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework for the dissertation. The chapter defines the key concepts of work commitment and organizational performance, presents the overall theoretical background for the papers, and summarizes the main theoretical expectations. Chapter 3 summarizes the empirical findings from the five papers. The first part of the chapter concerns organizational commitment and thus consists of a summary of the findings on the proposed relationships between managers’ and employees’ organizational commitment and organizational performance (paper A and B). The second part of the chapter concerns goal commitment and hence consists of a summary of the findings regarding the proposed relationships between

managers' goal prioritization, employees' goal commitment and organizational performance (paper C, D and E). Chapter 4 first synthesizes the results of the studies in a joint conclusion. Hereafter the chapter discusses the overall strengths and limitations of the dissertation as well as critical perspectives on potential 'dark sides' of work commitment in public organizations. Finally, the chapter addresses perspectives for research and practice that can be derived on the basis of the dissertation's results.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to provide conceptual clarification and present the main theories behind the dissertation's papers. The chapter is divided into two parts. Section 2.1 defines and discusses the concepts work commitment and organizational performance. Section 2.2 presents the theoretical background for the papers and summarizes the overall theoretical expectations concerning managers' commitment and goal prioritization, employees' work commitment and organizational performance. The contributions of the papers to the overall theoretical framework of the dissertation are discussed throughout the chapter, whereas a more detailed specification and discussion of the theoretical arguments are found in the individual papers. Chapter 3 will refer to the theoretical framework presented in this chapter when summarizing and discussing the empirical findings of the five papers.

2.1. Conceptual Clarification

What does work commitment mean? And how can we understand organizational performance in a public sector context? This chapter begins by defining work commitment and organizational performance, as conceptual clarification of these constructs is necessary to understand and evaluate the findings and the contributions of the dissertation.

2.1.1. Defining Work Commitment

Existing research on commitment in the workplace ranges from studies on workgroup commitment, professional commitment and personal career commitment to studies on union commitment, organizational commitment and goal commitment (Neubert & Wu, 2009). This dissertation, as mentioned in the introduction, focuses exclusively on the latter two. Organizational commitment and goal commitment are particularly interesting because they both rely on two strong strands of literature that represent different and potentially competing logics (Klein et al., 2012; Meyer et al. 2004). Organizational commitment has its roots in sociology and organizational psychology and exclusively pertains to commitment to a recognizable entity (Mowday et al., 1979). Goal commitment primarily draws on the literature on Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990; Latham et al., 2008) and focuses on commitment to intended outcomes of a course of action. Also, the two types of commitment are both concerned with the goals of the organization,

however, in different ways. Organizational commitment is more broadly concerned with employees' commitment to the values, mission and visions of the organization whereas goal commitment is delimited to employees' commitment to a particular performance goal. It is by now well recognized that individuals can develop multiple work-related commitments and that different types of commitment can co-exist in work settings (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Cohen, 2003). Recently, efforts to unite the two streams of literature have also emerged. For instance, Meyer, Becker and Vandenberghe (2004) developed an integrative framework on motivational processes building in part on Locke and Latham's (1990) model of goal setting and in part on Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) general model of workplace commitments (Meyer et al., 2004). The degree of complementarity and the potential trade-offs between organizational commitment and goal commitment are not explicitly addressed in this dissertation, however, their individual contributions are. The abovementioned literatures will be described in more depth when the overall theoretical expectations of the dissertation are introduced in section 2.2. But first, a theoretical clarification of what commitment means in this context.

The multidisciplinary interest in work commitment has spurred a myriad of conceptual approaches (for thorough reviews and meta-analyses see e.g. Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002, Klein et al., 2012 or Cohen, 2003). Meyer and Allen's (1997) multidimensional framework is, however, by far the most used and validated approach to commitment today (Sollinger et al., 2008; Klein et al., 2012). Meyer and Allen define commitment as "an internal force (mindset) that binds an individual to a target (social or non-social) and/or to a course of action of relevance to that target" (Meyer, 2009: 40). According to Meyer and Allen, the internal force can be thought of as a conscious mindset consisting of three dimensions: *desire* (affective commitment), *obligation* (normative commitment) and *cost* (continuative commitment) (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The dimensions can be said to describe different causes of commitment to the individual and combined to reflect an individual's 'commitment profile' (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001: 308). In continuation hereof, *affective commitment* is more specifically defined as an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in a commitment target. *Normative commitment* is the perceived obligation to a commitment target out of a sense of duty. And finally, *continuance commitment* is defined as the belief that one must commit to a target because of prior investments (e.g. hard work, learning, skills, time), which have made the cost of not committing too high (e.g., relocation, forfeiting unvested pension funds) (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Table 2.1 below provides an overview.

Table 2.1. Dimensions of Meyer and Allen's commitment model

Commitment	Mindset	Description
Affective	Desire 'Want to'	"Develops when an individual becomes involved in, recognizes the value-relevance of and/or derives his or her identity from an association with an entity or pursuit of course of action".
Normative	Perceived obligation 'Ought to'	"Develops as a result of internalization of norms through socialization, the receipt of benefits that includes a need to reciprocate, and/or acceptance of the terms of a psychological contract".
Continuance	Perceived cost 'Have to'	"Develops when an individual recognizes he or she stands to lose investments, and/or perceives that there are no other alternatives than to pursue a course of action of relevance to a particular target".

Source: Based on Meyer and Herscovitch's proposition 5a, 5b and 5c (2001: 316-317).

Meyer and Allen's framework (1997) builds upon earlier conceptualizations of commitment. The definition of affective commitment mirrors the seminal definition of organizational commitment first formulated by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979). Mowday, Porter and Steers' definition has been referred to as attitudinal in order to separate it from other behavioral side bet views of commitment at that time (e.g. Becker, 1960; Salancik, 1977). The distinction between attitudinal commitment and commitment based on more extrinsic or economic benefits (e.g. continuance commitment) is expressed in various ways. Angle and Perry (1981) distinguish between commitment to values and commitment to stay with an organization. Similarly, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) in their meta-study of organizational commitment categorize studies as either attitudinal or calculative. As opposed to Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional model, these distinctions represent unidimensional views of commitment. Where Meyer and Allen theorize that commitment consists of different dimensions, unidimensional approaches argue that the dimensions are in fact qualitatively different concepts reflecting different logics and relationships between the individual and the relevant target, e.g. an organization or a goal (Sollinger et al., 2008). This debate is continuously being extended (see e.g. Cohen, 2003; Riketta, 2002). Balfour and Wechsler (1996) distinguish between three forms of commitment: identification, affiliation, and exchange. Identification commitment concerns individuals' sense of pride in the organization and their feelings about the organizational mission, vision and achievements (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996: 261). Affiliation commitment refers to individuals who feel a sense of belonging to the organization and who care for the well-being of their colleagues (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996:

263). Finally exchange commitment captures individuals' beliefs in organizational acknowledgement and appreciation of their work and effort (Balfour & Wechsler, 1996: 264). Despite differences in conceptualizations, most studies acknowledge multiple reasons, rationales, motives, or mindsets for commitment either as factors that affect commitment or as expressions of commitment (Klein et al., 2009). As recently noted by Stazyk, Pandey and Wright (2011: 605), "the conceptual overlap in organizational commitment understanding may be conceptually clear to scholars but less straightforward for study participants".

This dissertation mainly focuses on affective and normative commitment in regard to both organizational commitment and goal commitment, as these dimensions of commitment theoretically can be expected to reflect autonomous types of motivation and, on that background, to entail the strongest relationships with behavioral outcomes and performance. According to the Self-Determination Theory formulated by Ryan and Deci, autonomous motivation involves acting with a sense of volition and having the experience of choice. In contrast, controlled motivation involves acting out of a sense of pressure – a sense of having to engage in the actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagné & Deci, 2005). A recent development in studies of Meyer and Allen's three-dimensional commitment model has exactly been integration with Self-Determination Theory. Studies of this kind demonstrate that whether the individual's commitment builds on autonomous or controlled motivation can be used as a common basis for understanding the nature and consequences of the different commitment dimensions (Meyer et al., 2004; Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Gagné et al., 2008). Section 2.2 will elaborate further on the theoretically proposed differences pertaining to the motivational bases of the commitment dimensions and describe in more detail how this motivational differentiation supports the theoretical framework of this dissertation. An overview of the commitment dimensions included in the individual papers is provided in table 2.2 and briefly summarized below.

Table 2.2. Overview of included commitment dimensions in the dissertation papers

Included dimensions of commitment	
Organizational commitment	Paper A: affective commitment Paper B: affective, normative and continuative commitment
Goal commitment	Paper C, D and E: affective and normative commitment

Paper A and B on organizational commitment take on different approaches. Paper A investigates the relationship between managers' and employees' af-

ffective organizational commitment, and paper B investigates the association between organizational commitment and organizational performance by including all three dimensions of commitment. The more narrow focus on affective commitment in paper A can be ascribed to the proposed relationship with managers' transformational leadership. The relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment is theorized to work through role model influences and processes of emotional identification with organizational goals and values corresponding to the particular inherent properties of affective commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2004). The relationship between organizational commitment and organizational performance is not delimited to these specific mechanisms, however, and a broader approach including *affective, normative and continuative commitment* is thus explored in paper B.

Paper C, D and E on goal commitment all build on the same approach to goal commitment (described in more detail in paper C). The approach is denoted 'value-oriented' goal commitment and focuses on *affective and normative commitment* as a shared expression of an individual's goal commitment. The approach partly resembles Angle and Perry's (1981) concept of value commitment and builds on the notion that affective commitment and normative commitment are closely related dimensions, compared to continuance commitment, as they are both based on autonomous, rather than controlled motivation and to a large extent rely on the values of the individual. Against the backdrop of these approaches comprised in the five papers, the dissertation as a whole gives a broad and varied picture of the role of organizational commitment and goal commitment in public organizations. Before elaborating further on the theoretical expectations, the next section looks at the ambiguous concept of organizational performance.

2.1.2. Defining Organizational Performance

Within public administration, organizational performance is a core concept that has received attention for decades (Brewer, 2006; O'Toole & Meier, 2011; Boyne et al., 2006). Due to the multidimensional nature of the concept, it is by no means straightforward to theoretically define or empirically study organizational performance (Selden & Sowa, 2004; Cameron, 1986; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Andersen et al., 2016). At the outset of this dissertation, at least two questions are critical to assess: 1) by which performance criteria are an organization's achievements judged? 2) Who defines what good performance is for a given performance criterion? Structured by these two questions, this section clarifies the performance approach of the dissertation.

Performance criteria refer to the standards by which an organization's achievements are judged and can furthermore be divided into criteria relating to the results of the production or the process by which the results are achieved (Andersen et al., 2016). Process criteria typically refer to standards of equity, transparency or efficiency and are often associated with input, output or the ratio between the two in the production of public service delivery. Conversely, criteria of results most often refer to mission achievement or effectiveness and thereby mainly draw attention to the outcomes of public service delivery (Lynn & Robichau, 2013; Boyne, 2002). This dissertation focuses on the results of the production, that is, the *outcomes* of public service delivery, and thus defines organizational performance in terms organizational goal achievement (Selden & Sowa, 2004).¹ Moreover, the dissertation focuses on two different criteria of organizational performance outcomes, reflecting public demands to improve quantity and quality in public service delivery respectively (Meier, 1987). Paper B, which investigates the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational performance, addresses the criteria of both quantity and quality in public service delivery, whereas paper E, which investigates the relationship between managerial goal prioritization, employees' goal commitment and organizational performance, solely addresses the criterion of quantity.

The exclusive focus on organizational performance *outcomes* implies that the dissertation only provides a partial picture of organizational performance. Neither process criteria nor potential performance trade-offs between for instance output and outcome criteria are included in the analyses. In democratic welfare states, a focus on organizational performance outcomes of public service delivery can, however, be argued to be particularly salient as performance in this regard typically reflects organizations' effectiveness in terms of the achievement of politically defined objectives (Lynn & Robichau, 2013). This notion naturally leads to question 2, namely, *who* defines what good performance is for a given performance criterion.

As stated already early on by Heffron (1989: 323), in a public context "there is no agreement on what the intended result of organizations is or should be". A range of different stakeholders both within and outside public organizations hold legitimate views on what constitutes good performance, and the criteria that are taken into account by different stakeholder groups may vary widely (Andrews et al., 2006; Boyne, 2003). Examples are criteria set by elected politicians formulating goals and policies to be carried

¹ As also noted by Selden and Sowa (2004), scholars often also use "effectiveness" to describe organizational goal achievement, and the two will also in this context be used interchangeably.

through, service beneficiaries, and service providers. In the empirical setting of Danish high schools, examples of key stakeholders are students, parents, teachers, school principals and school boards. As indicated above, this dissertation privileges the goals and objectives formulated at the national political level, meaning that the criteria for the performance standards investigated in the dissertation are determined in the Danish parliament. In a public sector context, the ultimate principals are the democratically elected politicians, and their public mandate gives them a legitimate claim on authority in deciding what constitutes good performance, and in the end also the power to decide whether publicly owned organizations survive (Boschken, 1992). Hence, the politically determined standards for performance criteria in a democratic welfare state arguably have some precedence in terms of authority (Andersen et al., 2016).

The immediate implication of this approach is that relevant criteria for organizational performance that are not politically expressed or formulated are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Also, the papers do not assess *all* politically stated criteria of good performance in the analyses. Instead selected criteria for the outcomes of public service are investigated, which again limits the scope of the analyses comprised in the dissertation.

Finally, the adapted performance approach of this dissertation implies that the analyses provide a static picture of organizational performance. Compared to assessments of public service *improvements* that concern shifts in service standards in relation to a baseline, this dissertation solely looks at the relative achievements of different organizations in a single time period (Boyne, 2003). Further drawbacks pertaining to this approach are discussed in papers B and E, and Chapter 4 also discusses these issues in connection with the limitations of the dissertation.

Summing up, this dissertation focuses on performance *outcomes* and defines organizational performance in terms of organizations' achievement of *politically determined goals*.

2.2. Theoretical Background and Summary of Theoretical Expectations

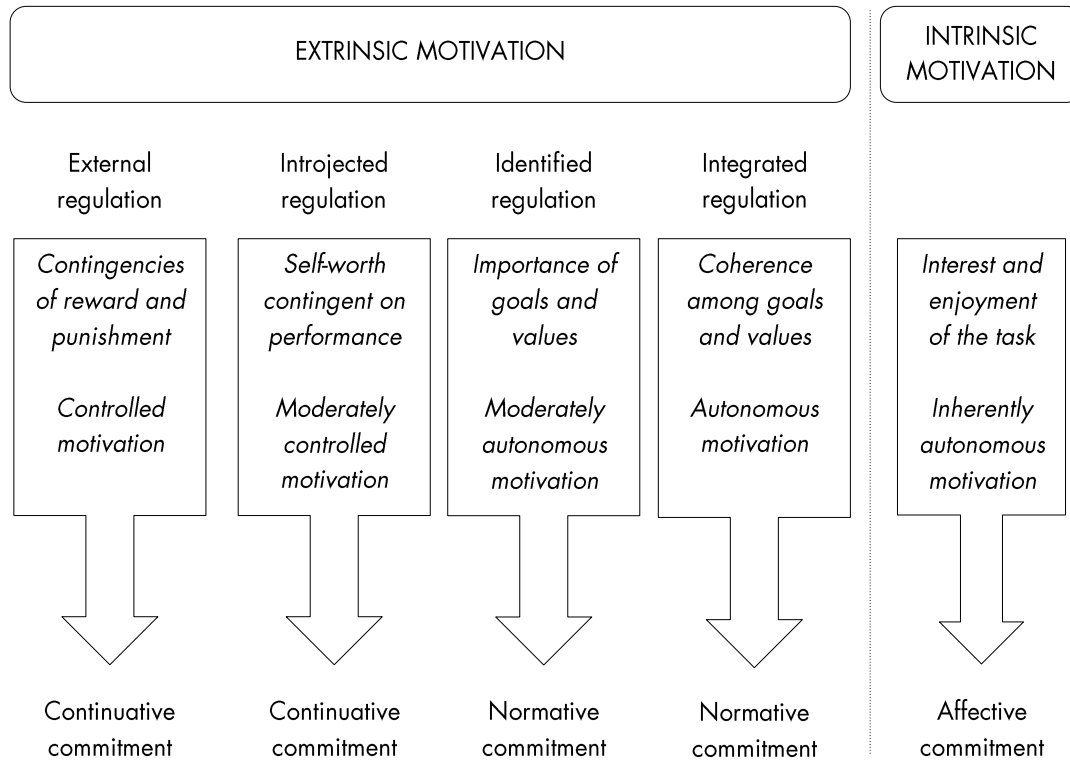
In the following, the theoretical background for the main theoretical expectations of the dissertation is presented, and section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 summarize the main theoretical arguments of the five papers comprised in the dissertation. The purpose of this part of the dissertation is to shed light on the *underlying theoretical approaches* of the individual studies and to give an *overview* of the theoretical expectations. A more detailed theoretical elaboration of the arguments is provided in the individual papers.

As outlined in section 2.1, the type of motivation founding the individual's commitment can be used as a common basis for understanding the nature and consequences of the different commitment dimensions (Meyer et al., 2004). Returning to Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, controlled and autonomous motivation defines the endpoints on a continuum for different types of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Controlled motivation refers to extrinsic types of motivation (doing something because it leads to a separable outcome), whereas autonomous motivation refers to both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (doing something because it is interesting or enjoyable) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The continuum is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below. Figure 2.1 is based on Gagné and Deci's illustration of how individuals' 'perceived locus of causality' (i.e. the felt autonomy for behavior) is external for controlled motivations and internal for autonomous motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005: 336). The figure furthermore shows how this dissertation elaborates on this framework by including also the proposed commitment relationships, which will be further discussed below. It is important to note that the papers do not aim to empirically test a potential causal relationship between motivational bases and commitment dimensions. The inclusion of Self-Determination Theory and its distinction between autonomous and controlled types of motivation in this dissertation merely serves to shed light on the theoretical foundation underlying the expectations developed and tested in the individual papers. The expectations on both organizational commitment and goal commitment developed in the papers overall build on *the degree* to which the different commitment dimensions are based on autonomous or controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

As mentioned in section 2.1 and depicted in Figure 2.1, *affective* and *normative* commitment is here expectedly based on autonomous types of motivational factors: affective commitment reflecting feelings of affiliation and identification with an organization or a goal, and normative commitment more normative and moral obligations towards an organization or a goal (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Based on Ryan and Deci's continuum, the difference between affective and normative commitment can be further substantiated. Recall that affective commitment reflects an individual's *desire* and can thus be said to build on *inherently autonomous* motivation (i.e. intrinsic motivation); the individual simply commits to the organization or its goals due to his or her interest in and enjoyment by doing so. Normative commitment on the other hand reflects feelings of *obligations* and internalized pressures and can thus be said to be based on what Ryan and Deci denote *moderately autonomous* or *autonomous* motivation; the employee either commits to an organization or a goal because he or she sees the importance of the values

they represent (identified regulation) or because they are congruent with his or her own values (integrated regulation) (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Figure 2.1. Overview of Self-Determination Continuum and Commitment Relationships



In opposition to affective and normative commitment, *continuative* commitment is based on an instrumental and calculative relationship with the organization and thus follows from *controlled* or *moderately controlled* motivational factors; the individual either commits to an organization or a goal because of a need to maintain organizational membership due to a lack of alternatives or prior investments (external regulation), or because he feels pressured to do so to avoid feelings of, for instance, low self-esteem (introjected regulation) (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Individuals who act based on controlled motivation act with the intention to obtain a desired or avoid an undesired consequence, so their commitment is contingent on whether effort is instrumental to those ends (Gagné & Deci, 2005).²

² Note that theoretical expectations on the motivational basis of commitment differ in the literature. In Meyer et al.'s (2004) conceptualization, affective commitment is associated with all three types of autonomous motivation and continuative commitment only with controlled motivation (external regulation). Also, empirical findings are inconclusive; e.g., normative commitment is found to correlate highly with both moderately controlled motivation and autonomous motivation, which supports the theorization presented here as well as Meyer et al.'s (2004).

Summing up, affective, normative and continuative commitment can thus be argued to build on different motivational bases, which reflect different regulatory processes and in turn are predicted to have different behavioral consequences. The purpose of embedding the concept of commitment within the broader frame of different types of motivation described in Self-Determination Theory serves three purposes. The first purpose is that it further substantiates the choice undertaken in this dissertation, namely to focus on affective and normative commitment. As argued above, both affective and normative commitment can be argued to build on autonomous types of motivation (albeit involving different regulatory processes) and, in comparison to continuative commitment, thus to promote voluntary behavior that expectedly has positive performance implications for individuals' behavior and performance. Second, the Self-Determination Theory further clarifies how the three dimensions of commitment are distinct from one another, and finally, including Self-Determination Theory illustrates how commitment as a theoretical construct can be situated in the broader theoretical field of work motivation.

2.2.1. Organizational Commitment

In the following two main sets of theoretical expectations concerning organizational commitment are derived. The first set of expectations focus on the relationship between public managers' and employees' organizational commitment (investigated in paper A). The key question addressed here is how public managers' affective organizational commitment and leadership style are related to the affective organizational commitment of their employees. The second set of expectations focus on the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational performance (investigated in paper B). These expectations are derived by assessing the question of what affective, normative and continuative organizational commitment means to organizational performance outcomes in a public sector context.

The expectation concerning how public managers' affective organizational commitment relates to employees' affective organizational commitment fundamentally builds on psychological theories of basic needs and social identification processes. According to basic needs theory, individuals have a natural capacity and inclination to form bonds with social entities and groups. Both in Maslow's seminal Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) and within the abovementioned Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) individuals are argued to possess a need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance among their social groups. This need to form relationships and feel connected to social entities is further developed in theories of social identity

(Tjafel, 1978) and organizational identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998). Here it is argued that individuals not only have a need to form these bonds, but also (in part) derive their identity from these relationships (Meyer, 2009: 56). Accordingly, Meyer and colleagues argue that *affective* organizational commitment develops when an individual becomes involved in, recognizes the value relevance of, and/or derives his or her identity from an organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001: 316). On this basis, making the organization a shared source of identification is in this dissertation argued to be key to affecting employees' *affective* organizational commitment. One way public managers can do this, as argued in paper A, is by expressing high affective organizational commitment themselves. Public managers serve as critical role models to their employees due to their formally assigned authority and power (Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999). Moreover, they shape both the formal and informal organizational processes with great importance for the internal integration within the organization (Rainey, 2009; Christensen et al., 2009). In this way managers are argued to encourage and inspire employees to follow their example. In paper A, we denote this process of managers transmitting their own affective organizational commitment to their employees as 'sharing the fire'. In a similar vein, Paarlberg and Lavigna (2010) recently stated that managerial practices are decisive for employees' affective organizational commitment because they communicate the key values in the organizational identity and how such values are translated into acceptable behavior. On this background, public managers' affective organizational commitment is expected to be positively related to employees' organizational commitment, because managers through their own organizational commitment strengthen or sustain a work environment employees can identify with and feel connected to (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

A proposed precondition for this positive transmission is that managers actually come across with their affective organizational commitment or in more popular terms 'walk the talk' (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Therefore, the leadership style of public managers and how it is perceived by the employees is furthermore expected to affect the relationship between managers' and employees' affective organizational commitment. A transformational leadership style is argued to support managers in communicating their affective organizational commitment in that it implies clearly articulating organizational goals and facilitating the process of connecting individual values to the organizational mission (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Avolio et al., 2004). Moreover, it is argued that not only the degree to which the manager is transformational in his or her leadership, but also the congruence in manager-intended and employee-perceived transformational leadership is important (Favero et al., 2014; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). According to the

self-other agreement literature, managers' self-awareness and interpersonal orientation affect the congruence in manager intentions and employee perceptions of transformational leadership (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992, 1997; Fleenor et al., 2010). Supporting this argument, recent studies have also demonstrated that manager-intended and employee-perceived leadership is weakly correlated (see e.g. the recent study by Jacobsen and Andersen, 2015). On this background, the effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between managers' and employees' affective organizational commitment is expected to depend both on the degree of transformational leadership perceived by the employees *and* the degree of overrating by managers relative to employee perceptions. In order to describe the different combinations of employee-perceived transformational leadership and manager-intended transformational leadership, paper A differentiates between different types of managers according to their realism. The label 'realistic' denotes congruence in manager-intended and employee-perceived transformational leadership, whereas the label 'overambitious' is used when manager-intended transformational leadership is overrated relative to employee-perceived transformational leadership. A positive relationship between managers' and employees' affective organizational commitment is only expected in so far as managers are both seen as transformational leaders and are realistic about how transformational they are. In all other cases, managers' and employees' affective organizational commitment is, at best, expected to be unrelated.

Finally, concerning the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational performance, addressed in paper B, this dissertation mainly expects that both affective and normative organizational commitment will be positively related to organizational performance, whereas continuative organizational commitment will not. Previous studies on how organizational commitment affects performance (e.g. Angle & Perry, 1981; Mowday et al., 1982; Park & Rainey, 2007) have primarily focused on performance outputs (such as retention and absenteeism), and we thus know little about the implications for the *outcomes* of public service delivery. Organizational performance outcomes are often closer to the achievement of the politically defined objectives in the public sector than organizational performance outputs, and it is therefore, as argued in paper B, equally important, if not more important, to also address these implications of organizational commitment (Andersen et al., 2016).

Existing theoretical arguments concerning the relationship between organizational commitment and performance stem mostly from organizational behavior studies, psychology and generic management theories (Park & Rainey, 2007). And, as noted by Balfour and Wechsler (1991), it is within

these streams of literature argued that employees who are affectively and normatively committed to the organization where they work are also more willing to make an extra effort for the organization, and in many work situations put their organizations' interest before their personal concerns (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991: 355). Moreover, it is argued that affective and normative organizational commitment have positive effects on retention and turnover intentions because these types of organizationally committed employees will take greater pride in their organizational membership and believe in the organization's goals and values (Riketta, 2002; Balfour & Wechsler, 1991).

Existing studies also argue that affective and normative organizational commitment has positive effects on in-role and extra-role job behavior (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Balfour & Wechsler, 1991). In-role behavior is defined as the behavior required by formal job descriptions (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991) and extra-role behavior as behavior that is beneficial to the organization and going beyond formal job requirements (e.g., extra hours and effort and altruistic behavior) (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991). Conversely, the literature expects that *continuative* organizational commitment only has a positive effect on actual turnover and in-role behavior as continually committed employees merely remain with the organization because they need to (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). They are thus not expected to do more than the bare minimum to uphold membership of the organization (Meyer et al., 2002).

On the backdrop of these theoretical insights, empirical findings in the literature concerning the more specific relationship between organizational commitment and performance in a *public sector context* is reviewed in paper B. Results here are inconclusive. The findings consistently support the expected positive relationship between affective and normative organizational commitment and turnover (including turnover intentions) (e.g. Mowday et al., 1982; Angle & Perry, 1981; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Balfour & Wechsler, 1991). Also continuative organizational commitment is consistently associated with lower actual turnover and higher turnover intentions (Balfour & Wechsler, 1991). The empirical findings in regard to performance criteria of organizational outputs more closely related to the final results of public service delivery such as extra-role behavior or employee effort do, however, not provide a clear picture. And, any linkage between all three dimensions of organizational commitment and organizational effectiveness in the literature is found to be tenuous at best (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Balfour & Wechsler, 1991).

Building on these theoretical arguments and empirical findings, affective and normative organizational commitment is in this context theorized to be positively related to the performance outcome criteria of increasing the *qual-*

ity of public service delivery. First individuals who are affectively and normatively committed to their organization are argued to be more willing to put in an extra effort as their behavior is voluntary and dependent on either a desire to pursue certain courses of action or perceptions of what is appropriate behavior within the organization, respectively. Second affective and normative organizational commitment is argued to be positively associated with the quality of public service delivery through personnel stability (O'Toole & Meier, 2003; Perrow, 1986) as employee retention expectedly exacerbates difficulties in building competence and mutual trust within organizations (Dunn, 1997).

In regard to the relationship between affective and normative organizational commitment and the performance outcome criteria of increasing the *quantity* of public service delivery, the expectations concerning the effects of affective and normative organizational commitment are more ambiguous. As argued in paper B and discussed above, the autonomous type of motivation driving affective and normative commitment could be expected to be more closely related to pursuing professional standards and thus behaviors aiming at securing quality rather than quantity of public service delivery. Individuals who identify with or experience normative obligations to support organizational goals and values could, however, theoretically also be expected to have an interest in securing the economic foundation for achieving these ends by increasing the efficiency of their efforts. Finally, *continuative* organizational commitment is not expected to have positive implications for performance outcome criteria of increasing neither the *quality* nor the *quantity* of public service delivery as such. As proposed above and confirmed in numerous empirical studies, continually committed employees cannot be expected to do more than the bare minimum to uphold their organizational membership and are therefore not expected to put in an extra effort to increase the quantity or the quality of public service delivery.

2.2.2. Goal Commitment

This last section of the chapter derives the theoretical expectations regarding employees' *goal commitment*, which can also be divided into two sets of expectations. The first set of expectations concerns the relationship between public managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment (investigated in paper C and D). The main question guiding these theoretical expectations is how goal conflict and employee co-determination affect the relationship between public managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. The second set of expectations concerns the implications for organizational performance (investigated in paper E), and this part as-

asses how public managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment are related to organizational performance.

The expectations concerning goal commitment are founded on the Goal Setting Theory, which, as first formulated by Locke and Latham (1990), builds on the tenet that conscious and well-specified goals affect individuals' attitudes and direct their behavior. Moreover goals are expected 1) to direct individuals' attention towards goal-relevant activities both cognitively and behaviorally, 2) to affect individuals' energy and efforts by appealing to their emotions, 3) to affect individuals' persistence and hence their effort over time, and 4) to affect individuals' actions by leading to arousal and development of task-relevant strategies for goal-attainment (Locke & Latham, 2002: 706-707). According to Goal Setting Theory, the characteristics of goals play a crucial role. More specifically, the theory states that specific and difficult goals lead to higher performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; Latham et al., 2008) because high and hard goals, compared to easily accomplishable goals, stimulate employee effort and arousal, and because specific goals are better at regulating the direction of employee attention and effort than poorly specified goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Goal difficulty is defined as "the extent to which an individual's goal is discrepant (either positively or negatively) from that individual's capacity to achieve the goal" (Wright, 1992: 283), and goal specificity as goals that are clearly defined, delimited and concrete. In Goal Setting Theory, employees are thus expected to perform better, not due to ability or situation, but because of specific goal characteristics. Goal commitment is also a central concept in Goal Setting Theory, and is even proclaimed to be the "sine qua non" of goal setting (Latham et al., 2008). According to Goal Setting Theory, goal commitment is related to employee work behavior and performance because goal commitment moderates the goal difficulty-performance relationship (Locke & Latham, 2013). The positive effects of goal difficulty appear to be stronger among employees with higher goal commitment (Klein et al., 1999). Goal commitment in itself has, however, also been shown and theorized to have independent effects on employee behavior and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Wright, for instance, finds that goal commitment regardless of the level of goal difficulty increases employees' work efforts (Wright, 2007).

Building on the logic of Goal Setting Theory, this dissertation proposes that managerial goal prioritization affects both employees' goal commitment (investigated in paper C and D) and organizational performance (investigated in paper E) by directing managers' and employees' goal attention and efforts. The expectations developed in Goal Setting Theory pertain to goals that are assigned by others, jointly set or self-set (Locke & Latham, 1990). Note, however, that this dissertation focuses exclusively on performance goals de-

defined as objects or aims of an action to attain a particular standard of performance (Perry et al., 2006: 509). Also, reflecting the often-noted characteristic of public organizations as having multiple goals, goal prioritization is here understood as managers' prioritization of a goal relative to other relevant goals within the organization. Within the empirical context of Danish high schools, achieving a high academic level or a high completion rate are examples of particularly salient performance goals.

Managerial goal prioritization is expected to signal goal importance and provide employees with a direction for their work efforts, and as argued in both paper C and D, a strong managerial goal prioritization is expected to challenge, encourage and/or inspire employees to assume greater ownership of their work attitudes and thus to increase their commitment to the goal (Wright, 2004). By prioritizing a goal, managers can communicate the salience of the goal for the organization as a whole, signal their own commitment to reaching the goal and make it easier for the employees to understand the relationship between effort and resulting performance (Porter et al., 1976; Wright, 2004).

As described in paper C, the association between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment in public organizations may depend on the level of goal conflict. Goal conflict is a central issue in the public sector as organizations typically face multiple goals, meant to consider and satisfy different democratic and public issues of society (Wilson, 1989; Rainey, 2009). This dissertation focuses on intra-individual conflict, that is, employees' perception of a conflict between two different goals pertaining to the same task. Intra-individual goal conflict is particularly interesting as public employees very often face two types of goals – “meet quantity criteria” and “meet quality criteria” – and thus potentially experience a conflict concerning which performance dimension to emphasize when completing a task (Locke et al., 1994). Goal conflict is expectedly related to both public employees' goal commitment and to the relationship between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. First, employees who perceive a goal conflict may be less committed because striving towards one goal would be at the expense of another (Latham et al., 2008). Second, employees who perceive a goal conflict are expected to be less receptive to managers' goal prioritization because they feel that it entails incompatible action tendencies (Locke et al., 1994).

Paper D also investigates the relationship between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment, but focuses on how co-determination affects this relationship. Where goal conflict is argued to negatively impact the relationship between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment, employees' perception of co-determina-

tion is conversely expected to have a positive impact on the relationship between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. Co-determination is defined in terms of processes in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal (Soonhee, 2002). Co-determination thus refers to employees' involvement in information processing, decision-making or problem-solving endeavors concerning either individual, work-related issues (such as planning a work task) or more strategic, organizational issues (such as allocation of resources and formulation of goals) (Soonhee, 2002). Employee co-determination is expected to have a potential to foster and direct employees' goal commitment.

The argument, presented in more detail in paper D, builds on expectations developed in the Human Resource Management literature and the Industrial Relations literature. First, it is argued in Human Resource Management studies that co-determination affects employees' work-related attitudes in the sense that it strengthens employees' sense of ownership of organizational values and ensures a dialogue across organizational levels (e.g. Soonhee, 2002; Rogers & Streeck, 1995). Second, Industrial Relations scholars suggest that employee co-determination qualifies and legitimizes managerial decisions and organizational decision procedures by facilitating an information flow within the organization, which in turn means that managers are in a better position to take decisions that will be accepted and embraced by employees (e.g. Freeman & Lazear, 1995; Frege, 2002). Common to both streams of research is that co-determination is associated with more satisfied employees with a greater understanding and appreciation for the organization's values and goals. Based on these arguments, co-determination is expected to strengthen the bond between employee, organization and manager, which affects the degree to which employees perceive the manager's goal prioritization as legitimate and in congruence with their own individual values and goals (Freeman & Lazear, 1995; Frege, 2002). Employees who feel that they are being involved and heard by their manager are thus expected to be more committed to the goal the manager has chosen to prioritize, and co-determination is in other words expected to positively affect the relationship between managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment.

Finally, concerning the relationship between managerial goal prioritization, employee goal commitment and organizational performance, addressed in paper E, this dissertation expects that both managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment are positively related to organizational performance. Note that organizational performance in this context only pertains to a quantity criterion for organizational performance outcomes. The relationship between goal setting and performance is supposedly among the top five established findings in the human resource management literature

(Latham et al., 2008). However, this extensive literature on goal-setting's effects on performance has primarily been investigated with focus on the abovementioned goal characteristics (Latham et al., 2008; Wright, 2004). Our knowledge about the effects of goal prioritization thus remains sparse. Due to the multiple and ambiguous goals in public organizations, goal prioritization at the managerial level is in itself expected to be a potentially valuable tool to ensure goal attainment at the organizational level. Managerial goal prioritization is in this dissertation expected to reflect the disposition of managerial efforts. As described in paper E, managers can through new initiatives, policies and allocation of time and resources privilege a goal and improve the conditions for its achievement. Hence, managers who prioritize a goal highly are also expected to devote more attention to how the goal is achieved, to continuously review the progress and to ensure sufficient resources and supporting activities for goal achievement. On this background, managers' prioritization of a goal is expected to increase organizational performance on the particular standard of performance reflected in the goal.

In line with the arguments presented above, managerial goal prioritization is in this dissertation also expected to provide employees with a clear direction and help clarify job and performance expectations. Moreover, managerial goal prioritization can give employees a direction for their work and signal how they should prioritize their efforts (Porter et al., 1976, Wright, 2004). As mentioned previously in this section, prior empirical studies have documented an independent positive relationship between employees' goal commitment and performance and theoretically argued that goal commitment serves to direct employees' goal-related behavior (Locke & Latham, 1990, Latham et al., 2008). Therefore, goal commitment is expected to enhance organizational performance also in this context. The expectation here is that employees' goal commitment serves to secure mission stability, that is, consistency among organizational members in what they perceive as the critical goals of the organization (O'Toole & Meier, 2011). Mission stability is arguably particularly relevant in public organizations due to the multiple and volatile goals at the higher levels of the political system, and public employees' goal commitment is in this light expected to be positively associated with organizational performance by ensuring that employee behaviors are directed towards achieving the politically determined goals of the organization.

Chapter 3 turns to the empirical findings of the five papers comprised in the dissertation and the question of whether the theoretical expectations derived above also find empirical support.

CHAPTER 3. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the empirical findings from the five papers in the dissertation. As outlined in Chapter 1, all analyses build on data from Danish high schools. The analyses of how managers' organizational commitment and goal prioritization are related to employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment, respectively, are based on individual level responses from the parallel principal survey and teacher survey (paper A, C and D). In the analyses investigating the performance implications hereof, the teacher responses have been aggregated at the school level, and performance is measured by the use of objective archival data on high school performance (paper B and E). This implies that the units of analysis are individuals in paper A, C and D and organizations in paper B and E. The individual papers present further details on the measures, the factor analyses and the data, but an overview of the central survey items used in the analyses can be found in table A1 and A2 (Appendix). Also, additional information on the data collection procedures and access to the interview guides and the survey questionnaires in their full length is provided in an online available data report (Jacobsen et al., 2013).

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part, section 3.1, addresses the empirical findings in regard to organizational commitment (paper A and B) and the second part, section 3.2, addresses the empirical findings concerning goal commitment (paper C, D and E). The results and conclusions of the individual papers naturally come with several limitations, and these are addressed in Chapter 4 in a shared discussion and conclusion. The present chapter simply summarizes the empirical findings. This structure reflects that the different analyses are based on the same empirical foundation and include many of the same types of measures, which means that the papers share several drawbacks in regard to measurement validity and reliability, as well as limitations in terms of the generalizability of the results.

3.1. Organizational Commitment

In the following, the empirical findings of paper A and B are described with reference to the theoretical expectations presented in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1. The first part of this section reports the results from the analyses of how principals' organizational commitment and transformational leadership is related to teachers' organizational commitment. The second part summa-

rizes how principals' and teachers' organizational commitment is related to two criteria of high school performance, namely increasing the academic level and the completion rate, respectively. The more specific operationalization of organizational performance used in paper B is briefly described along with the summary of the empirical results.

3.1.1. Organizational Commitment and Transformational Leadership

The empirical analyses in paper A overall support the expectation that public managers' affective organizational commitment is related to employees' affective organizational commitment and that transformation leadership style is important for this relationship.

First, based on the overall distinctions between 1) transformational and non-transformational managers, and 2) realistic and overambitious managers, the results from a series of multilevel models investigating the relationship between principals' and teachers' affective organizational commitment within each of the four transformational leadership congruence groups show that the relationship between principals' and teachers' affective organizational commitment varies markedly across the congruence groups. Moreover, the analyses show negative coefficients for the two overambitious types of managers and for the realistic non-transformational managers. The only positive relationship between principals' and teachers' affective organizational commitment is found when the principal and the teachers agree that the principal is transformational and the principal does not overrate his or her own leadership style relative to the teachers – that is, the realistic transformational managers. A regression analysis with pooled data and dummy variables for each congruence group further confirms that there are statistical differences between the four groups. Accordingly, a Chow test reveals that the three negative coefficients are all clearly significantly different from the coefficient for realistic transformational managers (though not statistically different from one another).

In sum, the main contribution of this study is thus to show that the relationship between principals' and teachers' affective organizational commitment depends on both teacher-perceived transformational leadership and congruence in principal intentions and teacher perceptions of transformational leadership. Moreover, the findings in this regard suggest that public managers are in a position to affect their employees' affective organizational commitment, but also that it is not enough that managers are themselves affectively committed to the organization; managerial efforts to align with and share this commitment with their employees are vital.

3.1.2. Organizational Commitment and Organizational Performance

The empirical analyses of the relationship between organizational commitment and organizational performance in paper B show that neither principals' nor teachers' affective, normative or continuative organizational commitment are significantly related to high school performance. The OLS analyses comprise two performance criteria for Danish high schools, respectively. These, as mentioned, pertain to the quality and quantity of public service delivery, namely the academic level of the schools (aggregated school means of exam marks) and the high schools' completion rates (proportion of enrolled students who graduated a given year, aggregated school mean). Both performance measures are operationalized as 'school added value', that is, the individual school's contribution to either the academic level or the completion rate when the social demographic background of the student (aggregated at the school level) and type of high school are taken into account³.

Continuative commitment was not expected to entail a positive relationship with organizational performance for either performance criterion, and the insignificant relationships with school added value to both the academic level and the completion rates here are thus not surprising. As mentioned in section 2.2.1, continually committed employees have so far not been shown or theorized to do more than absolutely necessary to uphold organizational membership. The results are the same for both analyses comprising teachers' and principals' continuative organizational commitment.

Regarding the relationship between affective and normative organizational commitment and organizational performance, the analyses do not reveal any significant relationships between teachers' and principals' affective and normative commitment and school added value to the academic level and the completion rates. This study thus indicates that where organizational commitment in regard to performance output criteria might have positive

³ The school added value is a residual measure calculated on the basis of an observed completion rate or academic level and a predicted completion rate or academic level. The predicted completion rate and the predicted academic rate rely on social demographic variables at the school level (gender, birth year, parents' education level, parents' income (in DKK), parents' employment, parents' age and ethnicity) and the school type (HHX, HTX and STX). The school added value is then calculated as the predicted completion rate or academic level subtracted from the observed completion rate or academic level. If, for instance, the observed completion rate is higher than predicted, the result is a positive school added value, and if the observed completion rate is lower than predicted, the school added value is negative. See also paper B and E for a more thorough description.

effects, as described in section 2.2.1 in Chapter 2, the results of this paper imply that we cannot uncritically assume the same when it comes to the final outcomes of public service delivery. The empirical findings in paper B thereby underline the relevance of additional investigations that focus not only narrowly on the implications of organizational commitment for the members of the organizations but also the recipients of the services they deliver.

3.2. Goal Commitment

This section on a general level describes the empirical findings of paper C, D and E with reference to the theoretical expectations described in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2. All three papers look at goal prioritization among Danish high school principals and the affective and normative goal commitment of high school teachers. A brief clarification of the empirical approach to these concepts is thus presented before the empirical findings are summarized below.

Goal prioritization in this dissertation, as also noted in section 2.2.2, refers to the prioritization of an externally assigned performance goal relative to other relevant goals, and is here operationalized as the degree to which the goal of a high completion rate is prioritized relative to six other goals that can be identified as key goals in this educational setting: a high academic level, teacher well-being, student well-being, general education, college preparation and avoiding budget deficits (see also Appendix).

Employees' *goal commitment* is in paper C, D and E, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.1.), defined on the basis of a value-oriented approach, which refers exclusively to teachers' affective and normative commitment. Teachers' goal commitment is here operationalized as teachers' commitment to the goal of achieving a high completion rate. The operationalization of other theoretical constructs that are crucial for understanding and evaluating the findings of the papers are explained along with the summary of the empirical results (see also Appendix).

3.2.1. Goal Prioritization, Goal Commitment and Goal Conflict

The empirical analyses of paper C confirm the theoretical expectations derived on the basis of the Goal Setting Theory, namely, that goal conflict matters for employees' goal commitment and for the relationship between managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. Recall that goal conflict in this context is defined as intra-individual conflict that is employees' perception of a conflict between two different goals pertaining to the same task. Paper C focuses on the potential conflict between the goal of achieving a high completion rate and a high academic level, which are both

goals that pertain to the task of teaching, and which expectedly could entail incompatible action tendencies. Goal conflict is measured by a single item asking teachers to what degree they experience a conflict between achieving a high academic level and a high completion rate. More specifically, the results of a series of random effects models show that the degree to which teachers perceive a goal conflict between achieving a high academic level and a high completion rate is very strongly negatively associated with teachers' commitment to the goal of achieving a high completion rate. Moreover, as described in paper C, the statistically significant and negative interaction term between principals' goal prioritization and teachers' perception of goal conflict indicates that the effect of principals' prioritization of the goal of a high completion rate on teachers' commitment to the same goal differs according to whether teachers perceive a conflict between achieving a high academic level and a high completion rate.

The analyses do not substantiate the theoretical expectation that managers' goal prioritization would in itself affect employees' goal commitment as the results show that principals' goal prioritization is not significantly associated with employees' goal commitment. In sum the paper's findings thus emphasize the merits of managerial attention to employees' perception of goal conflict in public service settings. Moreover the analyses in paper C indicate that integrating the organization's strategic goal practices with values that derive from employees' affective and normative values could be important in public organizations that adapt performance management systems, which focus on goal attainment and thus rely heavily on employees' goal commitment.

3.2.2. Goal Prioritization, Goal Commitment and Co-determination

The empirical findings from the analyses in paper D overall support the theoretical expectation that co-determination can be a valuable tool to ensure employees' goal commitment. More specifically, the results first of all indicate that teachers in Danish high schools have a broad interpretation of co-determination. A qualitative analysis based on interviews with five teachers and five principals at five different high schools shows that both individual level factors (e.g. planning of work task or individual competency development) and organizational level factors (e.g. allocation of resources and formulation of organizational goals) shape teachers' perceptions of their co-determination. Also, the analysis of the interviews reveals that both teachers and principals link co-determination to increased dialogue and information

flows across organizational levels as prescribed by Human Resource Management and Industrial Relation scholars.

Building on this broad interpretation of co-determination, a quantitative analysis comprising a series of random effects models shows that teacher-perceived co-determination moderates the relationship between principals' prioritization of the goal of achieving a high completion rate and teachers' commitment to that goal. Moreover, teachers' perception of co-determination has a significant, positive effect on this relationship. However, reflecting the result reported in section 3.2.1., the analyses find no empirical support for an independent relationship between managers' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment. Again, the principals' goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment is not significantly related in the present analyses. On this basis, the main conclusion of paper D is that employees who feel that they are being involved and heard by their manager are also more committed to a goal the manager has chosen to prioritize.

In sum, the findings thus indicate that co-determination can facilitate or support employee goal commitment by increasing the internal organizational dialogue and/or by strengthening the legitimacy of managerial goal prioritization.

3.2.3. Goal Prioritization, Goal Commitment and Organizational Performance

The analyses in paper E focus on the implications of managerial goal prioritization and employees' goal commitment for organizational performance. The results of the OLS regression analyses first of all show that principals' goal prioritization has a significant, strong, positive relationship with high school performance. Paper E looks at one criterion of high school performance, namely completion rates, and, like paper B, focuses on the individual schools' contribution to the completion rate when the socio-demographic background of the students and type of high school are taken into account, that is, the school added value (in paper E this is denoted the 'completion impact'). More specifically, as noted in paper E, the analyses show that the school added value is 0.00363 higher for each point of goal prioritization (on a 0-100 scale), which implies that principals' goal prioritization can change the schools' completion rate with up to 36 percentage points (max) relative to what would be the predicted completion rate for the school, based on the socio-demographic background of the students and the type of high school.

The analyses do not lend clear empirical support to the expected effects of employees' goal commitment on organizational performance, which was theorized to result from higher mission stability. They only provide partial

support for the proposed expectation as the relationship between teachers' commitment to the goal of achieving a high completion rate and the school added value to the completion rate at the outset is only borderline significant and becomes insignificant in further robustness analyses undertaken in the paper. The analyses also test the relationship between *teachers'* goal prioritization and organizational performance, but this test does not yield significant empirical substantiation for this relationship. Overall, the results indicate that the school added value to high schools' completion rates is not so much a question of the effect of employees' goal commitment or goal prioritization, but more of the impact of the principals' prioritization of the goal.

In sum, the empirical findings of paper E can be said to show that public managers' goal prioritization may be important for the goal-performance nexus and to indicate that public managers should not only concentrate on how they design goals, as suggested so far by the extensive literature on goal setting, but also on how they prioritize them.

CHAPTER 4.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

The intention of this final chapter is firstly to bring the empirical findings of the dissertation's papers together and to relate them to the overall research questions of the dissertation (section 4.1). Second, the chapter evaluates the methodological strengths and limitations of the dissertation as a whole (section 4.2), and discusses some critical perspectives on potential downsides of work commitment in a public sector context (section 4.3). Finally, the chapter proposes an agenda for future research and presents practical perspectives that can be derived from the results (section 4.4).

4.1. Synthesizing the Results

What are the main conclusions to be drawn from this dissertation's analyses and findings? And how does the dissertation contribute theoretically to the literature on work commitment? In the following the empirical results of the dissertation are briefly synthesized and the main theoretical contributions presented.

This dissertation set out to answer the questions: What is the relationship between public management and employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment, respectively, and what are the implications for organizational performance? Concerning the relationship between public management and employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment the results suggest that high school principals are in fact in a position to influence the affective and normative commitment of their teachers. Two main conclusions can be drawn from the results in this regard: that principals' organizational commitment is positively related to teachers' organizational commitment when the principals are perceived to be transformational leaders *and* when principals are realistic about how transformational they are; and that principals' goal prioritization is positively related to teachers' goal commitment, but that this relationship depends on teachers' perception of goal conflict and co-determination. Where teachers' perceptions of co-determination have a positive effect on the relationship between principals' goal prioritization and teachers' goal commitment, goal conflict, conversely, has a negative one. Overall the results thus suggest that principals who seek to positively affect their teachers' work commitment can benefit from focusing their managerial efforts on either a combination of their own organizational commitment and leadership style or a combination of goal prioritiza-

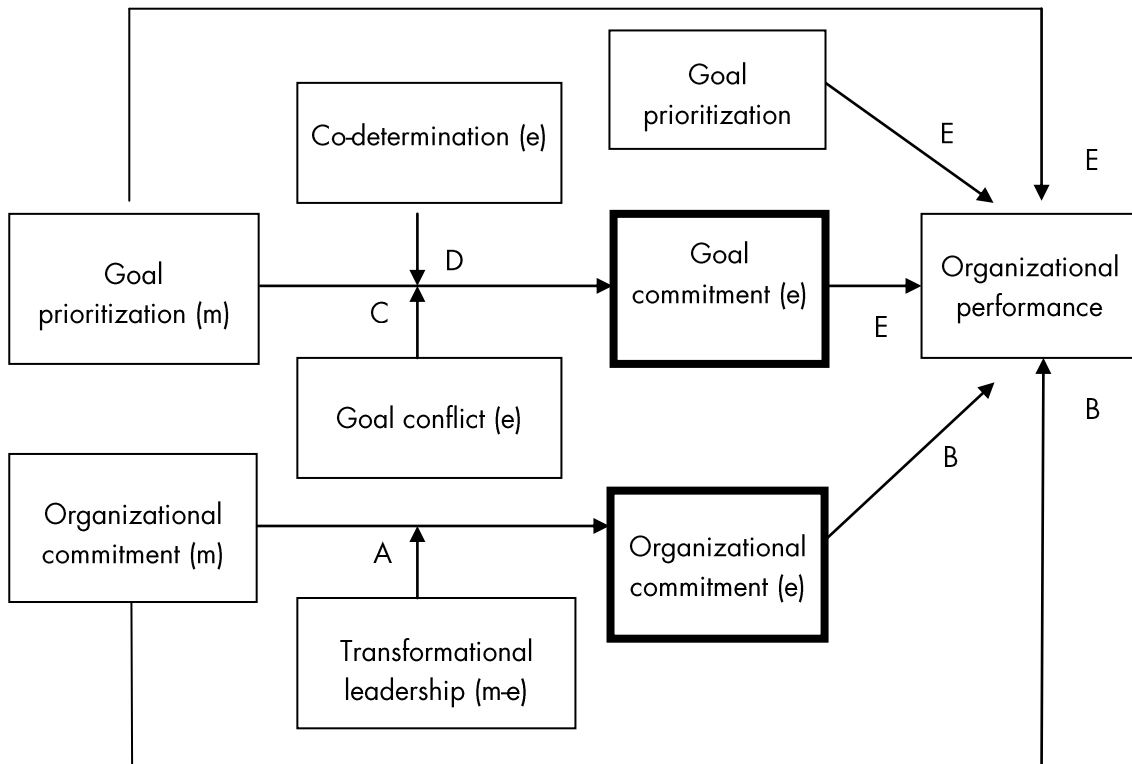
tion and initiatives directed towards teachers' perceptions of co-determination and goal conflict.

Concerning the question of how public management and employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment relate to organizational performance, the results suggest that only principals' efforts of goal prioritization are positively related to high school performance as neither teachers' organizational commitment nor their goal commitment are found to be related to organizational performance in this context. These results thus provide valuable empirical insights on what might be termed the scope conditions of work commitment as they indicate that work commitment may, as often theorized and empirically supported in the literature, be associated with outputs relating to the members of the organization, but not necessarily to the quality or the quantity in the outcomes of the services they deliver.

4.1.1. Theoretical Contributions

Returning to the figure from Chapter 1 on the contributions of the papers (see the corresponding Figure 4.1 below), each individual paper develops theoretical arguments for how public managers' efforts of goal prioritization, their commitment to the organization and their leadership style relate to employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment or what this means to organizational performance. On the backdrop of the arguments presented in the different papers and summarized in Chapter 3, this dissertation as a whole provides a theoretical framework for understanding the role employees' work commitment may play in the public management performance nexus. Moreover, the papers elaborate on existing theoretical arguments from more generic literatures such as management, organizational behavior and psychology in order to establish theoretical expectations that are particularly relevant in public service settings and hence in public administration research. Finally, the theoretical chapter has sought to integrate the concept of commitment within the frame of Self-Determination Theory and on that background provided further theoretical arguments for how we can differentiate and understand the motivational bases of the different commitment dimensions, and how commitment as a theoretical construct can be situated in the broader theoretical field of work motivation.

Figure 4.1. Overview of the contributions of the papers in the dissertation*



* Note: Adapted version of Figure 1.1 from Chapter 1.

(m) denotes manager, (e) denotes employee and (m-e) denotes manager and employeee.

Needless to say, several questions remain for future research not least because the conclusions derived above should be interpreted in the light of a number of methodological limitations. The strengths and limitations of this dissertation as well as some critical perspectives on the potential drawbacks of work commitment in public organizations can, however, serve to evaluate how to most fruitfully pursue the research agenda on work commitment in public organizations. The following section thus turns to these issues before addressing the perspectives for both research and practice that can be derived on the basis of this dissertation.

4.2. Strengths and Limitations

Naturally, each paper has some distinctive methodological strengths and limitations, which are discussed in the individual papers. However, a number of strengths and limitations transcend the different papers, and these are addressed in the following discussion.

4.2.1. Internal Validity and Measurement

The analyses all rely on data from Danish high schools, and *the multilevel data structure* constitutes a major strength for the internal validity of the dissertation. First of all, the parallel surveys to principals and teachers provide an unusual opportunity to combine measures of managers' organizational commitment, leadership style and goal prioritization with measures of employees' work commitment and their perceptions of leadership, co-determination and goal conflict. On that background the analyses of paper A, C, and D paint a varied picture of the relationship between internal managerial efforts of accentuating the organizational goals and values and public employees' work commitment.

Second, the combination of survey data and archival data used for measuring organizational performance strengthens the robustness of the analyses in paper B and E by reducing the risk of measurement errors such as social desirability bias and common source bias. Self-assessments of performance are especially prone to social desirability bias (Meier & O'Toole, 2013), but have nonetheless been the primary measure on performance so far in the literature (Riketta, 2002). The analyses of this dissertation thus represent a strong alternative approach to investigating the performance implications of public management and work commitment at different organizational levels compared to existing studies within the field. As a final remark on the performance measure, a strength of the analyses is that they measure performance *outcomes*. As mentioned, previous studies have mostly been delimited to measures of organizational outputs (Meyer et al., 2002). Scholars of performance in public organizations have long posited the multidimensional nature of the concept relating to e.g. the phases of public service production and various units of analysis (Andersen et al., 2016; Boyne et al., 2006). Measuring the implications for the beneficiaries of public services and not solely the members of the organizations thus paints a more varied picture of how work commitment relates to performance.

The multiple data sources are comprised in a cross-sectional research design, as all the papers in the dissertation undertake either comparisons of individual relationships between manager and employees (paper A, C and D) or organizations (paper B and E) at one point in time. This means that the possibilities for causal interpretations of the analyses' findings are severely limited. The archival data on performance capture the task difficulty at the different schools by taking the socio-demographic variables related to the students into account and also allow for controls of past performance. This strengthens the robustness of these analyses by, to some extent, reducing the risk of confounding effects of for instance organizational cultures and struc-

tures. The results of the analyses should, however, be viewed in terms of the uncertainty incited by the important potential endogeneity biases that threaten their internal validity. There are inevitably still confounding effects from unobserved variables associated with both the independent and dependent variables that are not accounted for by the control variables included in the analyses, and there may also be loops of causality between the independent and dependent variables assessed in the different papers. As far as reverse causality, both teachers' and principals' organizational commitment could for instance be affected by how well the school is performing, as committing to a successful organization might be perceived as more desirable or inspirational (see paper B).

As noted above, the independent and dependent variables in the studies are measured by the use of different data sources, which reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk of common source bias. Halo effects can, for example, still disturb the measurement of the latent variables (Favero et al., 2014) and may also have affected the assessments of both teachers and principals on which the analyses are built. The measurements may therefore to some extent reflect not only the theoretical concept of work commitment, but also teachers' more overall attitudes toward the high school. It should also be noted that work commitment, being an inherently subjective construct, is measured by survey responses, which in itself challenges the measurement reliability by inducing a relatively high level of stochastic variation and reducing the strength of the results.

Finally, on theoretical grounds this dissertation has sought to establish arguments for how managerial organizational commitment and goal prioritization expectedly relate to employees' work commitment, and for how employees' work commitment relates to organizational performance. A drawback of this dissertation's results pertaining to the internal validity is that the empirical analyses do not measure these proposed intermediate mechanisms directly. Explicit theoretical models, as the ones presented in the papers may, however, contribute to a stronger theoretical foundation for studying work commitment in public organizations as the present field of literature has mainly been concerned with empirically documenting antecedents or determinants of commitment (Meyer et al., 2002; Klein et al., 2009).

4.2.2. External Validity

Danish high schools are a well-suited empirical case to investigate the stated theoretical expectations of the dissertation because they have a relatively simple management structure with substantial room for different managerial strategies. This ensures variability in the independent variable. Danish high

schools also produce more or less identical services, which provide reasonable grounds for comparability across organizations. The results of this dissertation are, however, likely to have a broader international relevance. For instance, as noted in the papers, Danish high schools are in many ways rather similar to American high schools (Christensen & Pallesen, 2009). High schools also share key characteristics with a large number of other public organizations by being professionalized and decentralized organizations, where street-level bureaucrats have substantial discretion in carrying out their work tasks (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; O'Toole & Meier, 2011). The results may therefore also more generally be relevant for other similar areas of public service delivery. The dissertation's choice of setting nonetheless also represents some potential limitations, which indeed compromise the external validity of the results. First limitations concerning the types of employees and organizations in secondary education are discussed. Next, limitations related to the types of goals and performance dimensions on which the dissertation's analyses have focused will be addressed.

Secondary education in Denmark constitutes a hard test in the sense that it is extremely institutionalized with strong professional norms. Traditionally the area was also characterized by strong collective agreements, which meant that principals had to work within rather narrowly defined managerial boundaries. Both can be said to complicate the relationship between internal managerial initiatives and employees' work attitudes as well as between employees' work commitment and organizational performance. Public employees' organizational commitment could for example be expected to have a greater impact on performance in organizations where employees are less professionalized, as studies have shown that the organization means less to highly professionalized employees relative to their profession (Gouldner, 1957; Vandenberghe, 2009). Besides teachers' professional background, also principals' managerial leverage could influence the generalizability of the results. For instance, public managers' goal prioritization could mean less in public organizations where managers have a reduced amount of autonomy and less room for individualized goal-setting initiatives. Danish high schools are also quite homogeneous organizations with rather clearly defined and demarked boundaries, which could potentially strengthen the foundation for developing or sustaining organizational commitment among employees and/or a more effective communication of managers' own organizational commitment as well as their goal prioritization. Take for instance local government agencies or public hospitals, which typically comprise different types of public employees, have vague organizational boundaries or are large and complex entities. In such organizational settings it might at the outset be less clear for employees what the organizational goals and values are and

there might also be several additional hierarchical levels from employees to top managers. This could complicate for instance managers' chances of communicating their organizational commitment through their transformational leadership or their goal prioritization. Future studies on other types of occupations and organizations are thus needed to test the wider applicability of the findings.

This dissertation has focused exclusively on organizational performance dimensions reflecting politically determined goals, and high schools' performance outcomes have furthermore been investigated independently from other performance criteria. This means that only a partial picture of the investigated high schools' performance is provided by the analyses, which limits the external validity of the results. It could be argued that there might be performance trade-offs in regard to other performance dimensions that are not captured by the analyses (Moynihan et al., 2011), just as employees' work commitment could be found to have a stronger effect on outcomes more closely related to the teachers' working environment, such as student well-being. Also, employees' affective and normative goal commitment could have a greater impact on their goal-related behavior if they were not bound to a specific performance standard but instead represented either more general mission-oriented values (such as providing students with general knowledge and preparing them for further education) or very specific self-set learning goals (Latham et al., 2008; Locke et al., 1994). Future studies of other types of goals and performance dimensions would thus likewise add to the wider applicability of the findings.

4.3. Addressing the 'Dark Sides' of Work Commitment

The concept of work commitment has an inherent, positive connotation, and most previous research has been preoccupied with the potential positive effects of increasing or sustaining commitment in organizations (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). This dissertation also mainly focuses on the potential gains of having committed employees. The conclusion is not, however, that work commitment is merely a question of 'the more the better'. As discussed in the individual papers, the empirical results also indicate potential drawbacks of commitment as well as limitations regarding the gains from having committed employees. In the following, both empirically and theoretically founded critical perspectives addressing the potential 'dark sides' of commitment are therefore discussed in more detail.

First, on the basis of the empirical results, it can be questioned whether work commitment is always a positive thing that public service organizations

should merely strive to enhance. On the one hand the results from paper A suggest that public managers can positively affect the organizational commitment of their employees if they are also realistic transformational leaders. The analyses show that organizationally committed principals who are strong transformational leaders, but at the same time do not overrate their own leadership style relatively to the teachers at the school, also have more organizationally committed teachers. The combination of both high organizational commitment and realistic transformational leadership thus represents a potentially fruitful way of increasing public employees' organizational commitment. On the other hand, the analyses also show a negative relationship between principals' and teachers' organizational commitment when principals have a low degree of transformational leadership. An explanation could be that managers who do not clarify to the employees what the organization stands for and where it is heading create uncertainty about the organization's mission and vision, which in turn makes employees distance themselves from the organization and reduce their organizational commitment. Overall these results thus indicate that being a manager who is highly committed to the organization is not in itself sufficient. High levels of managerial organizational commitment must be accompanied by a realistic transformational leadership style, as it will otherwise potentially enforce harmful effects on employees' organizational commitment.

Second, based on the results from paper B and E it should also be emphasized that the gains from employees' work commitment may be limited when it comes to improving the quality and the quantity of public service outcomes at the organizational level: Neither teachers' organizational commitment nor their goal commitment is significantly related to these types of organizational performance. In other words, it is questionable whether work commitment translates into desirable behaviors towards users and citizens. This does, however, not mean that having committed employees is irrelevant to the organization, but that the effects hereof primarily may center on the members of the organization and not so much the beneficiaries of the services they produce. Further studies that investigate the implications for different performance outcomes as well as outcomes at the individual level would be greatly warranted to shed light on these potential prospects or limitations concerning employees' work commitment.

Third, on theoretical grounds, high levels of work commitment may also be associated with detrimental costs to both employee and organization. First, the relationship between commitment and work-related stress is referred to in the literature as 'the paradox of commitment' (Reilly, 1994). On the one hand, commitment can be argued to give employees a sense of purpose for their work and thereby to act as a resource that motivates active

coping or buffers against work-related stress and professional burn-out (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). On the other hand, commitment can be argued to increase employees' vulnerability to the negative effects of stressors (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and thus to have an exacerbating effect. Employees who invest heavily in their organization or its goals based on feelings of desire and/or normative obligations are argued to experience stronger conflicting pressures from coping with demands from both the organization and other personal obligations as well as to be particularly susceptible to psychological stress related to the target of their commitment (Reilly, 1994).

Fourth, personnel stability and mission stability have in this dissertation theoretically been argued to follow from high levels of work commitment and to have positive implications for organizational performance. Moreover personnel stability is expected to contribute to preserve competencies and mutual trust within the organization, and mission stability to enhance consistency in organizational members' goal perceptions and behaviors (O'Toole & Meier, 2011). Potential downsides of stability resulting from high levels of work commitment are, however, not unthinkable. Early on, Janis (1972) in his seminal work on 'groupthink' argued that groups composed of highly committed members might be less open to new ideas or approaches. Correspondingly it can be argued that highly committed employees could become a barrier to creativity and change within an organization – at least in the short run. Affective and normative commitment is, as mentioned, often a result of long-term processes of identification and socialization, and highly committed employees may therefore be more reluctant or slow to adapt to new goals and values if these differ markedly from the ones they have been committed to so far (Meyer, 2009). Organizational commitment for instance imply strong ties between the individual and the *existing* mission of the organization and may therefore challenge the implementation of reforms or new public policies, if these contradict or contest employees' conception of what the organization stands and strives for. Hence it could be questioned whether the associated advantages of mission and personnel stability potentially resulting from work commitment come at the cost of adaptability and compliance to change.

Potential drawbacks of stability is also relevant to discuss in a principal-agent perspective, because in the light of the political context in which public organizations are embedded high levels of work commitment could similarly be expected to impose greater risks of 'runaway agents' (McCubbins & Roger, 1987; Meier & Bohte, 2006). In Brehm and Gates' (1997) 'enhanced principal-agent perspective' both public employees' policy preferences and the social context in which they carry out their job (i.e. influences from peers and organizational culture) play a crucial role for their work-related behaviors.

According to Brehm and Gates public employees are not unilateral ‘workers’ or ‘shirkers’ as they can respond by working to implement policy (working), shirking by relaxing on the job (leisure shirking), intentionally going slowly to subvert policy (dissent shirking) or actively working against policy (sabotage) (Brehm & Gates, 1997). In this light, it could be argued that, over time, highly committed employees may come to act as ‘dissent shirkers’ or even ‘sabotagers’. That is, if employees under changing public policies or reforms choose persistently to follow preferences and objectives that have evolved on the basis of what they have been committed to so far, they thereby come to deviate from the interest of the political or administrative principals. Following, high levels of work commitment may be argued to be most beneficial for organizations with relatively stable missions or work task that build heavily on standard operation procedures or strongly institutionalized (or professionalized) job prescriptions, which clearly specify appropriate behaviors within the organization.

According to Meier and O’Toole the potential gains from organizational stability have for some time been downplayed in the literature in order to embrace entrepreneurial notions of public management, enactments of innovations of different kinds, and various forms of reinvention (O’Toole & Meier, 2003; Meier & O’Toole, 2011). In some of their recent studies they, however, point to the continuing pertinence of stability for organizational performance in a public sector context. In regard to personnel stability in educational organizations they for instance argue that the craft-like skills teachers acquire through years of experience are only partially transferable to other organizations (with for instance different mixes of students and different curricula), and that sheer time in position in a local setting may thus make a significant difference for their performance (O’Toole & Meier, 2003: 47). Notwithstanding the potential risks of strongly committed public employees pursuing their own policy preferences, the potential stability advantages resulting from high levels of work commitment, can equally be argued to offer possibilities for enhanced coherence to an otherwise chaotic policy setting that is exactly rife with opportunities for atomistic decision making.

A total overview of all the various implications for different types of organizational performance resulting from highly work committed public employees, can naturally not be settled on the basis of this dissertation. The questions raised in this discussion, on both empirical and theoretical grounds, however, indeed warrant further research. On this note the following section of the chapter now elaborates on perspectives for future research and practice.

4.4. Perspectives on Research and Practice

To wrap up this final chapter and the dissertation as a whole, the following discussion addresses how this dissertation may contribute to improving the future research agenda on work commitment in public organizations and to public management in practice.

4.4.1. Where Next? Suggestions for Future Research

The findings from the five papers comprised in this dissertation fill several gaps in the literature on work commitment in public organizations, but they also raise new questions relevant for future research on public management, employees' work commitment and organizational performance in a public sector context.

First, a major limitation of this dissertation – and the field more generally – is the uncertainty about cause and effect. Studies that explicitly seek to determine causality in regard to public managers' attitudes and leadership initiatives, employees' work commitment and organizational performance are thus needed. At least affective and normative types of commitment are difficult to stimulate in an experimental set-up because they are, as just mentioned, expectedly results of longer-term processes of socialization and identification within an organization. Therefore longitudinal studies that measure employees' work commitment over longer periods would greatly improve our knowledge on how work commitment develops and how it may be targeted more strategically by managers in the public sector. This dissertation has shown that the combination of measurements of work commitment and leadership measured at different organizational levels is useful for providing more varied answers to fundamental questions in the literature, and could thus also be a viable approach for future studies of the underlying mechanisms related to employees' work commitment. To begin to solve the question of causality though, studies that directly measure the intermediate variables would be greatly warranted.

In the light of the dissertation's theoretical framework, it could be interesting if new studies would empirically address the relationship between the different dimensions of commitment and their relationship to autonomously and controlled types of motivation. This would enhance our knowledge on how affective, normative and continuative commitment can be differentiated more clearly as theoretical constructs and begin to bridge the gap between the commitment literature and the broader theoretical field of work motivation even further.

This dissertation has assessed organizational commitment and goal commitment independently, but as suggested also in more recent studies

(Klein et al., 2009), a great task of looking into their potential interplay and interactions lies ahead. The two types of commitment have been investigated enduringly in separate literatures, and we thus know little about whether they should be seen as complementing, overlapping or competing. In the present context of rapidly changing organizational structures, an increasing amount of public administration reforms and more and more employments based on short-term contracts, it could be argued that the need for organizationally committed employees is surpassed by a need for employees who are more susceptible and willing to commit to changing performance goals and adapt to organizational restructurings. On the other hand, as noted by Meyer (2009), successful implementation of change may be dependent on organizationally committed employees, why this type of committed employees could also become an increasingly valuable asset for public organizations.

A novel approach of this dissertation has been to investigate the relationship between employees' work commitment and organizational performance outcomes both in terms of quality and quantity. More research in this direction, which tests the wider applicability of the findings detected here is especially important for public managers in order to evaluate what types of performance implications can be expected to result from managerial initiatives aimed at increasing or sustaining employee commitment within an organization. Finally, as also indicated in section 4.2, more studies that investigate the relationship between internal managerial efforts of accentuating the organizational goals and values and public employees' work commitment in different organizational settings, with different types of public employees, and in different national cultures is necessary, in order to improve our knowledge on the scope conditions and contextual influences that might impede or strengthen the relevance of employees' work commitment in public service delivery.

4.4.2. So What? Practical Perspectives

What do the results mean for public management in practice? Or, more broadly, what can public managers take away from this dissertation on work commitment? The validity of policy recommendations should always be viewed in light of the caveats and limitations of the studies from which they are derived – and this is no exception. In light of the discussion on the internal and external validity of the findings in this dissertation, the following discussion, with caution, turns to their potential significance for public management in practice.

In the aftermath of New Public Management initiatives that introduced market-like approaches of organizing and incentivizing public employees,

the findings offer an alternative approach for public managers by emphasizing the potential gains, in terms of committed employees, of focusing on internal managerial efforts of accentuating the organizational goals and values.

In a broader perspective, the results of paper A first of all support the often expressed theorem that ‘management matters’ in the sense that managers are in a position to affect their employees’ organizational commitment – for the better and for the worse. In order to positively share their organizational commitment with the employees, however, managers have to be realistic transformational leaders. It can therefore be said to be worthwhile if organizationally committed managers are not only transformational in their leadership style but *also* aware of and sensitive to their employees’ attitudes and perceptions.

Turning to the performance implications of organizational commitment, the results of paper B suggest that, at this point, public managers should not assume that being organizationally committed or having organizationally committed employees will alter the quantity or quality of the outcomes of the services the organization produces. There may be other valuable gains of organizational commitment to the organization as shown in numerous previous studies, such as employee retention and job satisfaction, but this dissertation suggests that increased organizational performance might not be one of them.

Conversely, paper E suggests that public managers’ prioritization of a goal is related to how their organizations perform on this dimension. In line with earlier recommendations promoting goal-setting initiatives, goal prioritization can thus be argued to be a fruitful means to increasing organizational performance. On this background, a critical challenge for public managers is to make sure that their goal prioritization is aligned with their organization’s mission and visions. Moreover, the results of paper C and D suggest that managers actually also may have tools to ensure that employees feel affectively and normatively committed to the prioritized goal. By increasing employees’ co-determination in the workplace and working with initiatives that alleviate employee perceptions of goal conflict, the chances are that these employees also feel a greater obligation and desire to commit to the goal the manager has chosen to prioritize.

Concluding, the aims of ensuring public organizations’ performance are manifold and sustaining or enhancing work commitment in public organizations may have both advantages and disadvantages dependent on the perspective. Theoretical and empirical insights on the relationship between public management, employees’ work commitment and organizational performance are thus critical to enhance our knowledge on the relevance and role

of work commitment in a public sector context, which is what this dissertation has contributed to.

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APPENDIX

Table A1 and A2 below provide an overview of the most central survey items used in the different analyses of the five papers within the dissertation. The items of commitment, transformational leadership and co-determination have been used to measure reflective indexes by the use of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Generally, the items have fitted the expected factor structures. The individual papers present further details on measures, factor analyses and data. As noted, an online data report also provides additional information on data collection procedures, interviewguides and survey questionnaires⁴ (Jacobsen et al., 2013).

⁴ Click [here](#) to access the data report.

Table A1. Overview of central survey items used in paper A-B*

Organizational commitment (principals and teachers)**	
Affective	<p>I do not feel emotionally attached to the school. <i>Jeg føler mig ikke følelsesmæssigt knyttet til skolen.</i></p> <p>I do not have a strong sense of belonging to the school <i>Jeg har ikke en stærk følelse af at høre til skolen.</i></p>
Normative	<p>I would feel guilty if I left the school right now. <i>Jeg ville få skyldfølelse, hvis jeg forlod skolen lige nu.</i></p> <p>I would not leave my school right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it. <i>Jeg vil ikke forlade skolen nu, fordi jeg føler mig forpligtet overfor de øvrige ansatte.</i></p>
Continuative	<p>I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this school. <i>Jeg mener, at jeg har for få andre muligheder til overhovedet at overveje at forlade skolen.</i></p> <p>One of the few negative consequences of leaving this school would be the scarcity of available alternatives. <i>En af de få negative konsekvenser ved at forlade skolen ville være manglen på reelle alternativer for et andet arbejde.</i></p>
Transformational leadership (principals and teachers)**	
I / My principal...	...provide(s) a compelling vision of the organization's future.
Jeg / Min nærmeste leder...	... tegner et overbevisende billede af fremtiden for organisationen.
	...articulate(s) and generate(s) enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission.
	... skaber opbakning omkring en fælles vision og mission.
	...facilitate(s) the acceptance of common goals for the school.
	... fremmer lærernes accept af fælles mål for skolen.
	...say(s) things that make employees proud to be part of the organization.
	... siger ting, som gør medarbejderne stolte af at være en del af organisationen.

* Danish versions of the items are displayed in italics.

**1 X at a 5 point Likert scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree".

Table A2. Overview of central survey items used in paper C-E*

Goal commitment (teachers)**	
Affective	<p>I really want to achieve a high completion rate. <i>Jeg ønsker virkelig at opnå en høj gennemførelsesprocent på skolen.</i> Achieving a high completion rate is as important to me as it is to the school <i>En høj gennemførelsesprocent på skolen er ligeså vigtigt for mig som for skolen.</i></p>
Normative	<p>I owe it to my school to do my best to achieve a high completion rate. <i>Jeg skylder skolen at gøre mit bedste for at opnå en høj gennemførelsesprocent på skolen.</i> I feel obliged to do my best to achieve a high completion rate. <i>Jeg føler mig forpligtiget til at gøre mit bedste for at skabe en høj gennemførelsesprocent på skolen.</i></p>
Goal prioritization (principals and teachers)	
	<p>How do you prioritize the following goals? Rank the goals on a scale from 1–7. 1 for the highest prioritized goal and 7 for the least prioritized goal. Every number can only be assigned once. Write 0 if a goal is not a priority. <i>Hvordan vil du prioritere følgende målsætninger? Rangér målsætningerne på en skala fra 1-7. 1 gives til den højest prioriterede målsætning og 7 til den lavest prioriterede målsætning. Hvert tal må kun tildeles én gang. Hvis du vurderer, at en målsætning ikke er relevant, skrives der blot 0.</i></p> <p>__General education / <i>Almen dannelse</i> __College preparation / <i>Studieforberedelse</i> __Teachers wellbeing / <i>Lærertrivsel</i> __Students wellbeing / <i>Elevtrivsel</i> __High level of academic achievements / <i>Højt fagligt niveau</i> __High completion rate / <i>Høj gennemførelsesprocent (fastholdelse)</i> __Avoid budget deficits / <i>Undgå nderskud på regnskabet</i></p>
Goal conflict (teachers)	
	<p>To which degree do you experience a conflict between securing a high level of academic achievements and a high completion rate? <i>I hvilken grad oplever du, at der er en konflikt imellem at tilgodese et højt fagligt niveau på skolen og en høj gennemførelsesprocent?</i> [1 X at a 10 point scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (to a very high degree)]</p>

Co-determination (teachers)**

Which degree of influence would you say that teachers have on the following decisions?

Hvilke grad af indflydelse vil vurdere, at lærerne har i forhold til følgende beslutninger?

- Ressourceallocation / *Ressourcefordeling*

- Devision of tasks / *Opgavefordeling*

- The overall goals of the school / *Skolens overordnede målsætninger*

To which degree do you experience that you have had influence on the prioritization of the school's goals?

I hvor høj grad oplever du, at du har haft indflydelse på prioriteringen af skolens mål?

* Danish versions of the items are displayed in italics.

**1 X at a 5 point Likert scale from "completely disagree" to "completely agree".

ENGLISH SUMMARY

Public employees' work commitment is important because it potentially contributes to ensuring that employees choose to remain with the organization and strive towards the politically determined goals of the organization. Our knowledge on the relationship between public management and employees' commitment at work is, however, sparse. This dissertation focuses on two types of work-related commitment, organizational commitment and goal commitment, and investigates how internal managerial efforts to accentuate the organizational goals and values are related to employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment. Within the commitment literature it is argued that organizational commitment and goal commitment also play a crucial role for the performance of public organizations. Committed employees are in other words expected to be more willing to make an extra effort for the organization, which in turn is expected to increase individual task performance and goal determination as well as personnel retention. Numerous studies have documented a positive relationship between commitment and turnover, absenteeism and job satisfaction, but we still know little about the implications for organizational effectiveness. Does employees' commitment matter for the quality and quantity of the outcomes of public service delivery? With the purpose of addressing these gaps in the existing literature this dissertation studies the following questions: What is the relationship between public management and employees' organizational commitment and goal commitment, respectively, and what are the implications for organizational performance?

The aim of the dissertation is to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between public management, employees' work commitment and organizational performance. This is done through five studies, which are all based on data from higher secondary education in Denmark (HHX, HTX and STX high schools). Data comprise parallel surveys of principals and teachers, objective and external performance indicators on high school completion rates and student grades, and finally qualitative interviews with again both teachers and principals. In addition to this report, which discusses the main theoretical expectations and empirical contributions, the dissertation consists of these five papers. The papers are either published in or prepared for peer-review journals.

Based on the findings from the five studies of the dissertation correspondingly five main conclusions can be drawn. *First*, the analyses show that principals' organizational commitment is positively related to teachers' organizational commitment, but only in the cases where principals are also re-

alistic transformational leaders – that is leaders who greatly emphasize the organization's goals and values, but who do not overrate their own leadership style relative to the teachers of the school. According to these analyses, organizationally committed principals who are not transformational leaders at best have no effect on their teachers' organizational commitment and in some cases actually a negative one.

Second, the analyses do not reveal any significant relationships between principals' and teachers' organizational commitment and the quality and quantity of high school performance outcomes. The analyses include measures of school added value to student grades and high schools' completion rates, but in both cases, the results are the same: neither principals' nor teachers' organizational commitment matter for the these types of performance outcomes. The results thus suggest that we cannot uncritically assume that organizational commitment has positive implications for not just outputs, as shown in previous studies, but also the quality or quantity of organizational performance outcomes.

Third, the analyses show that principals' prioritization of increasing the high schools' completion rate is positively associated with teachers' commitment to this goal, if the teachers do not experience a strong goal conflict. According to these results, teachers' perception of conflict between achieving a high completion rate and a high academic level is associated with reduced levels of goal commitment and has a negative effect on the relationship between principals' goal prioritization and teachers' goal commitment.

Fourth, the dissertation's analyses show that teachers' perception of co-determination has a positive effect on the relationship between principals' prioritization of increasing the high schools' completion rate and teachers' commitment to this goal. In other words, the results suggest that co-determination may pave the way for aligning teachers' goal commitment with principals' goal prioritization.

Finally, the analyses show that principals' goal prioritization is positively related to organizational performance: the higher the principals prioritize the goal of increasing the completion rate (relative to other critical goals such as student well-being and the academic level) the better the schools perform on this dimension. However, the analyses also show that teachers' commitment to the goal of increasing the school's completion rate does not alter the school's impact on how many students complete their education.

The conclusions of the dissertation naturally come with several limitations. In particular, the cross-sectional research design severely limits the possibilities for causal interpretations of the findings, and the exclusive focus on secondary education in Denmark means that generalizations to other areas of the public sector or beyond this geographical setting should be made

with great caution. In the light of these caveats and limitations, the results suggest that public managers should be attentive and responsive to their employees' perceptions, both in terms of how they see the manager's leadership style and how they perceive their working environment; that is, their possibilities for co-determination in the workplace and the potential goal conflicts they face in carrying out their job tasks. In addition, the results indicate that public managers can enhance the organization's performance through goal prioritization, but also that ensuring work commitment among the employees may not alter the quality or quantity of organizational performance outcomes related to the beneficiaries of the services they produce.

DANSK RESUMÉ

Viden om, hvordan offentlige ledere kan fremme medarbejderes commitment til den organisation, hvor de arbejder, og til organisationens mål, er vigtig, fordi commitment kan bidrage til at sikre, at medarbejderne forbliver i organisationen og forfølger politisk fastsatte målsætninger for organisationen. Vi ved imidlertid meget lidt om sammenhængen mellem offentlig ledelse og medarbejderes commitment. Denne afhandling fokuserer på to typer af arbejdsrelateret commitment, organisatorisk commitment og målcommitment, og ser i forlængelse heraf på, hvilken betydning offentlige lederes arbejde med organisationens mål og værdier har for medarbejdernes organisatoriske commitment og målcommitment. I commitment litteraturen argumenteres der desuden for, at organisatorisk commitment og målcommitment spiller en væsentlig rolle for offentlige organisationernes performance. Medarbejdere, som er committede til organisationen eller dens mål, forventes med andre ord at yde en ekstra indsats på deres arbejde og på den baggrund i højere grad at bidrage til at sikre, at organisationen skaber resultater. Indtil nu har studier af commitment i offentlige organisationer dog primært haft fokus på betydningen af medarbejderes commitment for fx medarbejderudskiftning, sygefravær og jobtilfredshed. Der mangler således viden om, hvorvidt medarbejderes commitment også har betydning for kvaliteten og kvantiteten af de serviceydelser, som borgerne modtager og bidrager til at finansiere. Med det formål netop at afdække ovenstående huller i den eksisterende litteratur undersøger denne afhandling følgende spørgsmål: Hvordan er sammenhængen mellem offentlig ledelse og henholdsvis medarbejderes organisatoriske commitment og målcommitment, og hvad er implikationerne for organisatorisk performance?

Det er således målet med afhandlingen at bidrage til forståelsen af forholdet mellem offentlig ledelse, medarbejderes commitment og organisatorisk performance. Dette gøres på baggrund af fem studier, der alle anvender data fra danske ungdomsuddannelser (HHX, HTX og STX skoler). Data kommer fra spørgeskemaundersøgelser til rektorer og lærere, registerdata, der indeholder information om skolernes gennemførelsesprocenter, elevernes karakterer og sociodemografiske baggrund samt interview med rektorer og lærere. Foruden denne sammenfatning, som indeholder en diskussion af de centrale teoretiske forventninger og empiriske bidrag, består afhandlingen af fem videnskabelige artikler. Artiklerne er indsendt til eller under udgivelse i peer-reviewede tidsskrifter og forefindes her i publikationen.

På baggrund af afhandlingens fem artikler kan der drages tilsvarende fem centrale konklusioner. *For det første* viser analyserne, at rektorers orga-

nisatoriske commitment kan have en positiv afsmittende effekt på lærernes organisatoriske commitment, men kun i de tilfælde hvor rektorerne kan siges at være realistiske transformationsledere, dvs. ledere der lægger betydelig vægt på at kommunikere skolens mål og værdier gennem deres ledelsesstil, men som ikke overvurderer deres egen ledelsesstil relativt set i forhold til skolens lærere. Analyserne viser, at når rektorer ikke udøver transformationsledelse, så har deres organisatoriske commitment i bedste fald ingen effekt på lærernes organisatoriske commitment og i værste fald en negativ effekt.

For det andet viser resultaterne, at der ikke er en signifikant sammenhæng mellem organisatorisk commitment og organisatoriske performance outcomes. Analyserne i denne sammenhæng ser på både skolernes løfteevne i forhold til elevernes karakterer og skolernes gennemførelsesprocenter, og hverken rektorer eller læreres organisatoriske commitment gør en forskel for skolernes evne til at løfte elevernes faglige præstationer eller deres evne til at fastholde eleverne på uddannelsen. Litteraturen har hidtil dokumenteret stærke sammenhænge mellem organisatorisk commitment og performance outputs, men resultaterne her indikerer, at der ikke nødvendigvis kan forventes det samme, når det handler om kvaliteten eller kvantiteten af organisatoriske outcomes.

For det tredje viser afhandlingens analyser, at rektorers prioritering af målet om en høj gennemførelsesprocent har en positiv sammenhæng med lærernes commitment til målet, såfremt lærerne ikke oplever en høj grad af målkonflikt. Resultaterne viser nemlig, at læreres opfattelse af konflikt imellem målene om at tilgodese et højt fagligt niveau og en høj gennemførelsesprocent har en negativ sammenhæng med deres målcommitment og ligeledes en negativ indvirkning på sammenhængen mellem rektorers målprioritering og læreres målcommitment.

For det fjerde viser afhandlingens analyser, at lærernes oplevelse af medindflydelse har en positiv effekt på sammenhængen mellem rektorers prioritering af målet om en høj gennemførelsesprocent og lærernes commitment til målet. Med andre ord indikerer resultaterne altså, at medindflydelse kan være med til at bane vejen for, at lærerne committer sig til det mål, som skolens rektor har valgt at prioritere.

Endelig viser afhandlingens analyser, at rektorers målprioritering har en positiv sammenhæng med organisatorisk performance: Jo højere rektor prioriterer målet om en høj gennemførelsesprocent relativt set i forhold til andre relevante mål, som eksempelvis elevtrivsel og et højt fagligt niveau, desto bedre er skolen til at løfte gennemførelsesprocenten. Lærernes commitment til målet om en høj gennemførelsesprocent kan dog på baggrund af analyser-

ne ikke siges at have en betydning for, hvordan skolerne klarer sig på denne performance dimension.

Afhandlingens konklusioner skal naturligvis ses i lyset af en række begrænsninger. Særligt afhandlingens tværsnittsdesign indebærer, at der er meget begrænsede muligheder for kausale fortolkninger af afhandlingens resultater, ligesom at det eksklusive fokus på danske ungdomsuddannelser reducerer generaliserbarheden af resultaterne til fx andre dele af den offentlige sektor eller på tværs af landegrænser. Overordnet set indikerer resultaterne i afhandlingen dog, at offentlige ledere bør være opmærksomme på, at det at sikre commitment blandt organisationens medarbejdere kræver, at de er lydhøre overfor, hvordan medarbejderne oplever lederens ledelsesstil samt deres arbejdsvilkår; herunder både medarbejdernes oplevede muligheder for medindflydelse og de potentielle målkonflikter, som kunne præge udførelsen af deres arbejdsopgaver. Herudover understreger resultaterne, at offentlige ledere kan øge organisationens performance gennem deres målprioritering, men omvendt også, at de som udgangspunkt ikke skal forvente, at det at have committede medarbejdere nødvendigvis afspejler sig i kvaliteten eller kvantiteten af organisationens performance outcomes.