Conventional classroom teaching through ICT and distance teaching
A case study from Greenland

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ABSTRACT
Conditions for schooling in Greenland are challenging in many ways. The staff of teachers in the country is very heterogeneous: some have teacher training, but many are without, and often work with limited resources. Distance teaching could be a tool to share teaching resources and raise the quality of teaching in the many small isolated communities and settlements.

This paper presents a case study on distance teaching in a school in Greenland. Data from work on Grounded Theory is used to investigate ways of utilizing distance teaching in the school. The analysis draws on a prevalent perspective on distance teaching as providing access to education. The perspective combines with Michel Foucault’s concept of “governmentality”.

I will show how progressive possibilities are not necessarily to be found in ICT-driven distance teaching. Pedagogical drivers operate behind the choices of ICT equipment and ICT solutions which, in this case, brings ICT under the command of a less progressive pedagogical agenda.

As I will show, the commitment from the municipality and from the teachers was to use distance teaching and ICT for conventional schooling. The case lays the ground for a discussion on the progressivity of distance teaching and the use of advanced ICT solutions in schools. My aim with the paper is to add to the understanding of the scope of distance teaching in schools. Does ICT and distance teaching serve progressive ends per se? What do we learn about distance teaching from this setup in the school in Greenland?

Keywords
Distance teaching, e-learning, online, ICT, K-12, settlements, Greenland, Michel Foucault
INTRODUCTION
Late in the summer of 2010 the school, in a small settlement on the west coast of Greenland, invited the children to step into a converted classroom. From a widescreen TV, their new distance teacher welcomed them live from a school in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. From this room, distance teaching was going to be the way they went to school. The children were very reluctant to step into the room, stopping at the doorway and looking in. This behavior was noticed by one of the male pupils. Unlike the other children, the boy comes from a family with some education and above average resources compared to others in the village. They were newcomers with a family connection to the place. The other children became less nervous when he stepped into the room and showed them that they didn’t have to be frightened of the cameras and TV screen. Upon entering, a supply teacher noticed that the children were hiding underneath tables, or placed tables against the walls to get away from the cameras; he experienced that they were frightened of seeing themselves on the screen. The exposure from all the digital hardware was an extraordinary and uncomfortable experience for the children; only the boy thrived immediately in the new virtual school setting.

Greenland is in a process of postcolonial nation-building. Gradually, responsibilities are being transferred from Denmark to elected Greenlandic politicians. Education was transferred with the home rule referendum in 1979, and a new School Act was written and implemented by the Greenlandic government in 2002 (Inatsisartutlov 2012). Learning goals are now increasing pupils’ responsibility and strengthening their collaboration, independent thinking, critical decision-making, engagement, and cooperation skills. The goals in the legislation are clearly associated with the process of emancipation.

There has long been a persistent political focus on distance teaching as a relevant tool in the educational system in Greenland (von Staffeldt 2001) (Naalakkersuisut 07.06.2017). The episode described above is taken from the most comprehensive and prominent example of distance teaching in the school system. This example is the subject for the case study in this paper, in the search for answers to the question of how distance teaching can be utilized in schools, and to what degree distance teaching can be labeled progressive pedagogical development and support the learning goals in the School Act.

Literature review: Lack of qualitative research on distance teaching in schools
One endeavor exclusive to distance teaching is providing access to education (Lee 2009, Slätto 2012). This means giving opportunities to people living in remote areas or to adults who can not leave well-established lives to move to a city in order to engage in education. This perspective puts adult education or secondary education as a premise for most research on distance teaching.

Distance teaching in schools as a field of research is still a subject in the making. Michael K. Barbour from Sacred Heart University in Connecticut, USA, has written a number of reviews on distance teaching research (Barbour & Reeves 2009; Barbour 2013; Barbour, Archambault & DiPietro 2013; Barbour 2015). He is repeatedly brought to the conclusion that research in the field is sparse. There are many quantitative surveys to be found on the widespread use of distance teaching with school children ("Keeping Pace with K-12 Digital Learning" 2015; Boboc 2014). A dominant question in this work is to what
extent distance teaching can compare in terms of quality. However, qualitative investigations looking for unique learning processes connected to a distance between teachers and learners are sparse.

Another predominant endeavor with teaching at a distance is pedagogical development. Even before the use of the internet, distance education was predicted to be a potent driver in nations moving from an industrial society to a postmodern information society. In 1993, Otto Peters described how distance education would support personal development and lifelong learning (Peters 1993). By providing access to education while at the same time stimulating personal learning paths and self-management, distance education was expected to facilitate literacy comprising independence, self-reliance, flexibility and development. Following this progressive lead on distance education, distance teaching in schools has been viewed as a positive development and a form of advanced schooling for the future (European Commission 2008).

ICT in connection with education and teaching is expected to support development and progress. This is a widespread topic for research in the field (Prensky 2001, Kress 2003, Pietrass 2009, Erstad 2010). The technology is associated with a new a kind of literacy, coined “digital literacy” or “media literacy” (Erstad 2010). Often this progressive view of ICT in education transfers to a likewise progressive expectation on behalf of distance learning.

An important extension to the pedagogical debate since Peters’s prediction is the recognition that collaboration is a central component of literacy and competency in an information society. Garrison (2000) outlines how theory regarding distance education has shifted focus from autonomy and independence to collaboration and transactions. Networking through digital media has become omnipresent (OECD 2012) which brings high expectations to the benefits of distance education (European Commission 2008). The expectancy is that students become engaged, communicating and collaborating through distance teaching (Beldarrain 2006). However, a defining part of this is a specific use of ICT in the distance teaching setup (for case studies on different implementations of ICT in schools, see Wong et al. 2008).

The field of research is dominated by high expectations for distance education to be a driver, in partnership with the use of ICT, for pedagogical development. But qualitative research on the use of distance teaching in schools is still in demand.

THEORETICAL BASIS

The data collection for the following case study was formed as Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory comprises a thorough method resulting in new theory on a subject matter. Data is given a leading role in this work to make the theory grounded in the field of study (Glaser & Strauss 2012 [1967]) The yield in terms of new concepts and new theory will not be presented in this paper. Data is analyzed to answer the question posed in the introduction (the extent of progressivity found in distance teaching in schools).

For my work with Grounded Theory, some framing was done to keep focus on distance teaching. Before I started data collection, I deliberately distinguished between ICT in school and distance teaching. Distance teaching has been practiced using analog media since before digital technology became widespread (Keegan 1986). Moreover, ICT in
schools is not about distance teaching, but rather comprises a variety of agendas. When the topic is distance education, affordances connected to digital technology are often the real focus, not what the distance between teacher and learner provides in terms of learning or literacy.

The distinction between ICT and distance teaching is relevant because ICT and distance teaching might represent different endeavors. That said, the endeavors also collide, and support, and generate each other.

An important framing for the study has been to view ICT not as something defining distance teaching, but rather to see how technical choices and solutions contain and express pedagogical thoughts driving the realization of distance teaching practice. This has been supportive in getting beyond the assumptions on ICT as didactically progressive per se.

Another focus of my data collecting has been ways in which pupils and teachers have participated in relation to the roles offered by the distance teaching setup. The perspective draws on theory and research building on Michel Foucault’s concept of power. Giving responsibility to pupils and pointing to their personal development can be viewed as sanctioning and disciplining in a postindustrial society, replacing the surveillance and physical obedience connected to schooling in the industrial society (Krejsler 2014, Krejsler 2004).

Power in the classroom does not disappear with student involvement. It takes hold in students by guiding through roles and identities. Integration works by demanding involvement and responsibility. In this perspective, power forms processes of productivity, rather than of suppression and dominance (Foucault 1994). Foucault shows how this is a defining part of how modern western liberal democratic societies work. Through studies of principal institutions like prisons and hospitals, Foucault found an omnipresent and relentless endeavor from the state to integrate its citizens. With the term “governmentality,” he captures how the state stretches to absorb and to optimize its citizens through distributed powers of definition (Foucault 2009. p. 108).

The social constructionist perspective stemming from the work of Foucault and others seems to contradict a premise with Grounded Theory: data is expected to inform the researcher’s development of new concepts. Social constructionism understands this relationship the other way around: it is terms and concepts with the researcher that inform his or her comprehension of the field.

Grounded Theory was presented by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 (Glaser & Strauss 1967). They wanted to advocate for researchers’ creativity in coining new terms and concepts. Their method was a focus on the meeting between the researchers’ established understandings and the workings in the field of study. They recommended utilizing active words and phrases from the field of study. In their perspective data does not “speak”, but there is a meeting, and with a systematic approach Glaser and Strauss saw concepts and terms as valuable research results.

The two theoretical approaches I use are not related, but I do not see them as excluding one another. (For further discussion, see Thornberg 2012, or Øgaard 2015). Data from my work on Grounded Theory is relatively open ended, within the framing mentioned, and suitable for research on the quality of distance teaching in schools.

Summing up, the analysis in this paper draws on dominant concepts on distance teaching as access in conjunction with Foucault’s concept of power and perspectives on “govern-
mentality”. A methodological focus has been how these relationships are reflected in the roles assigned to or taken up by pupils and teachers. Following this perspective, the question about distance teaching as progressive or conventional schooling relates to a critical discussion about what ends schools as institutions serve.

QUALITATIVE DATA FROM THE SCHOOL IN GREENLAND

The settlement where the distance teaching took place is situated 100 kilometers from Nuuk in the Nuuk Fjord. It is the only active settlement close to the capital. The village has around 70 inhabitants. Children of school age vary from two to eight. Data for this case study are sparse due to conditions for the study: very few people were involved in the distance teaching, which made the research short on interviewees to contact and chose from. Geography and infrastructure in Greenland makes flying and sailing necessary, which causes data collecting to be expensive, time consuming, and complicated. Further, I do not speak Greenlandic, which, in some cases, restricted the data collecting. However, these conditions are justified by the research being qualitative. A few interviews with different agents sufficed. Another quality which makes up for the conditions is that not much qualified research has been done on this subject (the most comprehensive report is von Staffeldt 2001). As a result of the difficult conditions for collecting data and the sparse material to choose from, I used a wide range of qualitative methods to get as much data as possible. This also triangulates the study. Data was collected from January 2012, a document being the oldest, until April 2015, when I made observations of teachers in Nuuk teaching pupils in the settlement.

Table 1. Data and method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Persons involved</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>Heterogeneous group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Heterogeneous group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30 pages</td>
<td>Report written in Danish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>Distance teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edited video recording</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14 min.</td>
<td>Edit included in analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data were obtained from several open interviews. I had a focus group interview with two teachers still involved in the project at the time. The project manager from the municipality also took part in this interview. The informants represented different positions and responsibilities in the project. This shaped the data, as the premise became a positive take on the municipality’s achievement. The conversation revolved around the purpose of the project and how they were moving towards their goals. The interview gave data on the practical solutions and the thoughts behind their decisions. In order to encourage more critical
opinions on the distance teaching, the focus group should have been with a more homogeneous group of people. Leaving out project managers and other authorities and representatives would have given the teachers more freedom to elaborate on critical views, which for that reason is a disadvantage of this focus group interview.

One interview with a former inhabitant from the settlement who took part as a supply teacher adds to data on practical solutions, and on the responsibilities and roles in the project. He took a secluded but pivotal position in the setup, and though his Danish was hard to understand and he was not a good informant, he is a source of valuable inside experience.

Two interviews were conducted with former pupils together with one of their parents a year after they moved from the settlement to a town. The timespan affected the narrative coming from these interviews. In both interviews the pupil and the parent added positively charged nostalgia to the description of their distance teaching experiences. This must be kept in mind when using this data. On the positive side, the timespan provided comparative data as both the pupil and the parent related their distance teaching experiences to the schooling in the town where they lived at the time of the interview.

A document written by the project manager adds to the data. He has a technical background and no formal academic training. The short report is a rudimentary presentation and evaluation of the process, addressed to politicians and administration for more support and recognition. Technical issues, as well as pedagogical aspects, are addressed in the report.

Data come from two observations of the teachers managing distance teaching from the school in Nuuk. A lesson on philosophy and religion was spent on Greenlandic grammar. A following lesson in Greenlandic was spent on pupils writing a story. In both lessons I was present with the teachers in Nuuk, with the pupils simultaneously present on screens and through a smartboard. The teachers’ actions and behavior are the focus in these observations as they are done from the teacher’s position in the distance teaching setup. The observations were done late in the process, and the teachers were confident in the project and with my research and presence.

The final type of data comes from video recordings. The recordings were made by a second project manager associated to the project at an early stage. Both project managers were obviously proud of their operations in the Greenlandic school system, which were and are ground breaking. The second project manager edited the video recordings to give a positive and convincing presentation to politicians and the public. The video material shows how the distance teaching is done while, at the same time, the editing reflects the success criteria driving the project. Selected still photos from these recordings are shown in the following.

All interviews have been transcribed. Translation from Greenlandic to Danish was necessary for part of one of the interviews with a pupil and a parent. The observations of distance teaching also needed some translation, which was done on the spot by the teachers themselves.

Data analysis
Data was collected for work on Grounded Theory. The analytical process in this method is a dynamic alternation between coding the data, looking for categories, developing categories and further data collecting. An ambition is to keep the process open ended for as long as possible. The result is new theory grounded in the field of research. In this paper, the
process is not brought to the development of new concepts and new theory. Data is employed to enlighten a specific question.

Data from Grounded Theory is very open ended and rich, which makes it suited for a case study revolving around a determined question. The analytical process moved between the different types of data. This was possible because the topic and my research questions were relatively clear from the outset: looking for conventional or progressive teaching, and for roles assigned to or taken up by pupils and teachers.

ANALYSIS: A SCHOOL FOR THE VILLAGE

In 2010 the situation in the settlement was that the children did not go to school. The village has a building combining a school and church that had been in use as a school some years prior. However, it had been several years since a teacher had lived at the settlement. The municipality is responsible for providing or securing teaching for every child of legal school age. The solution until 2010 had been to support parents with homeschooling. Now new possibilities came about through better internet technology. During the summer of 2010, the municipality installed smartboards and active monitoring cameras in the school building. A sponsorship from the internet provider in Greenland was used to establish an internet connection in the village. A handful of educated teachers working in Nuuk were employed as distance teachers for the settlement, and a room with a similar setup as the village school was established at their school.

Once the project started, the teachers and project manager quickly learned that the parents had failed at homeschooling their children. According to the project manager and the teachers, the children were significantly behind on school subjects; it was almost as if no learning had taken place for a couple of years. The teachers detected the academic level with the children and related it to the standards of the official national curriculum. They divided activities into school subjects, selected relevant material, and adjusted the children's schedules to that of the city school where the teachers themselves were employed. From 2010 on, the children followed a timetable made up of synchronized distance teaching.

Valuable informants to the teaching that followed are the boy mentioned in the introduction and his mother. The family was fluent in Danish and spoke Greenlandic well. With a higher education, she held the only local authority job in the settlement. According to the mother, her family was the prime initiator of leisure time activities in the village. She defined the village people as dormant:

…it's not because they are behind or poorly provided knowledge wise they are just… dormant. And waiting for something to happen. And when something happens it's the holy word: they do what is asked of them (my translation from Danish; Øgaard 2015, p. 106).

The mother observed other parents’ curiosity about the distance teaching, and parents taking an interest in the school. The solution was accepted by the parents and in the village, seemingly without reservations or protests.

The supply teacher living in the village and working at the school expressed great appreciation and respect for the distance teachers affiliated with the project. He believed they were very skilled, though he could not define what gave him that belief.
When the distance teaching arrived, it was defined as the authorities coming to the village from the outside, establishing officially sanctioned schooling. With the distance teaching there was an important and secure placement of responsibility for schooling with a professional staff.

A distance teaching solution for the school

During an interview, one of the teachers reflected on distance teaching as an exceptional experience:

I take it as normal teaching. I teach, it is just a little bit different; we have more to do with technique, with our smartboard, where we have this contact (my translation from Danish; Øgaard 2015, p. 111).

The teacher viewed distance teaching as normal teaching; she did not think of it as an opportunity for pedagogical development or as something demanding didactical changes. This approach was reflected in the chosen technical solutions. The primary technology in the distance teaching setup was the smartboard. It replaced the blackboard and served as a hub for all communication between teachers and pupils. Interaction through the smartboard was accompanied by sound transmitted through microphones and speakers. Cameras would transmit physical movement by teachers and pupils.

The pupils were often situated in rows facing the smartboard. Common collective activities might be going through the correct spelling of selected words, or collectively correcting the grammar in a pupil's writing. In math, distance teachers would write math puzzles on the smartboard to be solved by a pupil who was called to the smartboard in the settlement, as shown in the photos.

Translation:
- Yes, that is also the ones I use.
- But what did you do with the two numbers 14 and 23?
Translation:
– What is 12 minus 8?
Translation:
– What do you then do with the numbers, and think how we did before.

The group of pupils was very heterogeneous in terms of maturity and academic level. The teachers made an effort to differentiate their teaching. The teachers gave and evaluated individual tasks and assignments. When not interacting with the teachers, the pupils sat on their own working on assignments using paper, pencils, booklets, and, eventually, a counting frame.

The pupils would write in hand in their booklets and when an assignment was done they eventually went to the smartboard to write on the board what they had written down so the teachers in Nuuk could evaluate their work.

The teachers would follow the progression on each subject through the use of printed book materials. For this, a technology much used by the teachers was a document camera. The teacher or a pupil would take a book and put it under the camera to show which page they were on and point where to look on the page.

There were some personal computers present with the pupils in the settlement and occasionally they were used. The teacher teaching Greenlandic had the pupils play simple language games or solve crosswords on the computers. When done, the supply teacher who was present with the pupils would go to the smartboard and inform the teacher in Nuuk of the pupils’ results.

The digital technology served to support the use of books, booklets, pencils, a blackboard (the smartboard), counting frames and so on. The distance teaching was dominated by analog technologies associated with the traditional classroom. In this way, the digital technology served to establish conventional analog classroom teaching.

The school in the settlement featured a full-time supply teacher. His main function was to turn on the smartboard and computers, hand out materials, and take care of similar supportive tasks for the teachers in Nuuk. He was not expected to support the teaching in any other way. He was present with the pupils throughout the school day. In the photo he can be seen in a black t-shirt. Based on the interview with him and video recordings, he seemed to take on a very passive role in the distance teaching, not interfering with the dissemination of subject matter.
The School Act in Greenland also includes cross-curricular feature weeks involving creative and practical activities. These are placed within the subject “Local Choices,” which is a select subject for the school in Greenland. It comprises practical, aesthetic, and musical topics, including arts and crafts, architecture, music, drama, and sports. Creativity and practical activities are the focus of this subject.

Local Choices and cross-curricular feature weeks are a deviation from conventional classroom teaching. These teaching activities stem from progressive pedagogical thinking, where one finds a broader and more inclusive view of the pupil.

When the teachers in Nuuk were engaged in cross-curricular feature weeks at the city school, the distance teaching in the settlement stopped and the supply teacher was expected to take over. The supply teacher was also responsible for teaching Local Choices. The fact that the supply teacher, who had no formal education and seemed insecure and reluctant to teach, was expected to take on this responsibility shows how progressive pedagogy had a very low priority in the distance teaching solution for the settlement.

The project manager from the municipality shared responsibility for pedagogical and didactical decisions with the teachers. In his report, he made a few remarks regarding his expectations for the distance teaching:

The teaching is to be planned individually so it fits the academic level [of the students]. It can start out with a theoretical reading for everyone or for more pupils, some pupils then start working, and then for pupils at a higher level, there can be building upon the theoretical reading (my translation from Danish; Øgaard 2015, p. 110).

Meeting the curriculum is the central concern. Pupils as well as teachers are expected to follow given content and progress in a prescribed way. Abstract school knowledge is preferred. As I understand the practice described above, the teaching was in line with what the project manager expected and wished for the distance teaching project.

Authority and behavior in distance teaching

The teachers in Nuuk controlled the cameras in the settlement. They could follow the pupils’ activities and behavior as they were working, or as they went to the smartboard and back to their seats. In an interview, one of the teachers explained why the monitoring cameras were important to the project:

Because you want an overview and have control. I can’t manage or make her [a pupil] do it if I can’t see on the screen if she is doing something completely different. I have to see what she is doing even though I see what she is writing on the smartboard. (…) She can’t just sit on the floor where I can’t see what she is doing. (…) It is for sake of my teacher role—I must have control over my teaching (my translation from Danish; Øgaard 2015, p. 112f).

The teacher felt responsible for teaching the curriculum, as well as transmitting attitudes and manners to the children.

The boy who confidently stepped into the distance teaching classroom was, according to the teachers, the most active pupil. This caused them trouble:
Because he expresses his opinions and when he does something he wants it his way. He tries to manage the teaching instead of me managing the teaching or the teachers who run it. He wants to do it his way (my translation from Danish; Øgaard 2015, p. 113f).

Independence and taking responsibility were not the roles or the behavior expected from the pupils by the distance teacher.

The project manager referred to an instance with the boy in the start-up phase. A distance teacher asked the boy to take a seat and do his school work. The teachers were attempting to “straighten him out” from Nuuk. The project manager applauded the teacher during the interview and called it the “litmus test” showing whether the setup would work.

The boy himself spoke of his behavior in the school as participating and taking responsibility for the activities. In his own and his mother’s words, the boy was very engaged in the different assignments and working through the material presented by the distance teachers. He also took on the task of teaching Danish to other children. The instance mentioned in the beginning where the children met the distance teaching situation for the first time also showed the boy taking responsibility for dissolving the tension and helping the teachers to get on with the distance teaching.

The teachers’ experiences with the boy, and the way in which he expressed his intentions and behavior, contrast with each other. The teachers believed the boy did not have acceptable manners and the right behavior for their teaching method, while the boy and his mother saw the school as offering an opportunity to take part in his education and flourish.

Compared to his current schooling, the boy’s experiences in the settlement were positive. This was due in part to the teachers’ high expectations and close monitoring of his academic progress, and in part to a situation leaving room for his engagement. The absence of professional teachers at the school and gaps in the distance teachers’ surveillance might have offered the boy a feeling of freedom, encouraging him to use his resources to take responsibility. However, it was dependent and disciplined pupil behavior together with traditional teacher authority that was the intention with the distance teaching project.

In 2016, a new internet provider was assigned to the project. Subsequently the internet connection became unstable and the distance teaching stopped. However, the situation had by then changed and there was a professional teacher living and working in the settlement. The school is now considered a separate professional school in the school district. Assigning only one teacher to the settlement to teach all subjects, at all levels, is a demanding and vulnerable solution. The teachers at the city school were asked to continue the distance teaching, likely because they are respected teachers. However, because of the unstable internet connection and a reluctance to fix it, the teachers refused. There are currently no plans to utilize distance teaching in the settlement again.

DISCUSSION
In the editorial introduction to the Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy, Søby (2011) writes

“Digital media and ICT could serve as an impetus and hub for innovation in the lower secondary school. An exciting thought for lower secondary education may be to develop a virtual school that offers online and pupil-centric education and that uses new forms of learning and collaboration.” (p.5)
Under the headline “New Learning Models” from their “Fast Facts About Online Learning,” the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL, 2013) states

“iNACOL wants to accelerate the development of effective new learning models that are necessary for the field to achieve its potential. Online and blended learning models that are competency-based provide enormous potential for transforming the education system toward student-centered, personalized learning.” (p.4)

These quotes exemplify the expectations associated with ICT and distance education. In this case study, distance teaching and ICT was utilized to facilitate conventional classroom teaching at a distance. Research has suggested that smartboards support traditional classroom teaching by keeping the teacher as the active part of the classroom and in command (Gillen et al., 2007; Guðmundsdóttir, 2014). This was how the interactive smartboards worked in the settlement. They served as the dominant technology in order to simulate a traditional school environment where the teaching, essentially, was composed of pupils answering questions and fulfilling tasks at the request of the teachers, or from school books.

Greenland has more than 60 small settlements; 13% of the population lives in these places (Grønlands statistik, 2016). The sustainability of these villages occasionally forms a substantial political discussion, the villages representing an idea of an authentic Greenlandic lifestyle. The primary condition for a settlement is plentiful hunting and fishing grounds, but equally important for its survival are infrastructure and institutions (Hendriksen 2013). These are needed for a village to be recognized as such, which allows inhabitants to claim shopping possibilities, roads to be maintained, ferries to visit regularly and so on. In that respect, it becomes important for the settlement to have a building that is officially recognized as a functioning professional school. Hence, the endeavor was not pedagogical experimentation or development, but quite the opposite. For the long-term survival of the settlement, a normal conventional school was needed. In this case, distance teaching and ICT served the purpose well.

An important technology in the setup was active cameras. These were not primarily intended to support communication on school subjects, but to ensure correct behavior and to help the teachers communicate the right demeanor. When the children were first introduced to the distance teaching setup described in the introduction, they instinctively recognized the potent, powerful setting they were about to step into. Following the concept of power in Michel Foucault’s work (Foucault 1994), it is difficult not to see the monitoring cameras as serving the internalization of self-surveillance, self-discipline, morals and diligence in the settlement’s children. This endeavor also explains why a supply teacher needed to be present at all times, even though his work assignments were quite modest. Active cameras, synchronous communication on a smartboard, and a person present at all times is a massive degree of monitoring for, at times, only two pupils in the room.

Access to education is at the core of the legitimacy of distance teaching. In this case, distance teaching supports the municipality’s responsibility for providing access for all citizens to legitimate and approved schooling—but it also gives the municipality access to its citizens. If the mother’s experience of dormant village dwellers is true, if the home schooling prior to the distance teaching project was actually neglected by the parents, there is reason for authorities in a modern society to work on the optimization of its citizens.
It could be argued that schooling that transmitted self-discipline, in conjunction with core knowledge and skills, was relevant for the village dwellers. The children may not have been ready for progressive teaching demanding autonomy, critical thinking, self-management, responsibility, creativity and collaboration. Traditional classroom teaching may have been their requirement.

I find this late arrival of conventional schooling in the outer districts to be too late. The schooling in the settlement does not prepare the children for taking part in life in the 21st century. ICT, in this case, is in the service of educating to the work ethics of the 20th century.

The boy mentioned in the beginning thrived with the distance teaching setup. Compared to the situation where the settlement did not offer daily activities for the children, the boy took great advantage of the distance teaching setup. He did so by showing engagement, responsibility and collaboration with peers. Yet, he might have gained more from an elaborate use of ICT aiming for the potentials mentioned in a lot of research on ICT use in schools (Beldarrain 2006, Erstad 2008, Erstad 2010, Sørensen, Audon & Levinsen 2010, Sørensen & Levinsen 2014). iPads and extensive use of collaboration on internet platforms with peers and other teachers might have been more in line with his needs and potential. Furthermore, it would be in line with the needs of every child in the 21st century, and in line with what is written as learning goals in the Greenlandic School Act.

CONCLUSION

The solution from Greenland adds to the scope of distance teaching with school children. As mentioned, providing access to education is a common reason for applying distance teaching. The distance teaching provided the children in the settlement access to a professional, functioning school. Through distance teaching, it was possible to establish a legitimate school transmitting sanctioned knowledge and skills, and fostering diligence. However, the teaching unfolded far from discussions on 21st century skills, detached from dominant discourses on digital literacy and children’s competent use of digital technology (for introduction to dominant discourses, see among others Sørensen & Levinsen 2014, Erstad 2010, Bennett et al. 2008).

The case shows how it is possible to use distance teaching and advanced digital technology to establish traditional classroom teaching. It questions the dominant expectation that ICT and distance teaching will teach independence, self-management, and collaboration to students. No a priori connection was found between ICT-driven distance teaching in schools and pedagogical development. ICT and distance teaching might even work to reach opposing ends, as is the case in this study. Digital or media literacy does not emerge from distance teaching, or from the use of digital technology. Deliberate choices have to be made for distance teaching to meet progressive learning goals.

The boy could take advantage of the opportunities coming from the distance teaching setup. However, although it was a technologically advanced school, he frequently missed out on a number of opportunities for media literacy.

As well as providing access to education, distance teaching also gave the municipality access to its citizens living in remote areas. For the boy, the state’s embrace of its rural citi-
zens was an outdated endeavor. He was ready for a more dynamic, richer school day that allowed him even more responsibility, autonomy, and collaborative opportunities. Thus, distance teaching saved the boy at the same time as letting him down. The authorities embraced and included its citizens through distance teaching, but did it in a way that did not transmit contemporary, relevant and progressive learning goals, thus succeeding and failing at the same time.

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