



INTERNAL CAPACITIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Principals' Views in Swedish Secondary Schools

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Internal Capacities for School Improvement (academic dissertation)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to describe and analyse principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as critical internal capacities for school improvement, in five more successful and four less successful Swedish secondary schools, and compare the qualitative similarities and/or differences in the principals' views at the level of schools. A successful school is understood to be a school where pupils accomplish both the academic objectives and the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum. The empirical materials used were collected through semi-structured interviews with the principals and deputy principals, and through general school observations in the nine schools. The perspective of principals' views was used as the unit for analysis, in order to reflect the principals' way of thinking about the internal capacities, as principals' views were expected to be an important indication of how principals act and interact with teachers in their specific context. To create such a model for analysis meant creating views, generated from empirical text, that deepened the understanding of the meaning of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as critical internal capacities for school improvement. These views were then interpreted with the help of two theoretical concepts; structure and culture. The creation of the model made it possible to analyse and describe the school observations and the principals' views of the three critical internal capacities, in the same usage. The question of *what is decided* helped to describe and understand the *structure* in a school, which in educational sociology is understood as the division of labour. The question of *how the decisions are realised* helped to describe and understand the *culture* in a school, the distribution of work. By using the theoretical concepts of structure and culture it was possible to unfold the power relations and the modes of control in the schools, regarding the three internal capacities for school improvement. One part of the result was the constructed view types for collaboration forms, staff development and leadership. It was possible to construct three qualitatively different view types: A principal distributed and team-based/involving view type, a principal distributed and teacher-based/traditional view type, and a politically distributed and principal-based view type. The last view type only appears in relation to staff development. When connecting the principals' views of the three internal capacities in the different schools to the different view types, the results show that the 'team-based' view type dominates in all of the more successful schools, as well as in one of the less successful schools. In two of the less successful schools the 'team-based' view type has become a vision for the principals to strive for in relation to the experienced reality of the 'teacher-based' view type. The remaining less successful school is dominated by the 'teacher-based' view type. Principals' views of external collaboration forms, the connections with the world outside the school-house, are interesting, as all schools no matter the level of success, are 'teacher-based'.

Keywords: school improvement, successful schools, capacity building, internal capacities, collaboration forms, staff development, leadership, principals' views.

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Writing a thesis is sometimes described in terms of a journey. In my case the inspiration for, and the struggle with, this writing process is better described as a life-long vision that is now partly realised with this book. It is a vision of contributing to the development of a school environment for children and the youth of today and tomorrow, all over the world, to safely grow and learn in. To turn beautiful words into practice I am convinced that adults in schools have to be well prepared in order to make such school improvement happen. No matter if you are a goalkeeper in a handball team or a member of a jazz-ensemble, to be good you have to practice. Principals and teachers in schools also have to practice to be good. They have to practice to be good at school improvement, a school improvement that is people and practice focused in order to become effective and sustainable. That is not a linear or simple task, but a complex, holistic and time consuming process. Therefore this book is devoted to the educational growth of my grandchildren Sune, Molly, Eskil, and the fourth pupil-to-be that we know very little about at the time of writing this part of the thesis.

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Härnösand 26th September 2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

Swedish secondary schools, at the beginning of the 21st century, are complex to lead, manage and improve, as they are not only supposed to foster good citizens for today and tomorrow, teach classical and new knowledge, but also to retain and sort students (Berg, 2003). We know from research in educational change that education systems in general, and secondary schools in particular, are slow to change and resistant to reform (Blossing, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). In some schools, principals and teachers are enthusiastic, willing, and risk-taking, while in other schools principals and teachers seem to have lost their faith in improvement, and got stuck in outworn traditions, more suitable for times already gone by. Dalin (1994) points out that what we learn about schools depends very much on the perspective we are looking from, and schools are too complex to be explained from one single perspective alone. According to Fullan (2001) it is necessary to practice both a bottom-up perspective and a top-down perspective at the same time. Therefore there is reason to believe that for school improvement to become effective and sustainable, it has to be both people and practice focused and recurrent and has to be treated as a complex and time consuming process, not a quick fix. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the improvement problem is not that there are too few innovations in schools, but rather that many of them are just single projects and are therefore often meaningless from an improvement perspective (Ibid.).

It is well known (e.g. Barber, 2001; Fullan, 2005) that education systems in the western countries are shifting their decision-making from central agencies to local schools, and while doing so, focusing on the importance of building collective and sustainable internal capacities at all levels in the school system to enhance improvement. To make school improvement happen and become sustainable and effective in relation to both local and national objectives and expectations, the local school needs to have the requisite internal capacities in place to manage and perform a top-down initiative, as well as making use of a bottom-up innovation in the improvement process. However, in the school improvement practice, both at the level of school district political boards and at the level of local schools, such research findings seem to be elusive, and sometimes even neglected.

The landscape of school improvement, in the western part of the world, has undergone significant changes during the second half of the 20th century. During that period of time Sweden is one of the countries that has moved its education system consistently and quickly from centralisation to decentral-

isation. The most important Swedish educational reform along this road towards decentralisation is probably the decision on the nine-year compulsory school (SOU, 1961:30) taken by the parliament in 1962. At that time the Swedish school system was highly centralised (Lundgren, 1999). The main purpose of this reform was to develop all children into democratic citizens, although Kallos (1982) described the reform as a political compromise and mostly organisational, of only marginal benefit to the working class children who were regarded as the core of the reform. The reform program of schools' internal democracy in the 1970s (Prop. 1975/76: 39) was another important step towards decentralisation of the Swedish school system. A prolongation of those reforms, the 1980 National Curriculum (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980) for the compulsory school, emphasised governing through objectives instead of rules as well as providing more freedom for local adjustments. In the 1990s the local municipalities took over the employer role for teachers from the state. In addition financial resources were distributed as sector subsidies (Prop. 1990/91:18) and the participative system of governing through objectives *and* results was introduced (Lundgren, 1999). The present Swedish National Curriculum, Lpo 94 (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) for the compulsory school, consists of goals for both knowledge acquisition, divided into goals to strive for and goals to reach, and goals for upbringing.

Knowledge and upbringing are two important terms in each National Curriculum. Knowledge could be defined as how to organise the surrounding world in meaningful structures, upbringing is to transfer fundamental values, rules and action competence. A National Curriculum indicates what knowledge and what upbringing the education should provide and develop (Skolverket, 1999, p. 12)¹.

In the National Curriculum the foundation of values unites the choice of content in the academic objectives with the social and civic objectives. Thus, schools cannot be neutral in terms of values like respect for human rights, individual freedom and the inviolability of life (Lundgren, 1999). In the present Swedish National Curriculum, the message to principals and teachers is that the social/civic objectives and the academic objectives should be treated equally in Swedish schools (Skolverket, 1999).

As early as 1998 'The Conference of European Education Ministers', put forward the need for internal capacity building in schools to manage innovation and change, as one of the characteristics of a world-class education system (Barber, 2001) and "[R]esearch evidence from the most successful school improvement projects emphasises the importance of fostering the development

¹ All the translations from Swedish to English in the thesis are my own.

capacity of the school.” (Harris, 2002, pp. 51-52) Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a growing interest in schools’ capacity “[A]s the collective competency of the school as an entity to bring about effective change.” (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003, p. 84) Educational discussions about capacity and capacity building are often framed by specific reforms and what it would take to implement their ideas. Capacity seems to be context-bound and the human perspective in it is important (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Hopkins and Jackson (2003) make a difference between capacity, as a static concept, and the process of capacity building which is “[T]hose strategies that allow the school to harness the abilities, skills and knowledge acquired during one process of change to facilitate subsequent changes.” (p. 93)

Harris (2002) argues for the importance of having certain conditions in place to be able to build capacity for improvement. Hopkins (2001), describes these internal conditions as “[T]he internal features of the school, the ‘arrangements’ that enable it to get work done.” (p. 67) According to Hopkins there is a need for a simultaneous work on a clear and practical focus on school improvement, alongside the work on the internal conditions. In Sweden the work by Berg (2003) on so-called actor preparedness, both from the perspective of the school itself and from the perspective of the professionalism among staff, and also the work by Blossing (2000), on schools’ self-renewal, contribute to the understanding of fostering internal capacities for school improvement.

Here schools’ *internal capacities for school improvement* are understood as the abilities of the principal and the teachers as a collective, within a certain school context, in order to be prepared for and be able to handle the improvement process in order to fulfil the national and local objectives for their school. It is possible both to build and to learn to master the internal capacities for school improvement. *Internal capacity building for school improvement* is consequently understood as the social process during which the principal and the teachers in a specific school context, as a collective, build and learn to master the internal capacities needed, to be prepared for and be able to handle the improvement process in order to fulfil the national and local objectives for their school.

This thesis is a part of the Swedish research project *Structure, Culture, Leadership: prerequisites for successful schools?*² (Höög, Johansson, Lindberg & Olofsson, 2003). The SCL-project focuses on the relationship between structure, culture, and leadership in Swedish secondary schools, with the primary objective of studying “[T]he leader’s ability to create both high

² The SCL-project started 2003 and finishes 2008. It is located at the Centre for Principal Development, Umeå University, and is led by professor Olof Johansson with co-directors reader Jonas Höög, Umeå University, professor Leif Lindberg, Växjö University and reader Anders Olofsson, Mid Sweden University, Campus Härnösand. The Swedish Research Council finances the project.

expectations and harmony among the structural and cultural changes in the school during its development.” (Höög et al., 2003, p. 1) Consequently it is the job of the principal to lead the improvement work, and for the principal and the teachers to carry it through together in the leadership practice as a part of the day-to-day work in their specific school contexts. To understand the improvement work of schools, it is therefore important to consider the structural and cultural context in which the leadership practice in schools take place (Berg, 2003; Ekholm, Blossing, Kåräng, Lindvall & Scherp, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Höög et al., 2003), with the purpose of fulfilling the mutual and shared expectations in the national and local objectives.

Leadership in schools can be understood as a distributed leadership (Harris, 2005; Spillane, 2006). It can also be a leadership that is both distributed and positioned (Mullford, 2007). In the Swedish school context leadership is understood to be a democratic and communicative leadership that includes the principal acting as manager as well as the pedagogical leader of the teachers, in order to handle both the structure and the culture of the school in a democratic way (Johansson, 2000). The use of *structure* and *culture* in schools is inspired by Bernstein (2000), and refers to the division of labour and the distribution of work in schools. The structure expresses the power relations in a school, and the culture expresses the realisation of the power relations in a school. Depending on the principals’ and the teachers’ acquired set of values, beliefs, attitudes and norms, while acting as a collective, they can either support, confirm, preserve or delay the realisation of the structure. In order to describe social relations in general Bernstein uses the term classification.³ In a secondary school classification could describe the power relations between different subjects. If the classification is strong the subjects are separated and the teaching takes place according to the traditions in the different subjects. If the classification is weak more inter-disciplinary teaching could be expected.

Where we have strong classification, the rule is: things must be kept apart. Where we have weak classification, the rule is: things must be brought together. But we have to ask, in whose interest is the apartness of things, and in whose interest is the new togetherness and the new integration (Bernstein, 2000, p. 11)?

The culture of a school could also be explained as the modes of control within schools, or between the school and the community. Bernstein’s terminology for different modes of control in a school is framing. “Framing is about *who*

³ Bernstein uses ‘classification’ as a term for the relation between boundaries, for example between different categories of staff in a school. The demarcation between the categories is the power relation between those categories.

controls *what*.” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 12, italics in original) The framing in a school could either be weak or strong. Where the framing is strong teachers have very little impact on their own work, for example in staff development, while in a school with weak framing the staff development is ‘owned’ by those who are going to be a part of it. Staff development is used as a lever to support teachers in their day-to-day work. Having said that, it is necessary to emphasise that culture is understood in a wider sense in the SCL-project in general (Höög et al., 2003; Höög, Johansson & Olofsson, 2005).

As we already know from previous research (e.g. Fullan, 2005; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Höög et al., 2005; Leithwood, 2006) that how the structure and culture are treated by the principal in the leadership practice, is regarded as crucial for the improvement process in schools. *Principals’ views* could therefore be expected to function as a potential pre-condition, both for the leadership as principals’ action to handle and manage the structure and culture of internal capacities for school improvement, as well as for the leadership as an interaction between the principal and the teachers in the structural and cultural context of the school (Spillane, 2006).

The use of *views* is based on Zetterström’s (1988) development of the concept in the project ‘Long-term effects of higher education’ (The LONG-project)⁴ at Umeå University in the 1980s, which captured the long-term effects of higher education by studying university students’ views of studies in four different university programmes, and in relation to future work. Zetterström describes views as overlapping principles for how we interpret and evaluate the world. In relation to values and attitudes, views are regarded as more abstract, general and permanent. “[N]otions (views)⁵ could be described as ‘perceptual gestalts’, which constitute the ideological link between society and the conceptions of the individual.” (Franke-Wikberg & Zetterström, 1984, p. 240, quotation marks in original)

The contribution of this thesis, to previous research on internal capacity building for school improvement is twofold. *Firstly* it is to elaborate how principals responsible for school improvement in Swedish secondary schools (SKOLFS: 17, 2003), view collaboration forms, staff development⁶, and leadership, as critical internal capacities for improvement in their schools. *Secondly* it is to investigate the qualitative similarities and/or differences in the

⁴ For a more detailed description of the project see the work of Zetterström (1988), Hult (1990) and Olofsson (1993). For a summary see Franke-Wikberg and Zetterström (1984).

⁵ Franke-Wikberg and Zetterström uses the term notions instead of views. The concept of views is further developed in chapter five.

⁶ In this thesis staff development is used instead of the more ideological term professional development.

principals' views between and within the more successful⁷ schools and the less successful schools in the SCL-project. The empirical materials used are individual interviews with the principals and general school observations in these schools.⁸

Further disposition of the thesis

Chapter two gives the background on why the focus is on collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as the critical internal capacities for school improvement. This chapter presents the results of a pre-study of ten Swedish secondary school principals in ten different schools, two schools each from five municipalities in the geographical central area of Sweden. In the chapter the principals' views of what internal capacities they understand as critical to have in place in a secondary school in order to enhance improvement, are elaborated. Even though some hints about the aim have been given already in the introduction, *chapter three* gives a deeper description of the aim and the more specific research questions. The aim and the more detailed research questions that have guided both the empirical data collection and the direction of the analysis and discussions of the results, are based on the outcomes of the pre-study and the literature review in chapter four. *Chapter four* summarises relevant previous research in the areas of school improvement, capacity building for school improvement, and collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. In *chapter five* the perspectives of views as the unit for analysis of the results are elaborated. Furthermore, the research methods for data collection and data analysis are described within that perspective. This chapter also includes the development and use of a model for analysis, of the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as critical internal capacities for school improvement, inspired by Bernstein's (2000) language of descriptions. The results from the use of the model, together with general school observations in two of the schools in the SCL-project are presented in the chapter. In *chapter six* the results, and the analysis of the results, from the main study of principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, and the general school observations in the five more successful secondary schools and the four less successful secondary schools in the SCL-project, are presented at the level of schools. *Chapter seven* is devoted to the final discussion in relation to previous research and the aim, followed by conclusions and implications for future

⁷ Here school success is defined as pupils' achievement of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the 9th form and will be further developed in chapter five.

⁸ Altogether ten principals and two deputy principals were interviewed in the five more successful schools and the four less successful schools. The method is described in more detail in chapter five.

research. Finally the thesis is summarised in Swedish in *chapter eight* and in English in *chapter nine*.

2. SEARCHING FOR CRITICAL INTERNAL CAPACITIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Which internal capacities is it critical to build for schools to enhance improvement, and how can we learn more about the internal capacities needed to handle the desired improvement processes in the local school? In this chapter the results of a pre-study of Swedish secondary school principals' views of critical internal capacities for school improvement are presented, analysed and discussed, as a consequence for the main study of this thesis. It might seem rather unorthodox to introduce empirical results as early as the second chapter of a thesis, but the reason for doing so is twofold. *Firstly* there is a need to explain this part of the process of how the three internal capacities for school improvement in the main study have emerged. In the pre-study⁹ 10 secondary school principals from 10 different secondary schools, two from each of five of the 19 municipalities in the geographical central area of Sweden, expressed their views of critical internal capacities for secondary schools to make school improvement happen. These views from the principals, together with the findings in previous research as presented in chapter four, have in turn guided the selection of which critical internal capacities for school improvement to elaborate in the main study. *Secondly* it is important because the findings from this pre-study, together with the literature review, also served as an important resource when formulating the aims for the entire thesis and the more specific research questions, as well as the interview questions for the principals in the main study.

The purpose of the pre-study was to elaborate what a sample of secondary school principals, from the geographical central area of Sweden, understood as critical internal capacities for school improvement for secondary schools. The empirical material was collected through individual, one-hour interviews with the principals, conducted in the principals' offices. The interviews were both

⁹ None of the principals in the pre-study were involved in the main study. This chapter draws on a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in Montreal 2005 (Björkman, 2005).

structured and unstructured (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The unstructured question to the respondents was: How, as a secondary school principal, do you understand internal capacities for school improvement? Previous research on schools' work culture (Snyder, 1988) served as inspiration in constructing the structured questions in the interviews (App. 1). In the presentation of the results of the pre-study below, the principals' answers to both the unstructured and the structured questions are brought together to construct their views of the overall research question for the pre-study: What internal capacities for school improvement are most critical in principal's views, in order to make Swedish secondary schools improve?

The principals were selected from five municipalities in the geographical central area of Sweden. Principals, from two secondary schools (7th-9th forms) in each municipality¹⁰, were invited by e-mail to participate. All ten principals accepted the invitation. All but one had a long career as a principal, ranging from 3-15 years. Six of them had previous professional careers as teachers in pre-school or primary school, and four in secondary school. Five of the principals were women.¹¹ One of the selected schools in each municipality had a higher average grade according to pupils' final marks in the 9th form, in all subjects during school year 2003/2004¹². In the pre-study those schools are labelled 'academically successful schools' and the schools with the lower average grade in each municipality are labelled 'academically regular schools'. The reason for this selection of schools was to investigate if there might be differences and/or similarities between the principals' views of critical internal capacities for school improvement, and their schools' level of academic success as defined above. The interviews with the principals were audio taped and fully transcribed by me. The transcriptions were returned to the respondents for comments before the start of the interpretation process. All respondents accepted the transcriptions without any changes. The interview texts were interpreted through a 'dialogue' in several turns, from the perspective of the overall question above, between the author and the text, to make the understanding as wide, open and clear as possible (Kvale, 1997). In the analysis of the results presented below, principals' views of critical internal capacities were constructed in three categories: collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership. The categories emerged from the interpretation of the interview texts, during the analysis of the data. The categories are presented with

¹⁰ Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities, and most municipalities have only one school district political board for compulsory schools.

¹¹ The equal mix of gender was done to make the whole sample as representative as possible, but the issue of gender is not further developed in the pre-study.

¹² <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20041110.

quotations from the interview texts to make the presentation more authentic (Kvale, 1997).

Principals' views of collaboration forms

In all principals' views an important part of collaboration forms, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement, is that schools are organised in collaborative teaching teams with one teacher as team leader. In the principals' views it is also necessary that schools are collaborative, both within and between the teaching teams.¹³ Teachers therefore need to have arenas where they can meet, discuss and reflect on their teaching together with their colleagues. In their views these principals take it for granted that teachers also work together with both colleagues and pupils, in order to plan pupils' work. The teaching should be inter-disciplinary, to enhance maximal pupil learning.

My picture of schooling is that when you put together many subjects into a theme, it is more enjoyable than the subject oriented teaching that is normal in the 7th-9th forms (principal 1, academically successful school).

All principals' views describe openness and eagerness among teachers for a vertical integration from K-9¹⁴ as important, according to collaboration forms, and related to both the academic objectives and the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum.

It is very important to have staff that view school in a holistic way. That you work in a K-9 perspective. [T]o simply meet and gain an understanding of how your colleagues work, and correct them when needed, to get a better vertical integration in the K-9 perspective (principal 10, academically regular school).

Another important part of collaboration forms, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement in the principals' views, is that schools must have strong connections with parents. The results also show that it is not so important to capture the expectations expressed by people outside the school-house to support school improvement. In the principals' views there is a well-structured flow of information in the school, and formal meetings are prepared

¹³Swedish schools are organised in teaching teams. The teaching teams are normally organised around a group of pupils. This could be pupils from just one form, or pupils from all three forms in a mixed grouping. Often one of the teachers is appointed as a team leader. The level of autonomy for the teaching teams differs from school to school.

¹⁴K-9 includes pupils from the age of six to the age of 16.

and structured in schools that develop collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement. In such schools principals and teachers feel confident about their situation in school, and they move their school in the desired direction, guided by a common vision. According to the principals' views, teachers and principals should feel confident about their task, in relation to the local and national objectives, and are therefore not afraid to question proposed innovations. In the principals' views conflicts are understood as a natural and healthy part of the day-to-day work, in order to enhance improvement.

The most important thing is a lively discussion among the teachers on these questions. That discussion must be able to bring up difficulties, and also those issues that do not work so well. You have to assess what you do continuously, and discuss what you do. It is important that the problem has its origin at the local school, is owned by the local school, and is solved by the local school (principal 7, academically regular school).

All principals described in their views the importance of a collaboration built on trust among all involved, and a mutual understanding of the teaching process.

In the 7th-9th forms there is a culture where teachers want the principal to decide. In the 1st-6th forms it is more of a joint task....[We] have just organised ourselves so that teachers work in both 1st-6th forms and 7th-9th forms. It is important in order to understand both cultures (principal 8, academically successful school).

You need to have clear objectives. They do not have to be embraced by all, but they have to be predominant, taken for granted, the thing to follow. You have to know that. Everyone cannot run their own business (principal 9, academically successful school).

Principals' views in the 'academically successful' schools expressed that high expectations on both teachers and pupils are important as they are developing new knowledge together. Principals in the 'academically regular schools', in their views felt more hesitant about the high expectations on pupils and about viewing schools as a learning environment where teachers and pupils develop new knowledge together.

One could think that, or one could feel that we expect more from the pupils than they could possibly be expected to manage (principal 7, academically regular school).

Furthermore, all principals' views described the importance of fostering an authentic pupil democracy as a part of collaboration forms, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement.

To summarise, principals in both 'academically successful' and 'academically regular' schools, in their views, understand collaboration forms to be a critical internal capacity for school improvement. Such a school is built on teaching teams and these teams have a teacher as a team leader. Teachers in the teams work together on an inter-disciplinary basis, and there are meeting-places between the teams where teachers can meet and discuss. Conflicts are natural in such a collaborative culture and can help to enhance improvement. The collaboration forms are built to support a K-9 perspective of schooling. The schools' connection with the world outside the school-house is only partly included in the collaboration forms as a critical capacity for school improvement. Both the flow of information, and the meetings are well structured. The collaboration forms are important as they support moving the school in the desired direction, as expressed in the common vision. To make collaboration work, a culture of mutual trust among everyone in the school is necessary. What differs between principals' views is that in the 'academically successful' schools, principals underline the importance of having high expectations of both teachers and pupils in collaboration as they are supposed to create new knowledge together, while principals' views in 'academically regular' schools only express high expectations on teachers.

Principals' views of staff development

In the principals' views they relate the importance of staff development, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement, both to research and the national and local objectives for secondary schools. They explain the function of staff development as a lever in the improvement process. One staff development focus is to make teachers aware of school improvement as a long-term process, and to make teachers willing to take risks and to be early adopters of new ideas. Another key-function for staff development, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement in the principals' views, is to create a willingness among teachers to improve, an openness to discuss their own teaching performance together with colleagues, and to invite pupils and parents into those discussions. Principals in the 'academically successful' schools point out the importance of building a structure and a culture to support staff development, and also create individual networks for teachers. Not all principals in 'academically regular' schools share those views. The principals in 'academically regular' schools did not describe collegial feed back, strong networks with the world outside the school-house, or opportunities for teachers to practice benchmarking with other

schools, as a staff development focus. On the contrary, as one of the principals in an 'academically regular' school expressed it:

[T]here is a need for some kind of incentive, not necessarily money, for teachers to stimulate improvement work (principal, 7, academically regular school).

To summarise, all principals in their views have an understanding of the importance of staff development as a critical internal capacity for school improvement. Staff development should function as a lever in the improvement process to make teachers more skilled and willing to take risks and try different solutions to challenges that arise. Principals' views in the 'academically successful' schools point out the need to arrange staff development in such a way, and to build individual networks for their teachers in practice as well, while not all the principals in the 'academically regular' schools share those views. Principals in the 'academically regular' schools do not involve collegial feed-back, external networks or benchmarking in their views of staff development as a critical internal capacity for school improvement.

Principals' views of leadership

All the principals' reported in their views that a mutual and school-wide vision, built on a common foundation of democratic values, and an understanding of school improvement as a holistic and long-term process, is what makes leadership a critical internal capacity for school improvement in secondary schools. In all the principals' views, an improvement focused leadership includes a plan and a structure for recruiting staff, in order to achieve a high professional level among teachers and a good mix according to gender, age, competence and experience. Further more, the principals emphasised the importance of a good structure for developing clear, realistic and written goals for the work in school, in line with local and national objectives.

Teachers have to be well aware of the documents that govern us. What we can have an impact on, and what we cannot (principal, 2, academically regular school).

The leadership itself should be shared with the teachers in the school. The principals visualised this shared leadership by mentioning the team leaders working together with the principal in the leadership team. All the principals describe this shared leadership as giving opportunities to more people to take on more responsibility in school. One principal spoke about giving away some of the formal power to others. By doing this the principal felt more influential.

I am not the system. That feels good, because it is not so personal any longer. That was the way it was before. My real influence is greater today than before. Sounds contradictory perhaps, but that is how I experience it (principal, 5, academically successful school).

Principals should extend the opportunities to take on more responsibility in the teaching teams, in order to create support that brings more people into the decision-making process. All team leaders should have leadership training.

Not to be a solitary leader. That is for me what's most important. To work in a team (principal 4, academically regular school).

The principal, through his or her leadership, is responsible for creating trust amongst everyone in the school which supports staff development for teachers, including external input to make teachers aware of the governing documents in school, and to implement a holistic view of schooling. Now and then it is necessary for the principal to stop and 'check the map', to make sure that the school is moving in the direction decided upon.

[I] believe that a school that doesn't improve will soon stop being good (principal 9, academically successful school).

Finally, in their views of leadership as a critical internal capacity for school improvement, principals point out the importance of allocating financial resources for the planned improvement, but stress the efficient use of time as the most important resource for enhancing improvement.

To summarise, the principals' views of leadership as a critical internal capacity for school improvement include the responsibility for a mutual and school-wide vision built on democratic values, and a holistic view of school improvement. They include a plan for recruiting staff to achieve a suitable mix of people, and a good structure for implementing goals. The leadership should be shared with the teachers in the school in such a way that it brings more people into the decision-making process. It is also part of the leadership to create a trusting culture, allocating financial resources and an efficient use of time during the improvement process. In the principals' views of leadership as a critical internal capacity for school improvement there are no differences between principals in 'academically successful' schools or 'academically regular' schools.

Analysis of the pre-study and consequences for the main study

All the principals in this pre-study are well aware of what is expected from them as formal leaders responsible for the improvement in their schools. They describe the importance of a supportive school environment. An important part of such an environment is clear leadership to prepare for improvement that includes mutual trust, an openness and willingness to collaborate and develop among the teachers in the teaching teams. It is the work of improvement in school, kept together by a “[B]road-based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership.” (Harris & Lambert, 2003, p. 13) These views of critical internal capacities closely resemble what is outlined in the Swedish national governing documents, and in the international research literature on school improvement. Many of the principals in this study were involved in, or had completed their training in, the National Principal Training Programme for Principals, which could explain their up-to-date knowledge in this area.

When the principals described their views of critical internal capacities for school improvement, both similarities and differences were indicated between principals’ in ‘academically successful’ schools and ‘academically regular’ schools. On the one hand, all the principals talked about building internal collaboration, visualised in the teaching teams by developing trust and a common vision for the school. On the other hand it was surprising that few of the principals’ views, apart from the school-parent relation, expressed the importance of building connections with the world outside the school-house. This is curious because taking in ideas from other principals, teachers and others outside your own school, to gain new knowledge and skills and to challenge your own traditions, is supposed to increase the quality of the internal capacity building in schools (e.g. O’Day, Goertz & Floden, 1995; Gurr, Drysdale, Di Natale, Ford, Hardy & Swann, 2003).

All the principals’ views of leadership, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement, are that the leadership in school should be shared with others. One principal from an ‘academically successful’ school even describes leadership as not only giving teachers opportunities to take on responsibility, but also as distributing some of the principal’s own power among the teachers, in order to become more influential. This view becomes even more interesting as the Swedish education context strongly argues for the single principal as being formally responsible for his or her school (SKOLFS:17, 2003). The results from the pre-study indicate a change in the direction of principals’ views of leadership, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement, in relation to the governing documents. In these principals’ views there is a move from the ‘single principal leadership’, as described in the governing documents, towards

a 'managed and shared leadership', visualised by the principal and the team leaders together in the leadership team.

There are also indications of differences in how the principals in the 'academically successful' schools and those in the 'academically regular' schools view some of the critical internal capacities. In 'academically successful' schools, the principals' views are that it is crucial to build a structure and culture of staff development where teachers are supported to join networks and meet together with colleagues to reflect upon their own teaching. According to the principals' views in the 'academically regular' schools they still seem to be partly caught in the 'INSET-syndrome'¹⁵ where teachers could lean back in the lecture hall, listen, relax, and leave the improvement work to someone higher up. The principals in the 'academically successful' schools seem to have left that stage and underline in their views, the importance of building an environment for staff development to function as an internal capacity for improvement. These differences in the principals' views of involving the teachers in the improvement work could be explained by looking at the tradition of staff development, or in-service training. This has evolved from being an active, individual responsibility for teachers in the beginning of the 20th century, to being completely taken care of by the state for nearly 40 years from the late 1950s. It is only since the beginning of the 1990s that it is the responsibility of the school district political board and the local principal. Principals in the 'academically successful' schools also have a view of high expectations for both teachers' and pupils' performances.

When looking at the results from the pre-study it would have been possible to construct different categories for internal capacities for school improvement, such as: the K-9-perspective, collegial trust, and willingness to improve. However, when adding the results of this pre-study to the findings in the literature review presented in chapter four, the decision was made to focus in the main study on principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as the three critical internal capacities for school improvement in secondary schools. The results from the pre-study, together with the literature review have served as a selection process for the aims and the more specific research questions in the main study, as well as for the interview questions to the principals. The analysis of the results from the pre-study also indicated that it could be of interest to study the differences and/or similarities in principals' views of the three critical internal capacities for school improvement, in relation to their schools' level of success¹⁶. Finally the results of the pre-study, together with the literature findings, strongly influenced the interview questions to the

¹⁵ INSET is short for in-service training.

¹⁶ In the main study school success is defined as pupils' achievement of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the 9th form, and will be further developed in chapter five.

principals in the main study, and the wording of the specific research questions for the thesis, as outlined in the next chapter.

3. AIM

The principals' possibilities of accomplishing a school improvement that is both recurrent and people and practice focused, in order to make it effective and sustainable, depend on external circumstances as well as on internal capacities for school improvement. The external circumstances, such as parents' socio-economical status or the financial situation in the municipality, are often difficult for an individual principal in a school to alter. In the general school observations, used as one important empirical resource, the figures for pupils with a foreign background and the parents' educational background are presented as external circumstances for school improvement. This is in order to better describe the school context to the reader. Whilst being aware of the relationship between pupils' socio-economic background and school results in previous research, as already described in the Coleman report (Coleman, 1966), and challenged in the work on school effectiveness (e.g. Grosin, 2003; Mortimer, 1998; Rutter, Maugham, Mortimore, Ousten & Smith, 1979) and school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994; Fullan, 1991; van Velzen, Miles, Ekholm, Hameyer & Robin, 1985) to show the positive effect of schooling, the focus here is on the principals' views of internal capacities for school improvement. Therefore the external circumstances will not be further discussed in the analysis of the results.

The number of women in leadership positions in the Swedish compulsory school has increased strikingly (Franzén, 2006). Altogether in the five more successful schools there are five principals and two deputy principals. In one of the schools the principal and the deputy principal are both women. In the other four schools all the principals are men. All together in the four less successful schools there are five principals. In one school with two principals, both are men. In the other three schools the three principals are women. Franzén's study of school leadership and gender presented results that showed that it is difficult to separate what is 'female' and 'male' behaviour in school leadership. It seems to be more about how teachers apprehend what is 'male' or 'female' in a principal's behaviour. The issue of gender has not been the focus here, as this thesis concentrates only on principals' views.

The principals' views are used as the unit for analysis to capture different modalities in order to understand, compare and communicate what is decided (the structure) about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, and how these decisions are realised (the culture) in each of these nine schools.

The first part of the aim is to analyse the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as critical internal capacities for school improvement, in the five more successful and the four less successful Swedish secondary schools in the SCL-project, and compare the qualitative similarities and/or differences in the principals' views within and between the nine schools. The second part of the aim is to describe and analyse the schools in the same usage as the principals' views.

The more specific research questions are:

- What views do principals in the five more successful and the four less successful Swedish secondary schools (7th-9th forms), in the SCL-project, hold on the structure and culture of their schools' collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as critical internal capacities for school improvement?
- What are the qualitative similarities and/or the differences in the principals' views within and between the nine schools?
- How can the general school observations and the principals' views be described and analysed in the same usage to make it possible to compare the results from the nine schools?

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

As school improvement serves as the 'pitch' for the thesis, this chapter firstly discusses the development of school improvement in the western world. Secondly some of the huge amount of research in the area of capacity building for school improvement will be elaborated on. Thirdly the focus is on what some of the research literature has to say about collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement.

School improvement

It is hard to find one common definition of school improvement in the research literature. To summarise the intentions in most of the definitions, school improvement can be described as systematic, on-going, and supported efforts to make principals and teachers in schools more capable of achieving the national and local objectives in the school (e.g. Dalin, 1994; van Velzen et al., 1985). It is also problematic that in everyday language among principals and teachers in schools and sometimes also in the research literature, the terms change, development and improvement often being used interchangeably (Dalin, 1998). However, in line with Ekholm and Ploug-Olsen (1991), change is treated as the superior term. Development is regarded as a particular form of change, and indicates a change in a certain direction. *Improvement* is understood as a change in a certain direction that also includes the intention of making something better than it is at present. To improve something in school therefore implies mapping and analysing the present situation, in relation to the local and national objectives, a continuous evaluation of progress throughout the entire improvement process, and finally an analysis of the results in relation to the initial situation and the local and national objectives.

School improvement needs a focus in order to be successful. According to Goodlad (1994) that focus has to be the school as a whole. It is not enough to change the structure of a school. It is also necessary to change the culture, the people who realise the structure in the school, if you want a people and practice focused, effective and sustainable change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008).

The more increased demands for change in schools, together with more difficult working tasks for teachers and other staff in schools, the more important a constructive collaboration, support from colleagues and a positive atmosphere throughout the school, become (Hämäläinen & Sava, 1989, p. 18, my translation).

Teachers need a good learning environment themselves in order to provide a good learning environment for their pupils. In line with this thinking, many researchers (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Dalin, 1995; Ekholm, 1989; Fullan, 1993, 2001; Harris, 2002) claim that successful school improvement must be related to the day-to-day life in school together with colleagues. It has to be 'owned' by those involved in the improvement process, and supported by tailor-made staff development in an on-going process of problem solving as well as reflective thinking.

Even though school improvement is regarded as a non-linear process, specific phases in the process have been identified: initiation, implementation, institutionalisation, and the marketing of the results (Ekholm & Ploug-Olsen, 1991; Fullan, 2001). The initiative could be top-down, bottom-up or both at the same time, but according to the research findings, the implementation phase is often underestimated with regard to time. Implementation in the school improvement process is not only about learning new things. It is about learning new things together with one's colleagues in the school, while questioning and reflecting on the present situation, as well as on the new ideas supposed to be implemented. It is both re-structuring and re-culturing at the same time in order to re-shape the present. "Institutionalisation, seen as a process, enables an organisation to maintain stability while assimilating changes, from small to major, into its structure." (Miles & Ekholm, 1991, p. 6) As school improvement is regarded as a non-linear process, these phases do not necessarily appear in this order and are often parallel processes (Ekholm & Ploug-Olsen, 1991).

Fullan (1991, 1993, 2001) gives a brief history of the development of school improvement in the USA. The 1960s was the decade of the big state projects, such as open plan schools and individualised instruction. The first implementation studies appeared around 1970, but at that time most schools did not have the individual or organisational capacities to put new reforms into practice. The language changed, but not the practice of teaching. During the 1960s and 1970s, education systems all over the western world were meant to be one of the major societal vehicles to reduce social inequality. As a result of the 'Coleman report' (Coleman, 1966), one of the main questions became whether education really could make a difference, given social class and societal conditions. As a reaction, in their research the effective school movement showed that schools really could make a difference (e.g. Grosin, 2003; Mortimer, 1998; Rutter et al., 1979). Another research front showed that professional development and in-service training could help as continuing competence building for teachers and principals in school (e.g. Dalin, 1994; Fullan, 1991; Huberman & Miles, 1984; van Velzen et al., 1985). In the early 1980s there was a huge knowledge base of major factors associated with introducing single innovations, but no confidence that those results could be

reproduced on a wider scale. The report, 'A Nation at risk' (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), was the start of large scale tinkering with top-down, detailed descriptions of skills, leadership activities and tests in the USA. In the mid 1980s another movement, school restructuring, started in the USA. Here the focus was on school-based management and enhanced roles for school leaders and teachers in a decentralised manner. From his historical review Fullan (1991) identifies two main strands: *Intensification* in the sense of sharpening up the what and how questions in education. *Restructuring* with a focus on change towards a more school based management, integration of several improvement activities, creation of a cooperative school culture, and radical change of teacher education towards a more mentoring role for teachers. The research on *school effectiveness* grew from intensification, which mostly focused on the results in schools. The interest in the working process among the adults in school and the research in *school improvement* came from restructuring (Hopkins, 2001).

The improvement of the education in Sweden is often described in terms of before and after the government decision on a nine-year compulsory school (SOU, 1961:30). Before that decision Sweden had a parallel school system: the elementary school and the lower secondary school. At that time the school system was highly centralised. During the 1970s a reform programme focused on schools' inner democracy and collaboration was launched (Prop. 1975/76: 39). One prolongation of those reforms, the 1980 National Curriculum (Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980), put stronger emphasis on governing through objectives instead of rules, and opened up for more local adjustments of collaboration. Schools began to organise themselves into special work units and teaching teams, and developed local plans for the work in school. Those local plans were supposed to serve as inspiration for local development, as well as guidance for directing the use of resources in school. In the 1990s a further step towards decentralisation of the Swedish school system was taken with the participative system of governing schools through goals and results (Lundgren, 1999).

Today, at the beginning of the 21st century there is a shift of foci in educational change in the western world. A shift from what makes a school effective, towards a greater understanding of how schools become effective over time (Hopkins, 2001). School improvement research that traditionally focused more on the process using qualitative methods, and research on school effectiveness that traditionally focused more on the outcomes using quantitative methods, are gradually merging. The movement is towards a common theory, hoping to create more effective and sustainable school improvement by using theories, models and research methods from both strands (Creemers & Reezigt, 2005). This new paradigm could be characterised by a greater focus on pupils' results, by making use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods,

using strategies from both strands when improving schools, and a growing interest in teaching and learning in the classroom (Hopkins, 2001; Reynolds, 1998). This is well captured by Hopkins, Enskill and West (1994), in their definition of school improvement as:

[A] strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change... [I]t is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change (p. 3).

Harris (2002) elaborates on this definition and summarises the important conditions in *effective school improvement*: teacher development, a shared and distributed leadership, no one blueprint for action, attention at the pupil level,¹⁷ and understanding and working with the school culture. The human dimension of school improvement is crucial (Evans, 1996), but to foster a school culture by changing the basic assumptions of individuals is very difficult, and time consuming (Schein, 1985, 2004). Evans (1996) claims that even though change is a process it is often treated like a product, and therefore its human dimensions are often overlooked. The language of social change, like school reforms, is often phrased in terms of growth and renewal, while the experience of change from the perspective of the individual is often connected to loss. Therefore it might be necessary for the principal to give teachers time for grief in the process of change. “[N]o innovation can succeed unless it attends to the realities of people and place.” (Evans, 1996, p. 92)

From this brief historical review we learn that to make people and practice focused and recurrent school improvement effective and sustainable, is a long-term process with no one blueprint available for principals, teachers or decision makers. Dalin (1998) argues that, “In the deepest sense of the term, school improvement is a question of *value*.” (p. 97, italics in original), and Fullan (2001) emphasises this when he says that “[T]he interface between individual and collective meaning and action in everyday situations is where change stands or falls.” (p. 9) Harris (2002) concludes that:

*The most effective school improvement programs assist schools to build capacity for change...[B]oth the **readiness to change** and the **internal capacity to manage the change process** (p. 33, italics in original, here in bold).*

¹⁷ This thesis focuses on principals' views of critical internal capacities for school improvement, and will not specifically focus on the level of pupils in relation to school improvement.

Fullan (2001) declares that during the 1990s the large-scale reforms have returned in the western world with a stronger focus on schools accountability, understood here as:

[H]aving to answer for ones actions, and particularly the results of those actions...[W]ithin the school system often the answers are evaluated by a superior against some standards or some expectations (Möller, 2008).

Internationally the 'No Child Left Behind Act' (The White House, 2001) in the USA and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) in England (Lee, 1997) are well known in relation to national standards regarding accountability for schools.

In relation to the research literature on school improvement described above, there seems to be a need for both a re-culturing and a re-structuring of schools. The implementation of a reform, combined with a greater respect for the pre-conditions for the improvement process itself, from both educators, researchers, and policy makers is not sufficient, as schools seem to be more likely to retain status quo than to change. Secondary schools in particular, with their long tradition of an age-graded, subject-based curriculum and lesson-by-lesson schedule have proved to be quite resilient to change (Blossing, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006).

Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, Sweden is standing on the threshold of implementing a more standardised approach to reforming schools, including national tests, and grades for pupils even in the lower forms, and a more subject-oriented and form-based teacher education. This is happening alongside research findings showing that innovative secondary schools "[S]eem especially imperilled by standardised reform movements." (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006, p. 126) Even if those studies were carried out outside the Swedish school context, the consequences of the results must also be taken seriously for Swedish secondary schools. These research findings, in combination with the new standardised reform, are especially alarming according to recent Swedish research (Blossing, 2004), as Swedish secondary schools, with their historical tradition of resistance to reform, are now showing a growing interest in the improvement of a more collaborative work culture.

Internal capacity and internal capacity building for school improvement

In La Sagrada Familia, the unfinished church in Barcelona, there is a quotation in the exhibition hall by Antonio Gaudi (1852-1926), the modernist architect of the church and many other buildings in the city. He states that "[E]ach person masters a specific ability or capacity, and that is what should be

exploited instead of asking somebody to do something this person is not qualified for.” In the 1950s the term *capacity* was used in the business world as the individual and organisational ability and capacity of companies competing with each other on the open market (Selznick, 1957). In educational change, capacity is a term that has been linked to a wide range of different concepts during the last two decades (Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). The reform community uses the term as the ability to do something. To focus more on results of school reforms, Corcoran and Goertz (1995) describe capacity as “[T]he optimal amount of production that can be obtained from a given set of resources and organizational arrangements.” (p. 1). Here the product is interpreted as “[H]igh-quality instruction, which is central to the ability of the system to help all students reach high standards.” (Ibid.) Furthermore, Corcoran and Goertz argue that a schools’ capacity is a function of the intellectual ability, knowledge and skills of teachers and other staff, the quality and quantity of resources, and the instructional culture. Hopkins and Jackson (2003) describe capacity as having its core in the professional learning community, grounded in foundation conditions and connected to external opportunities. King and Newmann (2001) introduced *school capacity* as principals’ and teachers’ knowledge, skills and dispositions, professional communities, programme coherence and technical resources. Results from the Improving the Quality in Education for All-project (IQEA) in England, state that the following *internal conditions* need to be in place to make school improvement people and practice focused, recurrent, effective and sustainable: involvement and development of staff, transformational leadership, co-ordination, enquiry and reflection, and collaborative planning. These internal conditions provide the development capacity of the school (Hopkins, 2001). Stoll (1999) approaches schools’ internal capacity from a more holistic perspective and defines it as “[T]he power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and the school itself for the purpose of enhancing student learning.” (p. 506) By this Stoll means that a school with internal capacities in place is more adaptive to change. Stoll further argues that individual teachers within the school, the school’s social and structural learning context, and the external context influence a school’s internal capacity. In Sweden, in his study of schools’ work culture, Blossing (2000) points out his findings of a close relationship between the work culture of a school and the schools’ ability in self-renewal.

There is a significant body of research that relates to capacity building in schools. According to Johnston and Caldwell (2001) there are four dimensions that single out highly successful and world-class schools; an inclusive collaborative structure, integrated and inclusive professional development, a

learning-focused leadership, and effective communication¹⁸ channels. An interesting aspect of capacity building that could be deduced from this literature is that “Bullet pointed lists of strategies which may help to achieve success can never fully represent how leaders achieve and sustain success.” (Day, 2007, p. 47) O’Day et al. (1995) describe capacity building in schools as the ability among the individual teachers, within the school or the school district organisation, to accomplish standard based or systemic reform to help all pupils meet more challenging standards. They describe the teacher capacity as multi-dimensional including teachers’ knowledge, skills, dispositions and views of self. Teachers’ capacity interacts with the organisational capacity through formal and informal networks, the culture of the school and teachers’ communities of practice. The dimensions of organisational capacity are described as vision and leadership, collective commitment and cultural norms, knowledge or access to knowledge, organisational structures, management and resources. The organisational capacity improves, if it is influenced by outside ideas and the involvement of parents in the capacity building, and the most important resource, according to O’Day et al. seems to be time. Harris and Lambert (2003) describe capacity building as “[P]roviding opportunities for people to work in a new way.” (p. 4) This could happen by building strong relationships, mutual trust, and a professional community of learners. Mitchell and Sackney (2001) focus on building capacity for the learning community including personal, interpersonal, and organisational dimensions. Gurr et al. (2003) describe capacity building as being a personal, a professional, an organisational, and a community capacity. Still, teachers’ collaborative work and collegial relations seem to be at the core of building the capacity for improvement (Harris & Muijs, 2005). “Within improving schools, a climate of collaboration exists and there is a collective commitment to work together.” (p. 54), and also the will to build the capacity to learn together about teaching and learning, to become a learning community (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). “Professional learning communities are dynamic creations of the people who work in them.” (Bredeson, 2003, p. 50), but to create learning communities in schools is a complex process (Harris & Muijs, 2005). It is not a linear process. On the contrary it seems to be a multi-layered, context-bound, and time-consuming process (Day, 2007). What is missing is often the support from the internal capacities of a school, “[T]he internal features of the school, the ‘arrangements’ that enable it to get work done.” (Hopkins, 2001, p. 161), and to handle and manage the improvement process in practice. It is necessary for capacities among policy makers, principals, teachers, pupils and parents in schools to undertake tasks they have never accomplished before. Bottom-up and

¹⁸ For studies of principals’ communication as a contribution to school improvement see, for example, Årlestig (2008).

top down at the same time (Fullan, 2001). However, policy seems to be more about what is re-invented at each level, than about implementation. What has to happen is that it must be possible for new ideas and thoughts to be adapted into the local context. To be innovative, principals and teachers have to think outside the box. However, to make the innovation work in practice and to become institutionalised, principals and teachers as a collective, have to manage to get it functioning and back in the box again (P. V. Bredeson, personal communication, 18 June, 2007). Leadership, structure and culture have to support the desired change together. If this is not the case, the projects will end when the money is gone (Hargreaves, 1998).

Schools' *internal capacities* for improvement are understood as the abilities of the principal and the teachers as a collective, within a certain school context, in order to be prepared for and to be able to handle the improvement process, in order to fulfil the national and local objectives for their school. The internal capacities are both possible to build, and possible to learn to master. *Internal capacity building* for school improvement is understood as the social process during which the principal and the teachers in a specific school context, as a collective, build and learn to master the internal capacities necessary, in order to be prepared for and to be able to handle the improvement process, in order to fulfil the national and local objectives for their school.

To sum up the discussion of 'the pitch' for the main study, school improvement, a quote from the Norwegian professor Per Dalin grasps the essence and importance of schools' internal capacity building for school improvement:

A pre-requisite for school improvement to happen is to understand what characterises the individual school as an organisation, which values and norms regulate the day-to-day work, what is typical for teachers, leadership and pupils, which social patterns dominate, what structural conditions control the daily work, and the relationship between the school and the local community (Dalin, 1994, p. 270, my translation).

In the last part of this chapter we will take a closer look at what the research literature tells us about the three critical internal capacities for school improvement, evolved from the pre-study in chapter two: collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership.

Collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement

There is robust research backing up the observation that teachers become more supportive of school improvement if they feel secure in their work in school and feel support from their colleagues (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998; Rosenholtz, 1989). In order to build collaboration forms, a mutual foundation of trust between the principal and the teachers, and among the teachers seems to be necessary (e.g. Bredeson, 1989; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Louis, 2007). This is often described as a collegial and open atmosphere for discussion which can help people see the advantages and disadvantages of the planned improvement.

If we want to understand what the teacher does and why, we must therefore also understand the teaching community, the work-culture of which that teacher is a part (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 217).

In his study of nine schools Staessens (1993) found three types of cultures in schools: the familiar culture which is individualistic, the not living together culture which is balkanised, and the professional culture which is collaborative in nature. Hargreaves (1998) in turn describes four different school cultures: individualism, collaboration, contrived collaboration and balkanisation. Especially in secondary school different cultures can exist at the same time, but according to Hargreaves and Staessens, the collaborative or the professional culture seems to be the most effective for the improvement process.

Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox and Farrell (1999) have found that nearly all schools improve by adjusting their tactics to a specific situation, but schools could improve more rapidly if they also changed their strategies. Some schools, which are quite rare, according to Gray et al., also deal with “The unlocking of teachers’ intents of changing their performance.” (p.151) Those schools are on their way to becoming learning organisations or professional learning communities (e.g. Harris, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Such schools “[L]earn in a way that transcends the aggregated learning of individual members; that is, organisational learning takes place among the individuals as a collective.” (Marks & Louis, 1999, p. 711) However, some researchers argue that there has been a move during the last decade, to think about learning communities when dealing with schools, rather than learning organisations. The reason for this is that the concept of learning organisations is more focused on developing the organisation itself, while the learning community is aimed at developing human beings (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Educational researchers (e.g. Harris & Muijs, 2005; Scherp & Scherp, 2007) argue that the new problem of change we are facing during the first part of the 21st century, is to

discover what it will take to turn the existing, traditional, education systems, into professional learning communities. In schools as professional learning communities, principals and teachers working together create, expect and accept a collaborative structure and a culture of trust within the school and between the school and the world outside the school-house in order to provide mutual learning. Professional learning communities working together enable continuing staff development related to their shared practice, and have developed the 'internal capacities' needed to manage the collaboration by means of an extended view of leadership (Bredeson, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001).

In Sweden the contradiction, and at the same time the challenge, is that a growing number of secondary schools have already started to move in the direction of becoming learning communities, while others still have difficulties stimulating their pupils (Blossing, 2004).

However, it is necessary to point out that there are some critical voices regarding collaborative work in schools (Hargreaves, 1998). Where will teachers find the time necessary for collaborative work? Does everyone mean the same by collaboration? Little (1990) found in her studies that teachers believed there was no problem with collaboration together with colleagues as long as it took place outside the classroom. Collaboration together with others in the teaching situation was much more frustrating. Hargreaves (1998) discusses the micro-political perspective of schools, which questions what happens to the individual's integrity and autonomy in a constantly collaborative structure and culture. Hargreaves argues for the importance of respect for individualism, but not individuality, and an awareness of the fact that a collaborative structure and culture is difficult to enhance in large secondary schools. According to Hargreaves such a perspective could help us to sort out, what he labels, a contrived collegiality from a collaborative structure and culture.

Regarding schools' external collaboration forms, it goes without saying that teachers always have tried to communicate a picture of the world outside the school-house to their pupils through traditional educational recourses like, lectures, text-books, novels, films, TV, pupils work experience programmes, etc. By doing so they tried to connect the teaching in the school-house to the world outside, and vice versa. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we are well aware that distances both in time and space have been shortened. Pupils, at least in the western part of the world, take daily global access to the Internet for granted. These new opportunities for pupils to learn, and new demands on principals and teachers to open up their schools to the outside world, will probably also create new challenges for schools' collaboration forms. In the research literature (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Harris, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Senge, 1990; K. S. Snyder, Acker-Hocevar & K. Snyder, 2000) there is a strong accord for a collaborative structure and a culture between the school and

the world outside the school-house as supportive and challenging internal capacity for school improvement.

Staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement

There is a consensus among researchers (e.g. Blossing, 2000; Bredeson, 2003; Harris, 2002; Hopkins, 2001; Scherp & Scherp, 2007) that principals have to invest in people to make school improvement happen. Staff development of teachers and principals is important for the quality of schools, as well as for the improvement of schools. The focus is here on principals' views of the staff development of teachers, which is also known as in-service training, as a critical internal capacity for school improvement.

Staff development still suffers from a long tradition of being excluded from the main menu of schooling and being treated as something not connected to the day-to-day work in school. On the contrary, by tradition staff development has been treated more like time off work. In other words, there has traditionally been little connection between the 'workshop' and the 'workplace' (Joyce, 1990) in staff development. To serve as an internal capacity for school improvement, staff development in the 21st century:

[R]efers to learning opportunities that engage educators' creative and reflective capacities in ways that strengthen their practice (Bredeson, 2003, p. 34).

In Sweden, experiences from the Second World War necessitated the creation of a united ideology, with the main purpose of fostering democratic humane citizens (Lundgren, 1981). Schools took on an important role in support of this common ideology. During the 20th century school improvement in Sweden was closely related to the national school reforms (Carlgrén & Hörnqvist, 1999). One can also claim that the improvement of schools in Sweden had already started with in-service training for teachers at the beginning of the 20th century. At that time individual teachers or teacher's associations had to arrange their in-service training themselves by actually 'walking to the source of knowledge' to listen to a lecture for example by Fridtjuf Berg, about what he had learned from John Dewey's work in the USA (Ekholm, 1985).

In table 4:1 below, building on a model developed by The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 1992, p. 10), I have developed a simplified summary to show the shift of foci of staff development in Sweden. The table summarises how the focus in staff development has shifted in the Swedish compulsory school **from** the beginning of the 20th century, **to** the early 1990s,

and **now** at the beginning of the 21st century. The content of the summary is based on research by Ekholm (1985), Linnell (1994), and Blossing (2000), as well as my own experiences of staff development for teachers when responsible for the in-service training of teachers and principals in a Swedish municipality, and as a director of a university department for the staff development of teachers and principals in the geographical central area of Sweden for 25 years.

Table 4:1 A simplified summary of the shift of foci in staff development (SD) in Sweden **from** the beginning of the 20th century **to** the early 1990s and **now** at the beginning of the 21st century

Areas	Descriptions
Responsibility for SD:	From the individual teacher and teachers' associations to the state and now to the school district political board in each municipality
Aims for SD:	From developing the individual teacher, to local school development and now to improving leadership, teaching and learning to raise pupils' results, related to both social and academic objectives in the national curriculum
Direction of SD:	From a subject/method perspective, to a general and special education perspective and now didactics, teaching, learning, and reflecting to develop learning communities, quality and accountability for student results, alongside extended digital support
The target group for SD:	From individuals, to teaching teams and now towards the whole school as a learning community to handle and manage effective and sustainable school improvement
Time available for SD:	From voluntary during holidays, to compulsory during term and now compulsory partly outside term
The provider of SD:	From teacher associations, to universities and now to a more market-oriented system, with a lot of different providers, including the state, the school district and the individual school itself

As described in table 4:1 above, staff development in Swedish schools is the responsibility of the school district political board. The aims for staff development should be related to the academic objectives as well as the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum. Staff development should focus on enhancing quality and accountability for the whole school as a learning community in order to be able to handle and manage effective and sustainable school improvement. Staff development is often partly provided outside term from a variety of different sources.

To also change the paradigm of staff development in practice requires re-thinking, re-structuring, and re-culturing. In table 4:2 below, Bredeson (2003, p. 67)¹⁹ has captured this paradigm shift from traditional staff development to a new architecture for staff development, relevant for this thesis.

Table 4:2 A comparison between traditional staff development and a new architecture for staff development

Traditional Staff Development	New Architecture for Staff Development
From	To
Add-on, frill, educational step-child	Staff development as essential work
Individualised learning	Collaborative learning and growth
Activity centred	Linked to practice and student learning
Before, after and outside work	Embedded in daily work
Emphasis on outside ideas and expertise	Internal capacity for improvement
Focus on individual learning and change	Focus on collective expertise and practice

As described in table 4:2 above, it is necessary to treat staff development as collective, essential work linked to the day-to-day work in school to enhance pupils' learning. In other words, staff development should be used as an internal capacity for school improvement.

¹⁹ Bredeson uses the term professional development.

As a part of their work with staff development, principals have to construct different opportunities for teachers to meet, interact and reflect. There is a need for 'arenas' where formal and informal discussions about instruction can take place in a collegial atmosphere (e.g. Allen & Glickman, 1998; Blossing, 2000; Bredeson, 2003; Scherp & Scherp, 2007). Blossing (2000) further argues that principals should create a structure for staff development where teachers cooperate on practical pedagogical questions in such a way that the existing culture and traditional assumptions are challenged with regard to local and national objectives. Teachers are supposed to learn together, and plan their teaching together with both colleagues and pupils, and principals need to use the outcome of that planning to support staff development.

It becomes the principals' task in the leadership practice, to create support and stability over time in order to develop their teachers, and to treat staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement in line with the new architecture in table 4:2 above. If not, staff development will probably continue to be relegated to the back-yard of schooling.

Leadership as an internal capacity for school improvement

To lead change, the leader must understand change. To understand change, the leader must understand how to change. To understand how to change, the leader must personally experience the change process to identify with the personal struggle faced by members of his/her organization (Calabrese, 2002, p. 326).

From research on leadership and school improvement we learn that without a managed *and* shared leadership practice, improvement efforts have very little chance of success (e.g. Johansson, 2000; Mullford, 2007). Hallinger and Heck (1998) in their review of empirical research in school effectiveness, 1980 – 1995, put forward four areas where leadership can influence school improvement: establishing and communicating the purposes and goals of the school, influencing through the interplay between the organisation of the schools and its social network, influencing the people in school, and in relation to the organisational culture. To make use of a trusting and open atmosphere to enhance school improvement, principals, just as well as teachers, need to be willing to take risks and not be afraid of making mistakes to fulfil the planned ideas. To make that happen it is necessary for the principal to create mutual understanding about the use and development of common resources like time and acquired knowledge and skills among the teachers (e.g. Bredeson, 1989; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Principals also need to be aware of, recognise and

accept resistance from teachers at the beginning of the improvement process (e.g. Bredeson, 1989; Harris & Lambert, 2003). “Understanding the nature of change means to understand the individual member’s belief system.” (Calabrese, 2002, p. 332) However, to change the basic assumptions of individuals in an organisation is very difficult and time consuming (Schein, 1985, 2004). Barth (2001) argues that if principals really want to improve schools from within, it is necessary to create a community of leaders, where everyone involved feels, and acts, with collective responsibility for what has been decided. In their model for managing productive schools, Snyder and Anderson (1986) put forward the systems thinking perspective of leadership as a strategic capacity to create a good work culture in their schools, and Senge’s (1990) work on learning organisations also produced new imperatives for leadership in schools.

In Swedish schools the principal is both the pedagogical leader as well as the manager of the teachers (Johansson, 2000). In the present National Curriculum for the compulsory school, Lpo 94 (SKOLFS:17, 2003) a heavy burden of responsibility for managing the improvement work in schools is placed on the principal in the individual school. Teachers are supposed to collaborate in different teaching teams, and work in a pupil-centred way to involve pupils in the planning of their own learning. Instruction should be characterised by an inter-disciplinary way of working and should encourage pupils to develop their abilities in enquiry, problem solving and reflection. Principals are also responsible for enhancing student democracy and learning, authentic and good working environments, good parent-school connections, a vertical integration from K-9, ‘a constructive alignment’ with inter-disciplinary studies, co-operation with the community, and teachers’ staff development. As a consequence of the devolution of authority, Swedish principals are not only expected to fulfil the national objectives, but also to meet local objectives articulated at the district level. The different expectations and demands of different stakeholders (Ivarson Jansson, 2001; Lindberg & Wikander, 1990) place a heavy burden of responsibility for improvement on the shoulders of the principal.

In school improvement literature about school leadership (e.g. Ekholm, et al., 2000; Fullan, 2005; Harris, 2002; Johansson, 2000; Leithwood, 2006; Mullford, 2007) there is an emphasis on the importance both of the principal, and the leadership in the improvement process, but also on understanding both the structural and the cultural context in which schools operate. It is necessary to be aware of culture and structure from the leadership perspective (Fullan, 2001; Höög, et al., 2005). According to Leithwood (2006) the goal for school leadership is to create the pre-requisites for school improvement; an improvement that is both people and practice focused and recurrent to become effective and sustainable. Leadership seems to have a great, but mostly indirect,

effect on the inner life of schools and the results of pupils. The principal, and the leadership in a school are regarded as key-factors in the improvement process of the individual school, by pointing out the direction of the school, developing people and the organisation, and leading the instructional work in the school (Leithwood & Day, 2007). Leadership as a critical internal capacity for school improvement can be characterised by a “[B]road-based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership” (Harris & Lambert, 2003, p. 13), by all the adults in school. In one way or another, principals and teachers need to find ways to share or distribute the leadership (e.g. Harris, 2005; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). Johansson (2000) and Mullford (2007) has shown that in order to have a good impact on school improvement, leadership needs to be both positioned, with the principal as manager, and distributed, with the principal as leader. It needs to be built on participation among teachers at all levels in the organisation. The principal as a leader should care for the teachers as well as inspiring them to improve their practice in school, in order to develop the internal capacities to handle improvement processes in the day-to-day work and in connection with the world outside the school-house (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998; Harris & Lambert, 2003). Scherp (1998) shows in his study of principals in Swedish upper secondary schools, that those who had the greatest impact in their schools towards a more student-centred work culture, practised leadership that was clear, energetic, demanding and challenged teachers’ views of learning. It is the principal’s task to arrange the school leadership into a ‘sense-making function’ (SOU 2004:116), to make it possible for teachers, pupils and parents to understand the school as a sense-making arena (Scherp & Scherp, 2007), to enable successive development of the internal capacities for improvement in practice. Through dialogue the principal can care for and stimulate teachers to take part in a democratic school leadership. It is leadership based on authenticity and ethics, built on a productive dialogue between principals, teachers, pupils, parents, the school district level and the local community (Johansson & Zachrisson, 2008). Spillane (2006) offers a partly extended understanding of leadership in schools, especially the distributed leadership. Spillane argues that leadership is not only about the actions of a charismatic principal. It is first of all about leadership practice “[A]s a product of the joint interactions of school *leaders*, *followers*, and aspects of their *situation* such as tools and routines.” (p. 3, italics in original)

The big challenge for school leadership in Sweden at the beginning of the 21st century is that the leadership practice takes place in schools where the principal, according to Person, Andersson, and Nilsson Lindström (2004), is under constant cross-pressure between the demands of the school district, and national objectives. However, it is important to underline that in Sweden this cross-pressure may be constant, but its character has changed over time. Through the implementation of steering through goals and results during the

1990s, the principal was caught in the cross-pressure between the wording of directives from the school district political board, and the national curricula. International development, especially in the USA and Great Britain, towards a stronger accountability for principals in relation to the school objectives, has also come to pass in the Swedish secondary school. Principals and teachers in Swedish secondary schools have to relate to a working situation with growing accountability for their schools. At the beginning of the 21st century, principals seem to live in an ideological cross-pressure between a pedagogical result orientation, investigated through inspections and national and international tests, and a pedagogical process orientation, alongside shrinking finances at the level of the municipality.

To prepare schools for improvement it is important that the leadership in school is both managed and shared, with the principal and the teachers in the teaching teams, acting together, in order to handle both internal and external expectations and the school's internal capacities for school improvement in relation to local and national objectives. Such a holistic view of leadership for school improvement probably increases the possibilities for the leadership practice to contribute as an internal capacity in the improvement process.

Summary

The quantity of research literature in the field of school improvement is huge. What complicates the situation for a new researcher in the field is that the terminology is unclear in part as key words such as change, development and improvement are sometimes used interchangeably. From the historical review by Fullan (1991, 1993, 2001) and the work by Hopkins (2001) we have learned that school effectiveness and school improvement have started to merge into what is now labelled *effective school improvement*. There is a strong accord for the importance of internal capacities to enhance school improvement in the literature. At the core of school improvement, inspired by Hopkins et al. (1994) and Harris (2002), on the one hand is the idea that school improvement, in order to meet the expectations of schools' accountability from the decision makers at the state and school district level, is supposed to enhance pupils' outcomes in line with local and national objectives. On the other hand it is also supposed to develop a readiness and internal capacities for change. Based on this understanding of school improvement the further focus in the literature review was to investigate collaboration forms, staff development and leadership as critical internal capacities for school improvement.

In order to build collaboration forms, it is necessary to have a mutual foundation of trust between the principal and the teachers in a school. The research on school culture has found that a collaborative or professional culture is the most effective for the improvement process. Different cultures can exist at

the same time, especially in secondary schools. According to the research literature, the collaboration forms to strive for in order to prepare schools for improvement are to develop learning communities in school where external collaboration, continuing staff development and an extended view of leadership are also natural components.

To make school improvement happen, principals have to support teachers' development. It is therefore necessary to change the tradition of staff development and connect the 'workshop' and the 'workplace' (Joyce, 1990). In the Swedish National Curriculum the intention of staff development has moved from being an individual responsibility based on the teachers' own interest, to becoming a lever for the improvement work for the whole school.

In the literature on the improvement process, there is an emphasis on both the principal and the leadership, and the need for both a structural and cultural awareness in leadership practice. The leadership for school improvement is both positioned with the principal as manager and distributed with the principal as leader (Johansson, 2000; Mullford, 2007) and a leadership practice "[A]s a product of the joint interactions of school *leaders, followers*, and aspects of their *situation* such as tools and routines." (Spillane, 2006, p. 3, italics in original)

5. METHOD

In the first part of this chapter views, as the unit for analysis, are presented in more detail. That presentation is followed by a description of the method used for data collection and data analysis. The last part of the chapter elaborates the development and use of a model for a language of qualitative descriptions with the purpose of making it possible to describe views and practices with the same usage (Bernstein, 2000).

Perspectives on views as the unit for analysis

In all good research, no matter whether it is quantitative or qualitative, interpretation is always emphasised to a greater or lesser extent, but is always present. In factor analyses for example, it is not the charging of the factors itself that is interesting. It is the conceptions that the researcher assigns to the charging that are important. In empirical, qualitative research, such as in this study, it is therefore important for the researcher to carry out good, and plentiful, interpretation of his or her empirical material (Olofsson, 1993).

The concept of views is used to create an understanding of how the principals view the three aspects of internal capacities for school improvement investigated here. It is used as a vehicle to interpret understand, analyse and communicate the structure and culture of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. The definition of views, as mentioned in the introduction, is the definition developed and used in the LONG-project described above.

Notions²⁰ refer to structuring and integrating principles of an overlapping kind, which determine how the surrounding world is interpreted and evaluated. Notions determine how reality appears at the same time as the notions are determined by this reality. The notions of the individual are assumed to function as a filter or a matrix through which the world is viewed. They also govern the readiness for action of the individual. Notions could be described as 'perceptual gestalts', which constitute the ideological link between society and the conceptions of the individual. The concept of notions could be related to 'values' and 'attitudes' in the dimensions 'abstract-concrete', 'general-specific' and 'permanent-momentary'. Thus, notions are more abstract, general and permanent than values and even more

²⁰ In the LONG-project 'notion' was used as having the same meaning as 'views'.

so than attitudes (Franke-Wikberg & Zetterström, 1984, p. 240, quotation marks in original).

The views of the principals from five more successful and four less successful Swedish secondary schools, of three internal capacities for school improvement: collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, interpreted from the perspectives of structure and culture, are at the core of this thesis. However, it is necessary to point out that the translation of a concept from one language to another is always risky. Here the Swedish 'föreställning', the German 'vorstellung', is translated into 'views'. In the original definition, referred to above, the term 'notion' was used. However, while working with the concept, 'views' has emerged as a more complete translation capturing the deeper understanding and implications of the Swedish term. Consequently views are not to be understood as some kind of 'hidden' structure inside a person. It is the view itself that is the gestalt. The point of working with views is to visualise the interpretation, in order to describe the views that are constructed in the meeting between the researcher and the text. Studying views is about looking beyond the single expressions and trying to understand the whole picture of a certain phenomenon being investigated, in order to create expressions that are meaningful. It is about constructing different view types, which the interview text mediates. The focus in this study is to construct these view types to make it possible to understand, analyse and compare how principals in schools with different levels of success, view collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement.

Zetterström (1988) describes three dimensions of views: subjective views, collective views and ideological views. *Subjective views* expose the way a person thinks. In this dimension 'my view' is the only existing view. *Collective views* could be described as the way a person speaks. In discussions with others it is natural that different views exist and are therefore also expressed by the principal. In the *ideological views* the principal also prefers, and argues for, a specific view. In the analysis of these principals' views, the focus has been on finding the principals' ideological views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. Views have the potential for action and interaction, influenced by existing practice and tradition and views can therefore be modified (Hult, 1990; Zetterström, 1988). In order to treat views as ideological representations it is important to "[M]ove from trying to understand views from the perspective of 'reality' to trying to understand 'reality' from the perspective of views, which are the only tools available for us." (Zetterström, 1988, p. 69, underlined and quotation marks in original) Principals' views of internal capacities reflect their way of thinking about these capacities. Consequently the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for

school improvement, could be expected to be an important indication of how principals could be expected to act and interact with teachers in their specific school context.

At the same period of time and alongside the work of the LONG-project, another Swedish research group, *Inom-gruppen* at the University of Gothenburg lead by professor Ference Marton, developed their work on phenomenography²¹. In phenomenography the focus is on capturing people's conceptions (uppfattningar) about certain phenomena from an empirical perspective, which is very similar to the way the work with views is described above. However, according to Olofsson (1993) there is an important difference between the two when it comes to strategies for analysis and interpretation of the material. According to Olofsson, the purpose of phenomenographical studies is to discover similarities and differences between conceptions. Olofsson (1993) writes that:

[T]he conception itself is discovered in and by discovering the differences between the conceptions. We mean that qualitative differences between views are not discovered. Views are constructed from the structural model and the empirical material. By doing so the criteria for the interpretation becomes visible for others at the same time as it is made clear that it is the researcher that adds on interpretation to the interview material (p. 163, my translation).

Olofsson uses the term 'model' to underline the scientific status assigned to the structural model as a tool for analysis. The model for analysis of the principals' views, which is described in more detail below, is constructed for the purpose of analysing how the principals view social phenomenon for example the division of labour or the distribution of work in schools (Bernstein, 2000).

Lately, views as a concept for studies in education have returned in Swedish theses (e.g. Rannström, 1995; Rosenqvist, 2000). The work by Rosenqvist focuses on pre-school students' images (views) of teaching in pre-school and Rannström elaborates on teacher training students' conceptions of knowledge in their coming occupation. Recent research by Scherp and Scherp (2007) deals with principals', teachers' and pupils' views on school development and learning. In their study, views are grounded in research on social representations and the results are discussed from the perspective of organisations as loosely coupled systems, sense-making and learning in organisations, based on the work of Karl Weick²². Scherp and Scherp (2007) further describe views as something that every individual creates between herself and the surrounding world.

²¹ See for example Marton, (1994).

²² See for example Orton and Weick (1990).

Therefore views will influence how a person acts in different situations. Views are developed in interaction with others, have both cognitive and emotional dimensions, and can be understood as “[D]escriptions of patterns and regularities that you seem to have discovered through your senses.” (p. 71, my translation) According to Scherp and Scherp, to study views is therefore about discovering, as well as labelling, these patterns and to understand why they look the way they do. The results in their study are related to learning and schools as learning organisations, and are displayed in terms of causal-loops and mental causal maps. An interesting outcome of their study is that creating opportunities for teachers and pupils to develop together with others, and making it possible for teachers, pupils and parents to understand school as a sense-making arena seems to be at the core of principals’ views of leadership and school improvement. What seems to differ in the way Scherp and Scherp analyse their results compared to how its done here, is that they postulate their categories of views, which hides the construction of the categories from the reader.

Here, the use and understanding of views follows the work by Hult (1990), Olofsson (1993) and Zetterström (1988), and describes the construction of the view types from the interpreted texts, and treats the constructed view types as an important part of the result, not a starting point for it.²³ In practice it means that the process of analysis starts with the original interview text and the theoretical concepts of structure and culture in a model for analysis, which creates the principles for the analysis of the text. By using these principles it is possible to construct and give meaning to the view types. Finally the principles for analysis, together with the constructed view types are brought back into text. However, the text or a single observation, can never expose a whole view type. The view types are wider and more particular than the text.

To summarise, the model for analysis is the principles for views as the unit of analysis and the constructed view types are the gestalts. This process will be further described in the last part of this chapter when the model for the analysis of principals’ views and the use of the model in two schools in the SCL-project is described.

Successful schools

Is there a difference between a school being effective or being successful? In most countries across the world schools have the overall task of fulfilling politically decided objectives. Teachers in most schools in the western world are

²³ Miles and Huberman (1994) and Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994) argue for the importance, for validity and reliability reasons, of qualitative research describing clearly for the reader the different analytical steps in the research. However, their conclusion is that that is a rare scenario.

expected to teach academic knowledge, civic conscience and social competence to their pupils, to fulfil government objectives (Ahlström & Höög, 2008). How well these objectives are fulfilled would then be the bar to justify a school's level of effectiveness or success, but how we read and interpret the level of the bar seems to be a question of the perspective from which we observe the bar. In effective schools, as described briefly in chapter four, the discussion of accountability is focused on fulfilling academic objectives, while the concept of successful schools has been used about schools that achieve both academic objectives and social/civic objectives (Ibid.). In the present Swedish National Curriculum, Lpo 94, (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) the academic objectives and the social/civic objectives should be treated as equally important. Therefore a successful school in the Swedish school context, as well as here, is a school where pupils accomplish both the academic and the social/civic objectives as described in the present National Curriculum.

In the Swedish school system there are multiple tools to help principals measure the level of accomplishment related to the academic objectives, for example subject grades, the number of pupils leaving the 9th form with satisfactory grades in all subjects, qualification for the upper-secondary school, the average level of merit points,²⁴ and national and international tests. Instruments to measure the social/civic objectives are rarer, something which also applies to the Swedish school system. However, in the SCL-project an instrument, Social and Civic Objectives in Schools (SCOS),²⁵ has been developed to measure how well schools accomplish the social/civic objectives in the present Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003). The development of the SCOS-instrument is based on the so-called BRUK-material²⁶ developed by the Swedish National Agency for Education. SCOS is the first Swedish instrument which focuses on the social/civic task of schools in a broader sense and where pupils are the ones being assessed. In the SCL-project 2.128 pupils, aged 15, in 24 secondary schools completed the instrument. That gives a response rate of 79.37%.

In order to rank the schools according to academic outcome, as well as social/civic outcome, the SCL-project has chosen a relative comparison between the 24 schools in the project. In order to compare the schools to measure school success, the Z-values²⁷ of the schools' mean merit-values in 2004-2006, to cover

²⁴ Merit points are the sum of all values of the 16 best grades at the end of school year 9 (Good=10 points, Very Good=15 p, Excellent=20p). The average merit value is calculated for pupils who have a graded value in at least one subject. The total sum of merit points is then divided by the number of pupils who have a graded value in at least one subject.

²⁵ For a detailed description of the development of SCOS see Ahlström and Höög (2008).

²⁶ BRUK stands for *assessment, reflection, development and quality*. It is a Swedish national quality indicator system. <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080821.

²⁷ $Z=(X-M)/S$, where Z is the normalized value, X is the value for each school, M is the mean and

the academic objectives, and the SCOS-scale to cover the social/civic objectives for each school, were combined to create a standard to measure school success. In figure 5:1 below, inspired by Ahlström and Höög (2008), the ranking of the schools is exposed, and four different types of schools can be identified with regard to their accomplishment of academic and social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum.

		Successful in reaching academic objectives	
		More (<i>A</i>)	Less (<i>a</i>)
Successful in reaching social/civic objectives	More (<i>S</i>)	<i>AS</i> 5 schools I	<i>aS</i> 8 schools II
	Less (<i>s</i>)	<i>As</i> 7 schools III	<i>as</i> 4 schools IV

Figure 5:1 Ranking of the 24 schools in the SCL-project in relation to their level of success in reaching academic and social/civic objectives.

In figure 5:1 above the five *AS*-schools in square I are more successful with regard to reaching both academic and social/civic objectives. The seven *As*-schools in square III are successful with regard to reaching academic objectives only. In an international context both the *AS*- and the *As*-schools would be regarded as successful academic schools. However, according to the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS:17, 2003) the social and civic objectives are equally important, and therefore only the *AS*-schools can be seen as more successful in the Swedish context, the *As*-schools being only partially successful. The eight *aS*-schools in square II are successful only when it comes to reaching social/civic objectives, but not with regard to reaching the academic objectives. Finally the four *as*-schools in square IV are less successful schools with regard to academic objectives as well as at reaching the social/civic objectives. However, in an international context both the *aS*- and the *as*-schools would be regarded as less successful schools. In Sweden the *as*-schools are the only less successful

S is the standard deviation for the 24 schools.

schools, while the *aS*-schools are less successful only with regard to reaching academic objectives, and can therefore be seen as partially successful.

Figure 5:1 above, shows the grouping of schools and the number of schools in each group. Of course the criteria for the position of the borders between these four groups can be discussed. The five schools above the middle of the ranking for both the academic objectives scale and the social/civic objectives scale are placed in square I. The eight schools that are above the middle of the ranking when it comes to the scale for the social/civic objectives, but not according to the scale for the academic objectives are placed in square II. The seven schools that are above the middle of the ranking according to the scale for academic objectives, but not on the scale for the social/civic objectives, are placed in square III. Accordingly those four schools that are below the middle of the ranking on both scales end up in square IV.

As this is a study of principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as critical internal capacities for improvement in *Swedish* secondary schools, the decision was made to focus on the five *more successful schools* in square I, and the four *less successful schools* in square IV, in order to have the opportunity to connect principals' views to the schools' level of success according to the definition of success in the Swedish school context.

Data collection

The fundamental idea in the SCL-project is to compare secondary schools with different levels of success from different aspects. In order to accomplish the task of identifying different levels of success, 24 secondary schools (7th-9th forms)²⁸ from 12 different municipalities were judged to be a large enough number to guarantee both variation and statistical significance in the questionnaire analysis used by some of the researchers in the project, and also to adjust to the financial frame of the project. Independent schools were not included due to there still being too few in Sweden at this stage of the project, and to the fact that they often have both a special focus and administrative form. The 12 municipalities have been selected due to size, geographical position, and political majority, to make a qualitatively representative Swedish sample of secondary schools. In each municipality two schools were selected. One of the schools reported academic outcomes (grades) for year nine, in 2004, which were above the Swedish national average. The second school had an academic outcome below the Swedish average. The schools within the municipalities were comparable in terms of pupil demographic socio-economic background. Two exceptions were necessary because two of the originally selected schools could not take part in

²⁸ Some of the 24 schools indicated that they had an organisation of 6th-9th forms instead of 7th-9th forms.

the study. The schools that were selected as 'more academically successful' had academic grades in the 9th form between the 75th and 80th percentile of the grades of all Swedish public schools, while the schools below average, the 'less academically successful' schools were selected from the 25th to 45th percentile. This percentile range was necessary to meet the other specifications of the sampling, and to avoid extremes. The academic results refer to the students' grades at the end of year 9 in 2004.²⁹

The 24 schools were visited for a period of 2.5 days each, by three teams from the SCL-project, to collect the empirical material. Each team had a mix of professors and doctoral students and visited eight schools in four of the twelve municipalities. The empirical material in the entire SCL-project was collected through general school observations (App. 2), individual interviews with the principals and deputy principals, five teachers³⁰, and 5-10 pupils aged 15 in the 9th form, and questionnaires³¹ to the principals and deputy principals, teachers in the 9th form and pupils aged 15 in the 9th form, from each school. From each municipality the superintendent and the chairman of the school district political board were interviewed individually and responded to a questionnaire. The members of the school district political board also responded to a questionnaire.

Here the focus is on the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, in the five successful and the four less successful schools in the SCL-project. Therefore the empirical materials used were:

- Individual, semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005) with the principals and the deputy principals³² in the five more successful schools and the four less successful schools, as described in figure 5:1 above.
- General school observations in the nine schools, conducted during the school visits and following a specific observation manual (App. 2).

To make the limitations, due to different performances in the interview situation, as marginal as possible the interviews followed a manual to ensure

²⁹ <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20041201

³⁰ One teacher from each of the following subjects per school: social studies, mathematics and science, practical- and artistic subjects, remedial teaching, and language.

³¹ As the questionnaires are not used as empirical material here, I do not go into details on response rates for the questionnaires. For more details see (Höög & Johansson (Eds.), forthcoming, 2009).

³² There was a total of 10 principals and two deputy principals in the nine schools. In the presentation of the results in chapter six all twelve will be labelled as principals. However, in the quotations principals and deputy principals are identified as such when related to their schools.

that all the semi-structured interview questions were asked at each school. For the same reason the general school observations also followed a common and strict observation manual.

The ethical principles followed are the same as for the entire SCL-project, and follow the rules and guidelines decided by the Swedish Research Council at the time of the setting up of the project.³³ In short this meant that after the selection of schools the superintendents in the municipalities were contacted by letter and were asked to approve two of their schools taking part in the SCL-project. In the next phase the principals at each of the selected schools were contacted by mail and/or phone for a briefing about the project, to make it possible for them to decide whether they wanted to take part or not. After gaining the approval of the principals they were asked to arrange the two and a half day visit at their school, following a strict procedure decided by the project management. The content of this procedure was identical for all the schools, but the practical arrangements to accomplish the content could vary, depending on local conditions. All the respondents³⁴ were informed that the participation was voluntary. All the interviews with principals and deputy principals took place at their schools, and they all agreed to take part in the interviews. The individual interviews were about two hours long, and took place at the beginning of the school visit. A follow-up conversation was conducted with the principal³⁵ for half an hour on the final day of the visit. The interviews were taped and fully transcribed by people contracted by the SCL-project for this purpose. The original interviews were securely kept in one place at Umeå University.

During the interviews with the principals, a number of areas were covered to fulfil the needs of all the researchers in the SCL-project. In order to capture the principals' views on the specific research questions for this thesis the particular focus was on the following interview questions in the common manual to collectively contribute to finding the answers to the research questions presented above:

- How do you lead this school?
- What do you do as a the pedagogical leader of the school?

³³ http://www.codex.vr.se/codex_eng/codex/oversikter/etik/etik.html retrieved 20080821

³⁴ All the parents were informed separately concerning the participation of their children. Interviews and questionnaires were only completed with pupils aged 15.

³⁵ The follow up interview was conducted only with the principal at each school. At school D1 it was conducted with one of the two principals, here labelled principal 2.

- Please could you describe the collaborative structure and culture in your school?
- How do the teaching teams work?
- What is the role of the team leader?
- Please could you describe your school's connections with the world outside the school-house?
- Please could you describe the work with staff development in your school?

In order to make it possible for readers to follow a principal or a school in all the published material from the SCL-project, without being able to identify individual principals or schools, a common code-system was developed to label all 24 schools and the corresponding principals. Here the code for a more successful school is written with bolded letters (e.g. principal 11 school **L1**), while the code for a less successful school is not (e.g. principal 10 school K2). Two of the more successful schools (**E1** and **K1**) have both a principal and a deputy principal. One of the less successful schools (**D1**) has two principals. The other more successful schools (**F2**, **G1**, and **L1**) and the rest of the less successful schools (**A2**, **K2**, and **L2**) have only one principal.

Data analysis

Apart from elaborating on principals' views this thesis also elaborates on the similarities and/or differences in principals' views and the level of success of the schools. While preparing the empirical phase of the thesis, including school visits with general observations and interviews with the principals, it became obvious that in order to be able to interpret, analyse, and compare the observations from nine schools, as well as the interview texts from principals and deputy principals in nine different school contexts, some kind of common language needed to be developed, *a language of qualitative descriptions for internal capacities for school improvements*. The idea comes from the reading of Bernstein (2000). The argument for creating such a 'language' is that it can give the researcher principles for describing views and practice in the same usage. The particular construction of the model for analysis here has its origin in Zetterström (1988), Hult (1990), and Olofsson (1993), and was further developed by Björkman and Olofsson (2006a, 2006b). The combination of these literature sources gave opportunities of working with articulated principles for the interpretation of texts and observations, in relation to the two theoretical concepts of structure and culture, as described in the introduction. Using the theoretical concepts of structure and culture opened up opportunities to analyse the interpreted texts and to "[C]onstruct views to give meaning to the interview

texts.” (Zetterström, 1988, p. 6, my translation), and then compare and describe the views from the principals on the level of schools. The interview texts were interpreted and processed in a circular dialogue between the researcher and the text to make the interpretation as wide, open and clear as possible (Kvale, 1997).

To create a language of qualitative descriptions in this thesis, means creating views, generated from empirical texts, that deepen the understanding of the meaning of the structure and the culture of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. These can then be further interpreted using the theoretical concepts of structure and culture. Furthermore, the creation of a language of qualitative descriptions makes it possible to elaborate both the principals’ views and the school observations in the same usage. In this thesis the focus is on what principals understand as being valid for their schools. In other words, *what* is decided in relation to *how* principals try to maintain and/or change the school practice to realise the decisions. The question of *what is decided* helps to understand and describe the *structure* in a school, which in educational sociology is understood as the division of labour (Bernstein, 2000). The question of *how the decisions are realised* helps to describe and understand the *culture* in a school, the distribution of work. By using the concepts of Bernstein it is possible to unfold the power relations and the modes of control in a school.

This step led to the conclusion that the structure and the culture of a school can be described theoretically, through four different pathways or positions of understanding in a local school system: *the political position*, which refers to the school district political board, including the superintendent, *the principal position*, which refers to the principal and deputy principal at the individual school, *the teaching team position*, which refers to the teaching teams, and *the position of the individual teacher*. Thus, my reading of the individual interview texts first aimed at finding answers to *what*, in my interpretation, was the critical structural unit in the text and where was that critical structural unit positioned, in relation to the aspects of the three internal capacities for school improvement in each school. The question of *how* in my interpretation the critical structural unit was realised, and where this realisation was positioned was dealt with in the same way. In other words, where it is addressed. Different combinations of the positions of the structure and the culture of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, were then considered as qualitatively precise *view types* of the principals’ views on the three internal capacities for school improvement. The distinction made between what and how, gave the opportunity to analyse how the collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership in each school were decided, and how those decisions were realised as internal capacities for school improvement. This was done via the principals’ views, and provided the opportunity to connect directly to the central

theoretical concepts of structure and culture. No matter what aspects are investigated, this simple distinction can serve as a point of departure for describing, analysing, and assessing the level of a school's pre-conditions for improvement. The interpretation process ends up in a conceptual and empirically conscious opportunity to compare views and create specific questions for the individual school, and allows for comparisons between schools. A theoretical pre-understanding, combined with the texts creates this model. The model for analysis is built into the understanding of views, structure and culture, and is used as a methodological device.

The use of the model for analysis of principals' views, as presented in the next paragraph, was made in a comparative situation between the principals' views in two schools in the SCL-project, and draws on a paper presented at the NFPF/NERA-conference in Örebro, Sweden, 2006 (Björkman & Olofsson, 2006a), and a paper presented at the conference on qualitative research methods for doctoral students, in Vaasa, Finland, 2006 (Björkman & Olofsson, 2006b).³⁶

A model for analysis of principals' views and school observations

The criteria for the selection of the two schools for using the model for analysis were twofold. On the one hand, the selection was made with the intention of finding schools as different as possible, regarding the number of pupils, the geographical position and the size of the municipality. On the other hand, the two schools were both selected to be similar regarding political majority and academic success. The two schools are both situated in municipalities with a Social Democratic political majority and they both took part in the SCL-project as schools above the average national level, according to pupils' final academic results in the 9th form in 2004.³⁷ The interviews and observations in these two schools were conducted from September to December 2005. The results are presented on the level of schools, based on school observations and individual, semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005) with the principals in the two schools. Quotations from the respondents are used to present the results in a more authentic way (Kvale, 1997).

³⁶ These two papers were elaborated on in an article (Björkman & Olofsson, forthcoming) that has been accepted for publication in the journal *International Studies of Educational Administration*. In the article the model is presented in an extended way.

³⁷ This use of the model was conducted before the SCOS-scale was fully developed and therefore the selection of the two schools was done only in relation to pupils' academic results in the 9th form. The reason why A2, one of the nine schools in the main study, is also one of the schools in this study, is because the ranking of the schools in the SCL-project was not completed at the time of this study.

The general observations of the schools were completed during the visits to the schools, using the observation manual. The manual was constructed to focus on the school's structure, culture and leadership. The completed forms were re-written by me, in line with the theoretical concepts of structure and culture, to enable them to be used as a second empirical source to describe the nine schools. By doing so, it was possible to describe the structure and culture of these schools' collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, from two different sources of information: principals' views and the general school observations. The two empirical sources were not independent from each other, but they were different.³⁸

The results of this study are presented at the individual school level. First the general school observations are presented. The observations are presented in three parts, with a summary at the end. The first part is a general introduction to the specific context of the school. The second part describes *what* the observations tell us about the structure of the school. The third part, the culture, describes what the observations tell us about *how* the structure is realised. The structure and the culture could be described with different characteristics in the two schools, but the descriptions are there to give the reader relevant information in order to visualise the structure and the culture as interpreted from the observations. Secondly the principals' views of collaboration forms and staff development are presented and displayed. Finally the results for each school are discussed, and conclusions from this study of using the model, for the use of the model in the analysis in the main study are drawn.

General school observations – School A2

Introduction

A2 is a K-9 school. The 6th-9th forms, with 190 pupils and approximately 20³⁹ teachers, are separated from the lower forms, in a one-storey building. The school is situated in a village in a small, thinly populated municipality. The village has one dominant industry, but many people also commute to work daily. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 8%, which is below the national average.⁴⁰ The parents' educational level is 2.03, which is below the

³⁸ This increases the opportunity of judging validity. See Patton (1999) for an elaborated discussion on triangulation and Kvale (1989) on content analysis.

³⁹ Data about the number of pupils and teachers in the schools are from school year 2004/2005, throughout the thesis, and retrieved from the National Agency of schooling, data base SIRIS. <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080715.

⁴⁰ The Swedish national average (2005) for pupils with a foreign background, born in Sweden and abroad was 12%. <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080715.

national average.⁴¹ Most pupils live in one-family houses. The small size of the village makes it possible for the principal, the teachers, the pupils and the parents to meet frequently in different settings, outside school. School A2 is in good condition. It has its own gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, and the public library is integrated into the school building. In the dining hall breakfast is served to make sure that all the pupils get a healthy start to the day, and the lunch is cooked in the school's own kitchen. In the entrance hall the classes all have their own information board. All classrooms have a number of computers, and there is also a special computer room with 10 computers. In the hall there are another two computers for pupils' use. Pupils have their own 'common room', furnished and decorated by the pupils. The indoor environment gives a fresh, warm and friendly impression. There are also good opportunities for outdoor activities close to the school. Teachers have their own information board in the staff room, where they also have their individual pigeon-holes.

The school structure

In this municipality there is a superintendent and a school district political board, which also manages areas other than education within the municipality. The administration of A2: one principal, two development leaders⁴² and a secretary, is located together in the '6-9 building.' The principal's office has a desk, a bookcase, and a small table with chairs for meetings. The leadership team in A2 consists of the principal and the two development leaders. The principal is newly appointed, and used to be a teacher in the school. The principal seems to have a collegial relationship with staff and a friendly, but when necessary a strict relationship with the pupils. The principal is highly visible in the school, and most pupils seem to know the principal on a first name basis. The principal is closely involved in the social life of the community, and is involved in leisure activities for children in the village. The principal states that A2 has a good mix of staff, based on gender, age and experience, and speaks very enthusiastically about the school. Leadership largely seems to be practiced by walking around and talking to people. Teachers are organised into two large, inter-disciplinary teaching teams, but grouped together in their offices subject-wise. Teachers share offices, but have access to their own

⁴¹ Education value 1: six or nine year compulsory school. Education value 2: Maximum three year upper-secondary school. Education level 3: A fourth year at a technical upper-secondary school or a minimum of 20 credits at a university. Parents mean value according to educational level has been calculated per pupil, and then per school and municipality. The Swedish national average (2005) for parents' educational level was 2.15. <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080715.

⁴² Some Swedish schools have development leaders. They are teachers, sometimes with a small reduction in teaching hours, since they support the principal in development issues like staff development.

computers. The whole school can be described as separated in the K-9 perspective, as K-5th and 6th-9th forms work in separate buildings and in practice only meet in the dining room and in the library.

The school culture

All members of staff meet informally during the day in the staff room. There is a collegial climate between the teachers, and between the teachers and the principal. Even though teachers show great concern for their pupils and colleagues, their willingness to collaborate outside their own teaching subjects seems to be limited. They seem to prefer collaboration within the different subjects, and also collaborate in collective activities for pupils outside the classroom. Teachers and pupils seem to enjoy being together. When they meet in the hall they call one another by their first names, but there is also an atmosphere of discipline and order in the school, and adults never forget that they are teachers during the school day. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere among the pupils, and they seem to be acknowledged by the adults in the school in a positive way. Pupils seem to like their school, their teachers and their principal.

Summary

The physical opportunities for collaboration seem to be good in school A2. However, the general impressions from the observations indicate that in practice the day-to-day work seems to be carried out by the teachers as individuals. A2 is a school where the structure seems to be decided by the principal, sometimes together with the development leaders in the leadership team. This is done in a culture where the work to realise the decisions in practise is distributed to the individual teachers in their subject traditions, even though the school is organised in inter-disciplinary teaching teams. Even though teachers show great concern for their pupils and colleagues, their willingness to collaborate outside their own teaching subjects seems to be limited. Teachers seem to prefer collaboration within the different subjects, and in collective activities for pupils outside the classroom.

The principal's views of collaboration forms and staff development – School A2

From the principal's views we learn that it is the principal, sometimes together with the development leaders in the leadership team, who makes the decisions about the internal collaborative work in school, such as the organisation of the teaching teams. Even if the principal has decided to organise the collaborative work in two inter-disciplinary teaching teams, in the principal's view the intention is to give as much freedom as possible to the individual teachers to carry out the day-to-day work. The individual teachers in the teaching teams

are relatively autonomous, and the principal has confidence in their knowledge of the pupils and their attitudes to teaching. The principal prescribes an informal structure for conversations with teachers. According to the principal's views it results in much better collaboration than formal structures for conversations.

In the quotations below (w) (what=structure) and (h) (how=culture), indicate how the interviews have been interpreted, according to principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms and staff development.

We are well aware of that we do not really work together. [I] try to fix everything (w) so that their work goes smoothly. My staff should feel that they are free to decide about their work and feel that they have an impact on it as well. It is a freedom (h) with responsibility. [I] trust my staff (principal school A2).

This view type is labelled *principal distributed teacher-based collaboration forms*. In this view type the decisions about collaboration forms are located to the position of the principal and those decisions are realised by the individual teachers. Where the structure is located indicates the power relations in the school, and where the culture is located indicates the modes of control in the school (Bernstein, 2000). In school A2 the principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms probably undermines a deeper form of collaboration (Hargreaves, 1998; Marks & Louis, 1999; Staessen, 1993) and supports individualistic teacher behaviour in the school in general, and in the two teaching teams. Therefore existing views on collaboration forms do not contribute to making the collaboration forms serve as an internal capacity for school improvement in school A2 (Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003).

In the principal's views of staff development the principal and the development leaders have developed individual plans for all the teachers, and the principal understands the realisation of staff development as an individual business for teachers. In practice, each teacher makes a list of staff development requirements, finds suitable providers of staff development, and then asks for money from the principal to fund the developments.

Every teacher has a plan for staff development. The development leaders and I developed it (w), but I do not think it is so well done. [T]eachers can choose (h) what staff development they want to have. [W]e have to improve our work with staff development (principal school A2).

In the principal's views the principal takes the decisions about staff development, and the teachers realise the agreed decisions individually. This

view type is labelled *principal distributed teacher-based staff development*. This view of staff development makes it difficult for the principal to use staff development as a collective tool for school improvement (Bredeson, 2003; Harris, 2002), as the principal has limited opportunities to connect staff development to the practice in school (Joyce, 1990). Therefore the power of staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement in A2 is reduced (Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). These results indicate that the existing views of staff development will make a weak contribution to school improvement in school A2.

In table 5:1 below, the model for analysis of principals' views of collaboration forms and staff development is displayed to give the reader an idea of how the analysis was made.⁴³ The combination of w (structure) and h (culture), interpreted from the interview texts, indicates the constructed view types.

Table 5:1 Model for description of analysis of the principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms and staff development in school A2

Position	Principal's views	
	<i>Collaboration forms</i>	<i>Staff development</i>
<i>Political</i>		
<i>Principal</i>	w ⁴⁴	w
<i>Teaching teams</i>		
<i>Teacher</i>	h ⁴⁵	h

Conclusions

Looking at the results from both the general school observations and the principal's views, the pre-conditions for using collaboration forms and staff development as internal capacities for school improvement in A2 are low, and accordingly this school can be understood as being not so well prepared for

⁴³ This model was also used for the analysis of principals' views in the main study as described in chapter six.

⁴⁴ w= what, the structure, indicates the position where the decisions about collaboration forms and staff development are taken.

⁴⁵ h= how, the culture, indicates at what position the realisation of the decisions take place.

improvement processes, as a collective, regarding the internal capacities collaboration forms and staff development.

General school observations – School D2

Introduction

D2 is a secondary school (7th-9th forms), with 462 pupils and 40 teachers. The school is situated in a long, two-storey building from the 1970s, with big open spaces. Many classrooms surrounding the open areas lack windows. The building is a bit run down, but not shabby. Flowers and pupil's artwork combined with minimal damage, give a positive impression indoors. On the other hand there is no attractive outdoor environment for pupils. There are few teaching materials in the classrooms. Instead teachers bring what they need for the lessons on small trolleys. The school has a functional gymnasium, a refurbished dining room, and a special café for pupils. The structure of the school building provides frequent interaction between pupils and between pupils and teachers, but we see few signs of conflict. School D2 is situated close to a shopping centre, and is surrounded by blocks of flats and streets with heavy traffic. Pupils live in the area, which is a suburb of a big city. The share of pupils with a foreign back-ground is 30%, which is above the national average. Parents' educational level is 2.04, which is below the national average. There is a growing rate of criminality among young people in this area of the big city. This school has a strong external network. Our impression is that D2 is an interesting school, due to the fact that it delivers good pupil results, has a good educational climate for both adults and pupils, even though it is situated in a challenging building, and in a very challenging area.

The school structure

The big city is divided into geographically based administrative units. In this particular unit, there is a superintendent and a political school board. D2 has two principals working full time. They have two separate rooms, close to the two secretaries, the controller, and the staff room. One of the principals' used to be a teacher in the school, and the other principal has a teaching background, but came to the school from the private sector. They have developed a leadership team, where the leaders of the inter-disciplinary teaching teams are included. From time to time many teachers take on some kind of leadership role. One principal is more focused on the internal pedagogical issues in the school, and the other is more focused on external relations. There is a staff-meeting every Monday morning. The principals produce a weekly Newsletter. Teachers' are divided into two types of teaching teams, inter-disciplinary and

subject-based. There are specific contact teachers,⁴⁶ related to a specific group of pupils. The different groupings of teachers meet regularly once a week. Teachers are placed together, subject-wise in their offices, and have access to individual computers.

The school culture

All members of staff meet frequently for informal discussions in the staff room during the day. Both principals and teachers act with responsibility and clarity in their relations with pupils and teachers on a daily basis. On the one hand this school conveys signals of inclusion, in the way teachers interact with pupils as adults during the school day, in the collegiality among teachers, and in individual teacher-principal relations. On the other hand D2 also conveys signals of exclusion, through all the doors that are locked for the pupils. A snapshot of collegiality was expressed in the staff room when one teacher rushed in and asked for help with a group of students in one of the halls. Immediately all the teachers in the room rose as one, and went with their colleague to the hall. Teachers are proud of their school, and state that this is an attractive school for both teachers and pupils. Through creative financial management of the budget, the school has allocated quite a large sum of money for staff development. Together, the leadership and the teaching teams decide about 13 of the 16 days devoted to staff development per year⁴⁷. The individual teacher decides about three of the 'staff development days' during a school year.

Summary

From the observations of school D2 we have learned that this school is situated in a difficult area with rising criminality among young people. The internal and external environments are run-down. Despite this we could observe signs of a strong collegiality among staff, good relationships between staff and principals, and few incidents among pupils. Social strength and a clear leadership and organisation seem to have overcome the external difficulties. D2 has both interdisciplinary teaching teams and subject-based teaching teams. These two constellations of teams are the core of the work in the school. There is a strict system for meetings, constructed by the principals, for these different groupings of teachers throughout the week. The two principals have developed a mixed responsibility, principal A handles the external relations and principal B takes care of the internal relations. They form the leadership team together with the

⁴⁶ A contact teacher is a mentor for a group of pupils.

⁴⁷ For details about Swedish teachers' working hours and time for staff development, see ÖLA-00, the agreement between the Swedish association of local Authorities and the Swedish teachers' trade unions. http://brs.skl.se/brsbibl/cirk_documents/2001bil3080.pdf retrieved 20081015.

team leaders. It is a school where the principals seem to make the decisions in close co-operation with the team leaders in the leadership team. The realisation of the decisions is in practise distributed to the teaching teams.

The principals' views of collaboration forms and staff development – School D2

Both principals share the same views of collaboration forms and staff development. In the principals' views the every day collaborations follow a weekly schedule for meetings in different teaching team settings, initiated by the principals. The principals emphasise that they are working strategically on giving opportunities to the teaching teams for them to take on more responsibility for the work in school. Training the team leaders is one step in the strategic plan for improving the collaboration forms. The goal is to make the different teaching teams the core of the work in the school. In the principals' views they decide the structure of collaboration forms, and the teaching teams realise those decisions.

We have a collaborative culture, but we (w) have to pull some strings now to keep it going (principal B, school D2).

We (w) are working on giving the teaching teams more power (h) in the day-to-day work. The team leaders have been on a one-week training course. That is a part of the plan (w) (principal A, school D2).

It is extremely important that we interact with the world around, on the one hand to keep our school-house open for others, and on the other hand as a source of inspiration for our work. To open up the school to the world around is very important for me as a principal (w) (principal A, school D2).

This view type is labelled *principal distributed team-based collaboration forms*. In this view type the principals make the decisions about collaboration forms, and those decisions are realised by the teaching teams. The results indicate that the existing views of collaboration forms could contribute to making the collaboration forms function as an internal capacity for school improvement in school D2, but only as long as the teaching teams do not essentially challenge the principals' views (Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003).

In the principals' views most of the staff development takes place in, and is carried out by, the different teaching teams: only a minor part is based on teachers' individual interests. In the principals' views the principals make the decisions about staff development and the teaching teams realise these decisions.

Staff development is one of the strategic questions in a school. I have worked very hard to create financial resources for staff development. We have a common part, which we control as principals (w). Then there is another, more subject-oriented part, which we decide about together with the teaching teams (h), and finally there is a small individual part. Each teacher decides about these three individual days themselves, but they have to report back to us about what they do (w) (principal A, school D2).

We have had an agreement with the staff for many years that out of the 16 days per year for staff development, three days are individual and the rest are split between whole school needs and team needs (h), but we can say that we are responsible for it (w) (principal B, school D2).

This view type is labelled *principal distributed team-based staff development*. These views open up for the principals to use staff development as a collective tool for school improvement (Bredeson, 2003; Harris, 2002) and connect the staff development to the practice in school (Joyce, 1990). Therefore these views increase the power of staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement in school D2 (Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). In table 5:2 below the model for analysis of principals' views of collaboration forms and staff development in school D2 is displayed.

Table 5:2 Model for descriptions of analysis of principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms and staff development in school D2

Position	Principals' views	
	<i>Collaboration forms</i>	<i>Staff development</i>
<i>Political</i>		
<i>Principal</i>	w w	w w
<i>Teaching teams</i>	h h	h h
<i>Teacher</i>		

Conclusions

Looking at the results from both the general school observations and the principal's views, the pre-conditions for using collaboration forms and staff development as internal capacities for school improvement in D2 is high. Accordingly this school can be understood as well prepared for the

improvement process, as a collective, regarding the internal capacities collaboration forms and staff development.

Conclusions from the study and consequences for the main study

The conclusions drawn above from the results of the study highlight structural and cultural qualities as well as short comings, concerning staff development and collaboration forms as internal capacities for schools' collective improvement process. It is the pre-conditions, which have to be treated as challenges by the principals in both schools, and treated differently in each school, according to staff, pupils, and school context, in relation to local and national objectives. In this study two qualitative view types were constructed, based on how the principals viewed the structure and culture of collaboration forms and staff development as internal capacities for school improvement in their schools. In one of the view types the principal decides about collaboration forms and staff development, and the decisions are realised by the individual teachers, and in the other view type the principals make the decisions about collaboration forms and staff development, and the realisation of the decisions is taken care of by the teaching teams.

The consequence drawn from this study for the main study is that by using the model for analysis it is possible to analyse, describe and compare principals views and general school observations in the same usage. By so doing it was possible to unfold the power relations in these two schools, concerning collaboration forms and staff development as internal capacities for school improvement, as well as where and how the realisation of the power takes place. This provides new perspectives for understanding a school's internal capacities for school improvement. It also indicates possibilities for principals and teachers in schools to use this analysis model to better understand the status of their own school's pre-conditions for the improvement processes.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results and the analysis of the main study. Principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, as well as the qualitative differences and/or similarities within and between schools were investigated in the five more successful schools and the four less successful schools in the SCL-project. The results are presented at the level of schools. As described in chapter five the empirical materials used were individual, semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005) with the principals⁴⁸ and general school observations (App. 2) in each of the nine schools.

The first part of the chapter describes the constructed view types of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. From the interpreted texts and the model for analysis, qualitatively precise view types concerning each of the three internal capacities were constructed. These constructed view types are presented together with quotations⁴⁹ from the principals⁵⁰ to exemplify the interpretation of the interviews. The second part of this chapter describes the nine schools through the general school observations and the principals' views. In the final part of the chapter the results are analysed on the level of schools in relation to the literature review, in order to identify differences and similarities within and/or between the schools.

Constructed view types of principals' views

As described in chapter five, the constructed view types are an important part of the result as they make the criteria for the interpretation visible for the reader, and make it clear that it is the researcher who adds on an interpretation of the texts (Olofsson, 1993). The principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, are the principals' views of 'reality' concerning three critical internal capacities for school improvement in their schools. Using the model for analysis, as described in chapter five, the principals' views have been interpreted into the theoretical concepts of structure and culture. This made it possible to capture the decisions made (the structure) and how those decisions were realised (the culture) in the nine schools. Depending on how the

⁴⁸ Ten principals and two deputy principals.

⁴⁹ I translated the quotations.

⁵⁰ The principals are labeled 1-12.

structure and culture are positioned in the principals' views, they are connected to one or more of the qualitatively precise view types, presented in the first part of this chapter.

One example of this process of interpretation in the analysis, regarding internal collaboration forms, was when one principal described the re-arrangement of the timetable to create more time for the teaching teams to work and plan together. In the analysis this view was interpreted as a school where the principal decides about the internal collaboration forms (the structure), and where the decisions about the internal collaboration forms are realised by the teaching teams (the culture). This view type is labelled 'principal distributed team-based internal collaboration forms'.

A second example of the interpretation in the analysis process, concerning staff development, was when one principal described staff development as an individual business for the teachers, that needed to be approved by the principal. In the analysis this view of staff development was interpreted as a school where the principal makes the decisions about staff development (the structure). The decisions are then realised by individual teachers in their subject traditions (the culture). This view type is labelled 'principal distributed teacher-based staff development'.

A third example of analysis, this time regarding leadership, was a school where the principal described the teaching teams' need for certain pre-requisites, such as their own budget, in order to become more involved in the leadership practice. In the analysis this view of leadership was interpreted as a school where the principal decides about the leadership (the structure). The principal's decisions are then realised by the teaching teams (the culture), through an extended participation by the teams in the leadership practice. This view type was labelled 'involving leadership'. It is from this use of the model for analysis to interpret and understand the text, that the reader should understand the construction of the qualitatively precise view types displayed in table 6:1 below.

Table 6:1 Constructed view types based on principal's views of the structure (w) and culture (h) of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in all nine schools

Position	Principal's views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>					w		
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w	w	h	w	w
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h		h			h

In theory, as will be discussed in chapter seven, there are a number of possible combinations for positioning the structure and culture in the principals' views of the three internal capacities for improvement in schools. However, in practice, as displayed in table 6:1 above, two view types have been constructed according to collaboration forms: *principal distributed team-based collaboration forms (A)*, where the decisions (the structure) are located to the principal position. The realisation of the decisions (the culture) is located to the position of the teaching teams, and *principal distributed teacher-based collaboration forms (B)*, where the structure is located to the principal position, and the culture is located to the position of the individual teachers in their subject traditions.

Three staff development view types have been constructed: *principal distributed team-based staff development (A)*, where the structure is located to the principal position, and the culture is located to the position of the teaching teams, a *principal distributed teacher-based staff development (B)*, where the structure is located to the principal position, and the culture is located to the position of the individual teachers in their subject traditions. In the *political distributed principal-based staff development (C)*, the structure is located to the political and/or administrative position in the school district, and the culture is located to the position of the principal at the individual school.

Finally two view types have been constructed according to leadership: an *involving leadership (A)*, where the structure is located to the principal position, and the culture is located to the position of the teaching teams, and a *traditional leadership (B)*, where the structure is located to the principal position, and the culture is located to the position of the individual teachers in their subject traditions.

Constructed view types of principals' views of collaboration forms

Principal distributed team-based collaboration forms (A)

In this view type the principal makes the decisions (the structure) concerning the collaboration forms in the school. The structure is realised by the teaching teams (the culture). The structure is built on a common, communicated and accepted direction from the principal, that teachers are organised into inter-disciplinary teaching teams around a group of pupils. The teachers in the teams contribute their subject knowledge and teaching skills. The principal gives opportunities for the teaching teams to influence and to take on responsibility, and teachers in the teams take care of, elaborate and use their influence and responsibility as a collective. One of the teachers in each teaching team often has special responsibility for leading the work in the team and serves as a link between the teaching team and the principal. The responsibility and influence varies between these team leaders, depending of the level of distribution from the principal: a team leader who takes messages or information from and to their team, a team leader who is a part of the leadership team, and sometimes gets a financial bonus or a reduction of his or her teaching time, or the team leader as an official member of the leadership team representing the teaching team. In this view type there is trust between the principal and the teaching teams, between the teaching teams and between the teachers in the teams. There is a sense of freedom and willingness among the teachers in the teaching teams to openly discuss, take initiatives, and test new ideas. It is also acceptable to fail sometimes when making those efforts. Teachers learn and improve from observing each other and giving each other feed back. The formal meetings are effective and well structured. The school has developed internal arenas for the principal, the teaching teams, the pupils, and the parents to interact and learn together as well as external connections for collaboration outside the school-house in order to interact and learn from others.

In this view type principals emphasise that the structure has been developed to support collaboration. This view reflects the principle, described above, that the school is built on a common, communicated and accepted direction from the principal that teachers are organised in inter-disciplinary teaching teams around a group of pupils.

We have actually focused on collaboration within the teaching teams. We have re-organised a bit, actually from the idea of when teaching will take place. If you look at the time pupils should have per week, every day does not need to start at 8 am and finish at 2.30 pm. Now some of the working days for pupils are longer and we have one day a week that can be shorter. ... That day the teachers in the teams do not have any lessons in the afternoon. They

can use that time as their teaching team time. Then we have actually moved from one hour a week to 3-3.5 hours a week. We believe that we have opened up for collaboration within the teaching teams (principal 2 school D1).

In different ways the principals in this view type claim that it is difficult to run the school alone if you want to work in a collaborative way. Therefore the teaching teams are at the core of the collaborative work in their schools. This view reflects the principle described above, that the principal gives opportunities to the teaching teams to influence and to take on more responsibility and teachers in the teams take care of and use this distributed influence and responsibility as a collective.

I try to have the teaching teams and make them function as a group. To make them help each other in order to get their energy from these groups and to learn from each other in the groups. The teaching teams have no more than 10 people in each team and I try to make them work within these teaching teams. Give as much teaching and responsibility as possible to the teams (principal 6 school F2).

Principals' views in this view type indicate that teachers' inter-disciplinary work is more difficult in the 7th-9th forms than in the earlier school years, but in the principals' views the work in the teaching teams is becoming more and more inter-disciplinary. This view reflects the principle above that the work in teaching teams emanates from pupils' academic and social/civic objectives for learning and the teachers contribution is their subject knowledge and teaching skills.

Mm, on purpose (laugh) I do not know if it is so consciously done, but one idea is a holistic view, thematic work, as we say, where they should collaborate between the subjects...when it comes to K-5 it is no problem. They have it naturally from their time in school. They have always worked like that in some way, but when it comes to 6th-9th forms it has been harder to find the forms. [I] think they need a very straight working structure in order to make it function. We have done that, and we have now been working with this for five years to find that organisation, and they work differently (laugh). [B]ut I believe that we have found a model, or they have found a model, which they feel comfortable with, and where they can find collaboration forms between subjects. Then I believe that by constructing the school the way I did, with the teaching teams right in the middle of the work, close to the pupils, close to your own practice. They are placed close together and it is my belief that they will plan and work together, not only with questions related to pupils' welfare issues, but also pedagogical issues. That is what I want to believe anyhow (laugh) (principal 11 school L1).

In the principals' views they want the teaching teams to become more independent, and investigate all the possibilities for solving a problem, by using the resources within the teaching team, before turning to external help. This view reflects the principle as described above that there is trust among the principal and the teaching teams, between the teaching teams, and between teachers in the teams. There is a sense of freedom and a willingness to openly discuss, take initiatives, test new ideas, and it is acceptable to fail sometimes when making those efforts.

[F]or me the teaching team is a self-contained unit, so to speak, which should have great freedom and much of the resources in order to direct very much based on the possibility to try new things. ...and I believe that we have such a tolerant climate here, and that is their confidence in me (principal 7 school G1).

Principal distributed teacher-based collaboration forms (B)

In this view type the principal makes the decisions (the structure) about the collaboration forms in school. This structure is built on a common and communicated direction from the principal that teachers are organised in interdisciplinary teaching teams around a group of pupils, but teachers in the teams obstruct that structure. Therefore the structure is realised by the individual teachers in their subject traditions (the culture). In this view type principals describe that the main objective of the teaching teams becomes to take care of pupils' welfare issues, while teaching is taken care of by the individual teachers in their subjects. The principal tries to give opportunities for the teaching teams to influence and to take on more responsibility distributed to the teams, but teachers in the teams do not manage and use that influence and responsibility as a collective. Sometimes one of the teachers in each teaching team has special responsibility for leading the work in the team and serves as a link between the teaching team and the principal, but that role is not fully accepted by the other team members. In the principals' views there is a lack of trust between the principal and the teachers in the teaching teams, and between teachers in different subjects, or teachers with different teacher education. There is also a lack of willingness among the teachers to improve outside their own subject. Consequently, that nurtures few initiatives to test new ideas. The formal meetings are well structured. The school has developed internal arenas for the principal, the teachers, the pupils, and the parents to interact and learn together, as well as external connections for collaboration outside the school-house in order to interact and learn from others, but the actors are not willing to fully participate in those arenas.

In the principals' views the principal wants to create a teaching team-based organisation with teacher team leaders, but some teachers obstruct that idea.

The structure of the school is developed to support collaboration, but the structure is challenged by the tradition of understanding teaching as an individual profession. This view reflects the principle described above, that the principal tries to give opportunities to influence and to take on more responsibility distributed to the teaching teams, but teachers in the teams do not manage and use that influence and responsibility as a collective.

We have quite,... about half (of the teachers) have their roots in the 1969 National Curriculum, and partly in the 1980 National Curriculum, and they are still there, used to the fact that being a teacher is an individual profession with a lot of individual responsibility and influence. That is the reason why you collaborate as little as possible so to speak. When you really have to collaborate you probably do it with resistance (principal 3 school D1).

In principals' views they have problems with the teaching teams. They are doing well, as a collective when it comes to pupils' welfare issues, but the team members become individualistic when it comes to pedagogical issues. This view reflects the principle described above, that principals describe the teachers' understanding that the main objective of the teaching teams is to take care of pupils' welfare issues, while teaching is taken care of by the individual teachers in their subject.

Instead they do as they always have done as solitary teachers. They can join teaching teams and believe that they work in teams, but they have in no way secured more than the basis to make it possible to allocate marks (principal 7 school G1).

In principals' views in this view type the individual teacher becomes the core of the work in school. This view reflects the principle described above, that the teaching team structure is realised in an individualistic and subject based culture.

We are well aware that we do not really work together. [I] try to fix everything so that their work goes smoothly. My staff should feel that they are free to decide about their work and feel that they have an impact on it as well. It is a freedom with responsibility. [I] trust my staff (principal 1 school A2).

According to the principals' views the teaching team structure sometimes suffers from a lack of willingness and trust among staff to collaborate outside their teaching subject. This view reflects the principle described above, that the

principal says that there is a lack of trust and willingness among the teachers in the school, and few initiatives to test new ideas.

Unfortunately in a staff faculty in the 7th-9th forms, of about 35 teachers, I quite often see that many of the teachers do not contribute as much as I want them to do (deputy principal 9 school K1).

Somewhere I still believe that with a bit of patience, subtle speakers, study visits, discussions to get... Because they are wise people, not evil people systematically working against one another. I think they have been moving on year after year. I cannot describe what it is, but it is there (principal 10 school K2).

Constructed view types of principals' views of staff development

Principal distributed team-based staff development (A)

In this view type the principal makes the decisions (the structure) about staff development. This structure is realised by the teaching teams (the culture). The content in staff development emanates from the investigated staff development needs in each team and for the school as a whole. The teachers contribute their subject knowledge and teaching skills to the staff development. The principal gives opportunities to the teaching teams as a collective, to influence and to take on more responsibility for the staff development. The teams manage, elaborate, and use that influence and responsibility. Often financial resources have also been distributed to the teaching teams to make it possible for them to fulfil their needs in staff development, and to improve the work or the relationships in the teaching teams on their own. In this view type there is consensus between the principal and the teaching teams, between the teams and between the teachers in the teaching teams about the use of staff development as a tool in school improvement. There is a sense of freedom and willingness among the teachers in the teaching teams, to discuss openly, take initiatives, and test new ideas. It is also acceptable to fail when making those efforts. In this view type staff development is closely connected to the day-to-day work in school, and 'owned' by the people that are involved in the staff development.

In this view type principals describe how staff development becomes a lever for the principal and the teaching teams to improve the school together. This view reflects the principle described above, that the content of staff development emanates from the investigated staff development needs in each team and for the school as a whole, and the teachers contribution is their subject knowledge and teaching skills.

I have tried to work making staff development a source of support for what we want to reach. We decide that this is what we are going to work with this year. Then it should be possible to see in the staff development work that it actually is activities that have supported what we wanted to develop, and that we have used the resources, both time and money, for what we wanted to develop (principal 6 school F2).

Principal distributed teacher-based staff development (B)

In this view type the principal makes the decision (the structure) about staff development. This structure is realised by the individual teachers (the culture) in their different subject traditions, which means that the individual teacher in his or her subject takes care of their own staff development. The content in staff development emanates from the individual teacher's need for staff development, in his or her subject. Often the teachers have indicated their staff development needs to the principal on a yearly basis, and try to find courses, lectures or conferences by themselves, to fulfil their needs. In some cases the principal investigates all teachers' individual needs for staff development. When teachers find something interesting they apply for money from the principal to take part in that particular staff development. These individual staff development events are sometimes in line with the needs of the whole school, sometimes they are not. In this view type it is also common that the principal arranges staff development days, compulsory for all teachers in the school. When this happens, the issue is often related to a specific need the whole school has. In this view type staff development is mostly connected to the improvement of the individual teacher in his or her teaching subject or to improve existing competence in a new subject, due to lack of other competent staff.

In this view type principals describe how staff development becomes a tool for the individual teacher to use responsibly to improve in their own subject. This view reflects the principle described above, that the content of staff development emanates from the individual teacher's need for staff development in his or her subject. Often the teachers have indicated their staff development needs to the principal on a yearly basis and try to find courses, lectures or conferences by themselves to fulfil their needs.

Every teacher has a staff development plan, so to speak. It is on the computer and teachers can go in and change it themselves. I do not think they are so well implemented, these staff development plans. I can't say that they are done particularly consciously (principal 1 school A2).

Teachers have had the opportunities to request within their own subject (principal 10 school K2).

All teachers have an individual development component in their post, just as the children have...All teachers have X kronor per year to use for individual staff development (principal 4 school E1).

Politically distributed and principal-based staff development (C)

In this view type the political or administrative level in the school district makes the decisions (the structure) about staff development. This structure is realised by the principal in each school (the culture). This structure often emanates from a decision made by the school district level to implement a specific reform, such as the management of pupils' portfolios. The principal in each school often takes part in the planning of the implementation of the reform at hand, in a democratic way. The political/administrative district level distributes influence and responsibility to the principal in the schools to fulfil staff development, and the principals in the schools manage and use that influence and responsibility. In this view type the teachers in the teaching teams, who are the target for the implementation, have often not participated directly in the planning of the staff development. Therefore staff development in this view type is seldom connected to the day-to-day work in school, and is not 'owned' by the teachers that are involved in the staff development. In some cases it is not even connected to the staff development plan for the individual school.

In this view type principals describe how staff development is centralised and becomes a tool for the political/administrative level in the school district to use to improve the schools. This view reflects the principle described above, that the political/ administrative level distributes influence and responsibility to the principal in the schools to fulfil staff development, and the principals in the schools manage and use that influence and responsibility. In this view type the teachers in the teaching teams, who are the target for the implementation, often have not participated directly in the planning of the staff development.

It (staff development) is now actually a part of a long-term staff development plan at the school district level. This means that most of the teachers' staff development becomes centralised (principal 2 school D1).

Constructed view types of principals' views of leadership

Involving leadership (A)

Within this view type the principal makes the decisions (the structure) about the leadership. This structure is realised by the teaching teams (the culture). The formation of the leadership team differs in the principals' views and can either consist of a single principal, a principal and the deputies, or a leadership

team that involves the team leaders in some way. Based on a common and communicated vision for the school, the principal has developed the school leadership to give the teachers, the pupils and the parents optimal opportunities to participate in the decision-making and the leadership practice in the school. This is to facilitate the work in school in order to fulfil the national and local objectives. The process of a proposal becoming a decision, either works directly between the principal and the entire teaching team, or via the team leaders to the teams. The team leaders are either formal members of the leadership team, or form a consultation group for the principal. Formally, the principal makes the decisions in the school, but in this view type the principal *and* the teaching team, as a collective, form the core in the process of extending the leadership practice in school. Through the teaching teams the principal systematically develops an enlargement of the teams' participation in decision making and the entire leadership in school. In this view type the day-to-day work within and between the teaching teams is collaborative. The collaboration is created by mutual trust, both between the principal and the teaching teams, between teachers in the teams as individuals and as representatives for the school, and between teachers as representatives for different subject traditions. Teachers show a common responsibility and a willingness to try new things and to solve emerging problems. The principal is skilled at handling improvement processes and the leadership is characterised by a belief that everyone in a school can, and is willing to, contribute in the improvement process. In this view type teachers show an openness to having insight in, and giving and receiving feedback on, their work in school. Their pedagogical discussions are characterised by respect and care for one another, and a freedom among teachers to have different opinions. The internal organisation for meetings, and the formal communication and information is clear. The principal participates and challenges the teachers in the day-to-day pedagogical work in school, and uses staff development and collaboration forms as natural tools to stimulate the on-going improvement process, and to initiate new areas for improvement. The result of the work in the teaching teams is reported back to the principal via the teams directly, or through the team leaders.⁵¹

In the principals' views the principal has decided and framed the leadership in order to create pre-conditions for the teaching teams and to support them in different ways to extend their participation in decision-making in the leadership practice, and by creating overall stability in the school. This view reflects the principle described above, based on a common and communicated vision for the school that the principal has developed the leadership to give teachers,

⁵¹ In Sweden the principal should have yearly dialogues with each teacher about his/her progress, expectations, development needs, etc.

pupils and parents optimal opportunities to participate in decision-making, and in the leadership practice to fulfil the national and local objectives.

Yes, it is about creating pre-conditions for what we want to do, both financial pre-conditions and the use of time. It is about getting people to work together for what you want.... In some way satisfy the first steps of Maslow's pyramid so they (the teachers) do not have to care about such things, instead can work with those issues they are good at. It is about confidence and the basic needs (principal 6 school F2).

[T]hen we recruited X, and then we worked for the whole summer with structuring ... our entire lives (laughter). How we should work and we developed a number of policy documents. We wrote descriptions of working routines. It sounds boring, but it was very good. Different things like that. Decisions about the meeting structure. Changed a lot of things. How to delegate more to the teaching teams or to Y (principal 4 school E1).

In the principals' views the principal reinforces participation by being a visible role model in the day-to-day work to stimulate improvement. This view reflects the principle described above, that the principal participates and challenges the teachers in the day-to-day pedagogical work in school.

(Laugh) Someone said to me the other day: You run this school by the coffee breaks, (laughter) and that is probably because I try to be out there in the day-to-day work a lot, talk to people, observe and discuss where things are happening. That is probably a part of it, but on the other hand we have rather straight forward logistics in the organisation (principal 11 school L1).

The principals' views are that the principal understands that he or she consciously uses a combination of clear management and involving leadership, to extend collaboration and participation in the teaching teams for the work in school. This view reflects the principle described above, that formally the principal makes the decisions in the school, but in this view type the principal and the teaching team, as a collective, form the core in the process of extending the participation in decision-making and the entire leadership practice.

[I] try more and more to return questions to the staff. This means that if they come with a problem or thoughts, or questions ... I try to turn them back to them. Yes, you had this problem for a couple of days before you came to me, so to speak. What is your opinion about it? What solutions do you see? Just to return and create a possibility for the responsibility to be delivered downwards in the system (principal 8 school K1).

In the principals' views the principal uses collaboration forms and staff development as functioning leadership tools to make school improvement happen in the day-to-day work in school. This view reflects the principle described above, that the principal uses staff development and collaboration forms as natural tools to stimulate the on-going improvement process, and to initiate new areas for improvement.

[T]hen we discuss it (staff development) together in all the teaching teams. They discuss what they need and they have to motivate why, and then we go for it. I brought in an expert when there were a lot of discussions about how to organise, because there was a tendency to create a traditional 7th-9th forms school. [I] felt that it was much better for me to communicate directly to the whole teaching team so that everyone can hear the same thing at the same time, so that we could work together (principal 12 school L2).

In all principals' views they consider the teaching teams to be the hubs where leadership is realised in pedagogical practice. The extension of the leadership into the teaching teams is achieved in different ways. This view reflects the principle described above, that decisions about day-to-day work and improvement work in the school are made by the principal and realised by the teaching teams.

[T]he core in our work is the Consultation Team. It is a group that I have with representatives from every teaching team. I meet them every week to talk about what is happening in the different teaching teams ... [W]e have no elected team leaders, but our idea is that everyone, at some time, should have this consultation role. That it should be a rolling task in the teaching teams because the more different groups you are involved in the more you get to know the whole organisation. So this is a conscious strategy to prepare staff for many tasks (principal 11 school L1).

Traditional leadership (B)

In this view type the principal makes the decisions (the structure) about the leadership in the school. The individual teachers in the tradition of their subject then realise the decisions (the culture). The formation of the leadership team differs and can either consist of a single principal, a principal and the deputies, or the team leaders. In this view type the principal often makes the decisions from the position as the formal head of the school. The school is *organised* into inter-disciplinary teaching teams, but in this view type it is the individual teacher, in the tradition of their teaching subject, who forms the core of the work of the school. The principal feels an expectation from the teachers to be continuously present in school and to make the administrative and financial decisions, necessary for the day-to-day work in school. Meanwhile teachers take

care of the pedagogical issues framed by their subjects' traditions. Teachers are not interested in taking part in any leadership practice outside their own subjects. Different subjects also have different status and as an individual teacher your status in the school is related to which subject you teach or to your teacher education. To keep the school going, the principal gives the individual teacher a great deal of freedom to form their own teaching practice. The principal communicates with the teachers mostly through staff meetings or subject meetings. The principals feel that teachers believe that everything works well as it is. In this view type, discussions about improvement, not related to the teacher's subject, is seen as a threat to the teachers. Staff development is focused on teachers' individual development in their subject, and is not used as a leadership tool to improve the school. In this view type it is the individual teacher's visions, within the subject traditions that shape the work in school, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues in the subject or with pupils and parents. The individual teachers report on the results of the work in the subjects to the principal directly.

This view reflects the principle described above, that the principal often makes the decisions from the position as the formal head of the school.

When I arrived here for the first term (beginning of March 2005) and until the summer I changed the teaching team structure all by myself... I felt very much like a dictator then, but many teachers wanted that change. I knew that (principal 10 school K2).

In the principals' views former traditions make the leadership of today difficult and open up for the preservation of individualism and departmentalisation in school. This view reflects the principle described above, that the school is organised into teaching teams, but in practice it is the individual teacher in the tradition of the teaching subject who is at the core of the work of the school.

I try to lead them by creating opportunities for staff to participate. By tradition, at least in this school, the principal or the principals make the decisions, and then you can criticise afterwards. Then it becomes someone else's fault and someone else has taken the decision, which you can criticise (deputy principal 9 school K1).

I see two general obstacles. One is the timetable...the other is in the heads of the people and in the walls of the school. The school is not, I don't want to say hostile towards reform, but it is not easy to reform (principal 2 school D1).

In principals' views teachers' individualism is sometimes turned against the principal. This view reflects the principle, described above that discussions about improvement, not related to the teacher's own subject, are seen as a threat to the teachers.

Of course this group of teachers that have been here for a long time, they have a talent to lead informally. They themselves do not think they do this. They believe that we have an open climate and that everyone can speak freely. But they control in an invisible way (principal 10 school K2).

When I participate in meetings sometimes I feel that there is a lot of talk about that this being a leadership question, something for the principal. Even if I am sitting right there it goes like that and I can feel obvious signals sent in my direction. I just play the game and try to take my responsibility, and I try not to make a big deal about it. It is not as if I have been questioned openly, but it is something that you feel yourself (principal 1 school A2).

In the principals' views the principal has difficulties in using collaboration forms and staff development as tools to improve the work in school. This view reflects the principle described above, that staff development is focused on teachers' individual development in their subject, and is not used as a leadership tool to improve the school. It is the individual teacher's visions within the subject traditions, that shape the work in school, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues in the subject, pupils and parents.

I have a folder with all the priorities and requests from the staff, but the idea is also that I will buy staff development for them (principal 8 school K1).

The nine schools

In the second part of this chapter the results from the general school observations (App. 2) and principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, are presented at the level of schools. Each school is first described through the general school observations, to make it easier for the reader to gain an understanding of the individual school context, and in order to make the principal's views more transparent for the reader. The observation forms were interpreted and re-written in order to describe the school contexts by using the theoretical concepts of structure and culture. The structure and the culture are sometimes described with different characteristics in the nine schools, but the descriptions are there to give the reader relevant information to be able to visualise the observed structure and the culture. The results for each school were analysed with the analysis model described in chapter five, and related to one or

more of the constructed view types described above. The results of the principals' views of collaboration forms are presented as internal collaboration forms, which are collaboration forms within the school, as well as external collaboration forms, which are collaboration forms with the world outside the school-house.

The five more successful schools

School E1 - General school observations

Introduction

The E1 is a K-9 school. The 7th-9th forms have 300 pupils and 33 teachers. The school is situated outside the centre of a large municipality. This school has recently merged with another school from an area with quite a few immigrants and families with low socio-economic status. Therefore the pupils come from two different areas: one area with quite a few immigrants and people with low socio-economic status and one area with few immigrants and middle-class families. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 21%, which is above the national average.⁵² The educational level of parents is 2,25, which is also above the national average.⁵³ The school has survived the threat of closure and has now grown rapidly, too rapidly according to the principal. All the classes have long waiting lists of pupils and 30% of the pupils come from other parts of the municipality. The E1 consists of one building with a number of newly built extensions. This building is connected to the gymnasium. It is easy to find your way through the school. The reception is close to the administration and the staff room. The school was renovated some years ago in line with its pedagogical vision. Many of the classrooms have windows facing towards the halls. The pupils' café is run by the pupils, and is central. There is also a youth recreation centre in the school building. All working units have their own entrance where outdoor clothes and shoes are kept. All forms have their separate rooms and teachers' offices are connected to those areas. All rooms are very functional and linked to each other by the same pedagogical vision.

The school structure

The superintendent has the district-heads in the leadership team, and the district-heads have principals in their leadership teams. The superintendent also

⁵² The Swedish national average (2005) for pupils with a foreign background, born in Sweden and abroad was 12% <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080715.

⁵³ The Swedish national average (2005) for parents educational level was 2.15 <http://www.skolverket.se> retrieved 20080715.

has a strong position on the school district political board. The school plan⁵⁴ for the schools in the municipality is a 'living document'. In E1 one principal and one deputy principal are connected to the 7th-9th forms. Both of them are well dressed as a part of the leadership code. Their well developed pedagogical vision is to work in classes of 60 pupils with three teachers. The classes are split according to work content. The spirit of the school is built on a common platform for the pupils, one of security and belonging. The school has four profile areas: media, craft, sports, and music. The team leaders in the teaching teams are members of the leadership council, but do not have any responsibility as employers for the teams. Each form is a teaching team; even if they are separated they are not regarded as 'small schools in the big school'. The principal and the deputy are often present in the staff room and during lunches. They both have offices with a small meeting area, decorated with art and personal objects. The principal decided on the colours and furniture in the administrative part of the school and in the staff room.

The school culture

Much of the work in school is arranged across forms and teaching teams. Even after work teachers often meet in the teams. The special rooms for the teaching teams are their meeting places, together with a common staff room. The research team senses a collegial and trusting atmosphere in the teaching teams and teachers seem to feel free to have different opinions. The discussions in the staff room often concern professional issues, and the teachers were very interested in the SCL-project. Teachers tell that they enjoy going to work. They describe their school in positive terms and are willing to explain 'how things work around here'. Several teachers talk about the importance of the 'personal meetings' in school and pupils' work is exhibited in the school. The school building is in good shape and pupils do not wear shoes indoors. On special occasions with many people involved, the school hires guards to prevent theft and damage. Teachers are highly visible during breaks and in the dining room. Teachers and pupils meet and talk as equals, but teachers never forget that they are adults.

Summary

According to the general school observations E1 is an attractive school for pupils all over the municipality. The municipal school plan is used as a living document in the school and there seems to be a strong collegiality in E1. The renovation of the school was based on a pedagogical vision of teaching teams. The two principals form a leadership council together with the team leaders and

⁵⁴ Every school district political board has to decide on a school plan for the municipality.

teachers often discuss professional issues in the staff room. Teachers are visible together with the pupils during the breaks. The overall impression is that E1 is a school that is well organised and well equipped for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities for school improvement that are investigated here, seem to be made by the principals after hearing the leadership council's ideas. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

Principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principals' views the internal organisation is decided with the intention of enhancing collaboration. The principals' pedagogical vision is classes of 60 pupils with three teachers. Each class is one form. In each building there are two classes from different forms. Each building forms one teaching team and has one team leader. The team leaders form the leadership council together with the principals. The teaching teams meet officially twice a month with the team leader as chair. Once a month there is also an official meeting subject-wise. In the principals' views the collaborative work in the school functions well, but it is necessary for the principals to work constantly in order to sustain and improve the collaborative spirit of the teaching teams. Inter-disciplinary work in the teaching teams has a positive impact on teachers' salaries.

In the principals' views E1 strives to improve collaboration with the world outside the school-house. The school collaborates with the local public sector and other institutions in the municipality. E1 also has a number of connections with other European schools, financed by the European Union (EU). These projects are decided on by the principal and realised by interested, individual teachers.

In the principals' views a small part of the staff development is 'owned' by the individual teachers. However, the main part is discussed in the leadership council and is used as a lever in the improvement work for the whole school. The school district political board sometimes decides on special areas for staff development for all schools in the municipality, to be realised by the principal in the local school.

The principals complement each other in their leadership practise and they have different areas of responsibility. In the principals' views they show a close and very clear leadership to make sure that all the teachers know how the principals want the school to be. They are visible in the day-to-day work and support their teachers as much as possible in order to fulfil local and national objectives. The two principals developed the organisation and the routines for the day-to-day work in school together. The leadership council meets once a week and the team leaders have no responsibility as employers for their teams. They function as a link between the leadership and the teaching teams and are responsible for the work in the teams. The principals are now working on

encouraging the team leaders to take on more responsibility in the teams, and at the same time the principals are looking for ways to raise the status of the teaching team leaders. Both the individual teachers and the teaching teams have goals for their pedagogical work on a yearly basis and the principal evaluates these goals every year. The leadership in the school is regularly evaluated by the school district political board and by the staff.

In table 6:2 below the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:2 Principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school E1

Position	Principals' ⁵⁵ views						
	Cf		Sd ⁵⁶			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Principal</i>	w ⁵⁷	w	w	w	h	w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h ⁵⁸		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h		h			

The analysis of the principals' views in school E1, as displayed in table 6:2 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are mostly 'principal distributed and team-based' (A). It means that in E1 the principals take the decisions about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, and the principals' decisions are mainly realised by collaborating teaching teams. However, with regard to the external collaboration forms and staff development the principals' views also

⁵⁵ When there are two school leaders in the school and their views belong to the same view type, only one 'w' and one 'h' are displayed for each internal capacity.

⁵⁶ The 'principal distributed team-based' (A) staff development dominates in E1, according to the principals' views.

⁵⁷ w= what, the structure, indicates the position where the decisions about the internal capacities is taken.

⁵⁸ h= how, the culture, indicates the position where the realisation of the decisions about the internal capacities takes place.

describe the 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B) view type, where the individual teachers realise the structure. Regarding staff development, the principals' views also described the 'politically distributed and principal-based' (C) view type appearing over a number of years.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of E1 is that of a more successful school. The analysis of the results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe E1 as a collaborating and involving secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis indicates that E1 has a structure and a culture that provide pre-conditions for using internal collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice; accordingly E1 is understood to be well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities for school improvement. E1 has external collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that E1 has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide the pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly E1 is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

School F2 - General school observations

Introduction

The F2 is a 7-9 school with 326 pupils and 25 teachers. The school is situated outside the centre of a medium-sized municipality. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 2%, which is below the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.17, which is just above the national average. The school consists of one main building, which is in part two-storey. In the main building there is an entrance hall, school administration, staff room, library, teachers' offices and classrooms. There is a gymnasium in a separate building, and also separate buildings for craft and technology, home economics, and another separate building for the dining room. There is also a youth recreation centre in the main building. These brick buildings are old and in parts rather shabby. Close to the school there is forest area with an illuminated ski/running track. In the school yard there is a flag-pole, a football pitch and a pitch for other

outdoor activities. The school has survived the threat of a closure. There are no computers in the classrooms, but there is a special computer room with 16 computers. Pupils only have access to the rooms when with a member of staff. This school also has a special study area for pupils with special needs. The staff room is nice but rather small. In the entrance hall there is a pupils' café that also serves breakfast, and nearby there is a room where pupils can watch TV. Each day two pupils are responsible for the pupils' café and for cleaning the tables in the dining room.

The school structure

The municipality is organised into different school districts. The school district political board is responsible for schooling in the municipality and decides on the budget for the schools. The budget is then discussed among the principals in each school district. The superintendent is the executive for schooling in all the school districts. Each school district also has an administrative head. F2 has one principal, and the school has three teaching teams. Each team consists of about 100 pupils from 7th, 8th, and 9th form, and 10-12 teachers; there is one team leader in each teaching team. The leadership team consists of the principal and the team leaders and they meet on a regular basis. The team leaders participate in a leadership-training programme arranged by a University. Each teaching team has an office for themselves where all the teachers have their own desk, and they share two computers between them. One of the teaching teams makes a new schedule each week for their pupils. The teaching teams meet on Wednesday afternoons. The principal is responsible for a staff meeting every Monday morning. The principal's office is situated close to the staff room and the classrooms, there is room for small meetings and there is another meeting room next door. The door to the principal's office is seldom locked. There is an information board in the staff room, but e-mail is also used to distribute information in the school. The principal seems to have a close relationship with both pupils and staff, and was very positive about the visit by the research team and.

The school culture

The teachers are proud of their school. There is a relaxed, warm and open atmosphere between the teachers in the teams and between teachers from different teaching teams. Teachers were also positive about the visit, and the research team heard a lot of laughter in the school, both among staff and pupils. During the coffee-break at the morning meeting on the first day of the visit, many teachers were interested in the research project and asked questions. There is a relaxed atmosphere between teachers and pupils. During breaks special 'after-school-activities teachers' mix with the pupils, as do quite a few teachers. There seems to be close cooperation between teachers. During the visit

one member of the research team witnessed an incident when one teacher was taken ill during the lunch break. Immediately one of her colleagues offered to substitute for her during the afternoon. There is free coffee for teachers during the working day. Teachers often have a cup of coffee together in the staff room quite early in the morning.

Summary

According to the general school observations the social atmosphere is positive and relaxed in F2, even though the premises are old. The principal seems to have a close relationship with both staff and pupils, and teachers are proud of their school. The work in school is built on teaching teams. The principal forms a leadership team together with the team leaders. They participate in a leadership-training program. The overall impression is that F2 is well organised, but physically not so well equipped for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities investigated here seem to be made by the principal, after hearing the leadership teams' opinions. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

The principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

The principal decides and frames the collaboration forms in the school and the decisions are realised by the teaching teams. In the principal's views the teaching teams are used as the vehicle to accomplish the work in school. Each teaching team includes 10 teachers. In the principal's views it is important to train the teaching teams to make them function well as a group, in order for the teams to be willing to take on as much responsibility as possible as a collective. There is also a specific teaching team, the health-team, to take care of pupils' welfare. Every teaching team is represented once a month in the health team in order to discuss special issues regarding pupils in their own teams. The teaching teams have been trained to acknowledge all the individuals in the teams as a specific resource for the team as a whole. In the principal's views all the teaching teams show a clear willingness to collaborate, some more than others. The collaborative work in the teaching teams is self-evaluated, but there is a tendency to favour quantity rather than quality; the work with pupils welfare still functions better than inter-disciplinary pedagogical work. F2 has little collaboration with other schools. The focus of the work with the world outside the school-house is on developing better relations with the public sector, to improve the work experience programme for pupils. No international collaboration was mentioned.

In the principal's views the purpose of staff development is to use it in the improvement work in school to prepare teachers to better accomplish what they want to do. The content of the staff development is developed by being self-

critical in the teaching teams and by discussing what they need to improve in their work. The staff development work is not satisfactorily evaluated to date.

In the principal's views an important task for the principal is to create opportunities for the work of the teachers in the teaching teams, in terms of time and financial resources. This is to make it possible for a teacher to accomplish what they want, and at the same time to be a role model themselves and show that it is possible. The principal uses the metaphor of being the conductor of an orchestra where the teachers are the instruments and the role of the principal is to direct the instruments in such a way that great music is performed. In the principal's views it is necessary to be a manager and a leader at the same time, and to create opportunities for teachers to meet, discuss and learn in and across teams, in order to take care of internal social competence. This is a planned improvement strategy with a human face. One problem in accomplishing the use of such internal competence is that in the principal's views, teachers' self respect comes from what they do, not from who they are as people. The principal is an operative leader and accomplishes that task by creating structures, routines and order in F2. The team leader from each teaching team is a part of the principal's leadership team that meets every fortnight. There is a compulsory staff meeting every Monday morning, focused on information for the week to come. The leadership in the school is evaluated yearly.

In table 6:3 below the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:3 Principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school F2

Position	Principal's views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w			w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h					

The analysis of the principal's views in school F2, as displayed in table 6:3 above, shows that the internal capacities are all but one 'principal distributed and team-based' (A), where the decisions are made by the principal and realised by collaborating teaching teams. The exception is the external collaboration forms, which in the principal's views is 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B). Here the principal's decisions are realised by individual teachers. It is also worth mentioning that the principal had very little to say about external collaboration forms as such.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of F2 is that of a more successful school. The results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe F2 as a collaborating and involving secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates that F2 has a structure and a culture that provide pre-conditions for using internal collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly F2 is understood to be well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities. F2 has external collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that F2 has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide the pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly F2 is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

School G1 - General school observations

Introduction

G1 is a 7-9 school with 460 pupils and 36 teachers. The school is situated in a calm area with houses from the 1960s, outside the centre of a medium-sized municipality. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 14%, which is above the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.11, which is just below the national average. The school consists of one long three-storey building and three lower buildings. These buildings surround a school-yard with trees, benches and equipment for basketball. Nearby there is also a large grass football pitch. Outside, the school seems calm and in good order and there is no litter on the ground. It is easy to find your way as a guest in the

school, which you enter through a long hall. There is also an entrance passing through the staff room, which consequently is locked, something that the teachers do not like. In the middle of the hall there is the pupils' café with tables and chairs, a billiard table and a TV. The staff room and the school administration are situated opposite this café, which is central to the building. The classrooms are traditional, and the school is sparsely decorated.

The school structure

In the municipality there is a superintendent and a school district political board. On the administrative level in the school district, there is also a head of development for all compulsory schools in the municipality. There is one principal in the school. This school has a weekly newsletter distributed by the principal. The school has four teaching teams with pupils from the 7th-9th forms in each team and the teaching teams have trained team leaders. The principal has formed a leadership team together with the team leaders and the development leader⁵⁹ for the school. The leadership team discusses pedagogical and practical matters, and makes decisions. Some teachers in the teaching teams are remedial teachers and they also work part time in a special form for pupils who are 'slow learners'. One of the teaching teams has modern premises with new furniture whilst the other teams have old premises mixed with new material. There are pictures of the members of the different teaching teams outside the staff room and the principal's office, which is large. Pupils' areas, the principal's office and the teachers' offices are close to each other in the middle of the school which probably enables many informal meetings. The principal takes good care of the research team during the visit, and gives a calm and well-organised impression when interacting with pupils. The staff room has some sofas, tables, and a small kitchen, and behind sliding doors there is also a conference table. The teachers' offices are small and nice, but the material room is overcrowded and the classrooms are equipped in a variety of ways.

The school culture

The team leaders seem to be very active. There are quite a few adults to be seen amongst the pupils in the school. The atmosphere between teachers and pupils in the school is open, calm and relaxed. Teachers seem to work 9 to 5. Many teachers were very interested in the research project and wanted feedback when the research was finished. In the staff room teachers approached us spontaneously. Most teachers seem proud of their school and the way it has taken on its mission. The communication between teachers is respectful, with open discussions even if individuals have different opinions. Pupils also seem to respect their teachers.

⁵⁹ This full-time development leader is a former principal.

Summary

The general school observations inform that the architecture of G1 provides good opportunities for people to meet spontaneously, but the classrooms are traditional and the school is sparsely decorated. Teachers are proud of how the school handles its mission. The communication and the discussions between teachers are open and respectful and pupils seem to respect their teachers. The principal distributes a weekly newsletter in the school, often including pedagogical articles. The work in school is built on the teaching teams and the principal forms a leadership team together with the team leaders. There are many adults amongst the pupils during breaks. The overall impression is that G1 is a school that is well organised, but only partially well equipped for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities for school improvement seem to be made by the principal, and sometimes together with the team leaders in the leadership team. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

The principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principal's views it is the principal, sometimes together with the leadership team that makes the decisions in G1. The decisions are then realised in the teaching teams. There is now a willingness in the teaching teams to discuss and try new ideas, and the freedom to do it. The social climate among teachers has grown more tolerant over time. The principal has encouraged the teaching teams to include both pedagogical and social goals in the teams' development plans. Now the subject discussions also take place within the teaching teams. In all, the amount of time allocated to discussions in the teaching teams is one week a year. The team leaders have a good understanding of pupils' welfare issues. The teaching teams are externally evaluated, which according to the principal's views, has improved their work.

G1 has collaboration on a regular basis with schools in eight other municipalities in the region. There are a number of international projects going on, both within and outside Europe. The projects were initiated by the principal, and are realised by individual teachers. It is the principal's intention to increase collaboration with the world outside the school-house.

In the principal's views staff development should be guided by the needs of the school. There is collaboration between the teachers in the 7th-9th forms in the municipality, to improve the work in school. All the teachers also have individual plans to guide the individual part of staff development. These plans are evaluated as part of the teachers' individual and yearly talks with the principal.

In the principal's views the key question for school improvement is what it takes to make pupils accomplish their objectives. Due to a self-described weakness in social interaction, the principal does not visit the teaching teams as often as requested. Instead, according to the principal's views, the principal's strength is as a listener. The leadership team is the principal's number one information channel, through which the principal leads the school. The principal believes that the teaching teams should be as independent as possible. The team leaders, as members of the leadership team, have a 20% reduction in their teaching time, and are recognised by the principal as 'deputy principals'. There is currently a training programme in place to develop the team leaders as leaders. The principal implements pedagogical visions in the teaching teams through the team leaders, as in the principal's views they are closer to the teaching practice. In the principal's views it is crucial that teachers understand before they start to implement a new idea or a new method. Therefore school improvement is understood by the principal to be a continuing process.

In table 6:4 below, the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:4 Principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school G1

Position	Principal's views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.					
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w	w		w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h		h			

The analysis of the principal's views in school G1, as displayed in table 6:4 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are mostly 'principal distributed and team-based' (A). It means that in G1 the principal makes the decisions about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, and the principal's decisions are realised by collaborating teaching teams. However, with regard to external collaboration forms and some of the

staff development, the principal's views describe the 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B) view type, where the individual teachers realise the structure.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of **G1**, is that of a more successful school. The analysis of the results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe **G1** as a collaborating and involving secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates that **G1** has a structure and a culture that provide pre-conditions for using internal collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly **G1** is understood to be well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities. **G1** has external collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that **G1** has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide the pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly **G1** is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

School K1- General school observations

Introduction

K1 is a K-9 school situated in a large municipality. This school has one principal for the whole school and one deputy principal focused on the 7th-9th forms, with approximately 35 teachers and 318 pupils. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 6%, which is below the national average. The educational level of parents is 2.47, which is above the national level. This school is under re-construction and consequently at the time of the visit by the research team many of the premises were temporary. The surroundings are partly forest and partly private houses. The school itself gives the impression of a 'campus' with many buildings. The oldest buildings being from the 1950s. There is no traffic in the area and most of the doors in the school are locked. Due to the rebuilding it is difficult to find the way through the school. At the moment all the teaching takes place in the portakabins adapted for the teaching teams. The dining room and the assembly-hall are situated in a separate building and in the basement pupils have quite a new room for themselves. The

school is sparsely decorated. Unfortunately, the principal invited the research team whilst most of the school was having outdoor activities. Some of the pupils regarded coming to the interviews as a punishment, and some of the teachers were very irritated about the situation.

The school structure

A school district political board is responsible for schooling in the municipality, and the superintendent is the executive head. The municipality is divided into different school districts and each district has an administrative head. A principal is responsible for each school. The principal in school K1 indicated a somewhat tense relationship with the head of the school district. The construction of the new buildings will be based on a pedagogical vision. From the proposed building plans the research team understood that the school would have great pedagogical potential. The platform is a focus on Health and Physical Education (PE). The principal and the deputy principal each have their own offices, the principal having the larger one. The principal's office has a small conference table. The chair for visitors in the deputy principal's office was lower than the deputy principal's own chair. The administration is divided between the principal and the deputy principal. Communication between the principal and the pupils is very straightforward. The school has four functioning teaching teams and in each team there are pupils from the 7th-9th forms.

The school culture

There seems to be a 'distance' between the principal and the teachers. The deputy principal was regarded as 'the principal' by some of the teachers. Both of them have a strict dress code related to their position in the school. Many of the teachers were irritated during the interviews, because of bad planning. Some of the teachers described being forced to come. Not many of the teachers and pupils knew why the research team was there still, the team was treated kindly. The teachers seem to accept the PE profile. In Art, the school has started to introduce the pedagogical visions for the new school-to-be. The Art teacher was very interested in the visit. Pupils participate in cleaning and removing graffiti in the school when necessary. All meetings were announced via the school's intranet. There were adults amongst the pupils all the time.

Summary

The general school observations show that K1 is situated in a nice area and is under re-construction. Teachers were irritated because of the principals' bad planning of the visit. The work in school is built on teaching teams, but the members of the research team could feel a somewhat tense atmosphere between the principal and some of the teachers. The overall impression is that the new

school will have great potential for collaboration, according to the plans that the team were shown. The decisions about the internal capacities seem to be made by the principals, and the decisions are gradually realised by the teaching teams instead of the individual teachers in their subjects.

Principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principals' views they have worked hard to create 'a new school', built on involvement and collaboration. Pupils need to feel that they are working in one school, not separate schools depending on the subject taught. Four years ago K1 had no teaching teams. Now the teaching teams are taken for granted, because the teachers think that is best for the pupils and also for the teachers, according to the principals' views. Teachers try different ways to involve pupils in their own learning to a greater extent. Still, not all of the teachers fully participate in this. K1 also has subject teams. Both the teaching teams and the subject teams meet once a week. There is one team leader in each of the teaching teams. They meet regularly with the principals to share information between the teams. Inter-disciplinary work is one of the criteria for setting teachers' salaries. The teaching teams have to have the opportunity to work in different ways, as K1 has a long tradition of strictly separated subject-based teaching, according to the principals' views. Those traditions are partly still in place, however the teachers have started to move together with the principals in a more collaborative direction, but it is a long journey.

In the collaborative work with the world outside the school-house K1 has recently started a collaboration with four of the large industries in the municipality, in order to bring in updated knowledge into the teaching practice. The principals emphasise the importance of opening the school up to the world outside the school-house. K1 is also involved in a EU-project, focused on sport and health, in line with the profile of the school. This work is evaluated yearly.

In the principals' views the focus for staff development has been to make teachers more grounded in this profile. There is no specific staff development plan for the school, but teachers have had the chance to express their individual requests for a more subject-based staff development as well. However, principals want the teaching teams to take on more responsibility in discussing their need for staff development at the level of the teaching team.

In the principals' views pupils in K1 have always produced good academic results. The tradition has been that the principal makes all decisions. Therefore the core in their leadership today is to increase involvement of both teachers and pupils in decision making. This change of direction in leadership is supported by the principals by being communicative, present, respectful, and sometimes very clear in their relationship with staff and pupils. By being

constantly invited to take part in the decision-making everyone should feel that the school is their school. Decisions have gradually been transferred to the level of the teaching teams. The principals have a strict dress code to make it clear who is the principal, and to show due respect for their job. The teachers evaluate the principals' leadership every year.

In table 6:5 below the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:5 Principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school K1

Position	Principals' views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int. ⁶⁰	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
	(A)	(B)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w	w		w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>	h	h		h			

The analysis of the principals' views in school K1, as displayed in table 6:5 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are both 'principal distributed and team-based' (A), and 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B). In K1 the principals make the decisions about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. Regarding internal collaboration forms and staff development, the decisions are realised by the teaching teams, as well as by the individual teachers in their subjects. Decisions about leadership are realised by the teaching teams, and regarding external collaboration forms the decisions are realised by individual teachers.

⁶⁰ The principal holds a view in line with view type (A) and the deputy principal holds a view in line with view type (B), regarding the internal collaboration forms. Regarding staff development both the principal and the deputy principal hold both views in line with view types (A) and (B).

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of K1 is that of a more successful school. The results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe K1 as being on the way to becoming a collaborating secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates on the one hand that K1 has a structure and a culture that provide the pre-conditions for using staff development and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly K1 is understood to be well prepared for improvement processes as a collective regarding these internal capacities. On the other hand K1 is on the way to becoming prepared for the improvement process, as a collective, due to the internal capacities of internal collaboration forms. K1 has external collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that K1 has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly K1 is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

School L1 - General school observations

Introduction

L1 is situated in a medium-sized municipality. It is a K-9 school with one principal. There are approximately 20 teachers and 155 pupils in the 6th-9th forms. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 10%, which is below the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.32, which is above the national average. The school is situated in one two-storey building. The 6th-9th forms are located on the second floor where the library is also naturally integrated. The principal's office and administration are located here as well. There are staff rooms on each floor, they are quite small, but are well equipped. In general the premises are modern and well equipped. There are no pupils' lockers, instead all the classes have a home-room where they can put their outdoor clothes. Pupils also have individual set of drawers where they can keep their belongings. The home-room is the pupils' office. There is one group-room per class with a computer connected to these offices. On the opposite side of the hall there are a number of classrooms of different sizes. In every classroom there is a computer. Teachers in the teaching teams have their offices close to the pupils' offices. Each teacher has a desk and five teachers share one

computer. The school has no gymnasium. The school-yard could be described as a natural adventure park for outdoor activities. There is also a football pitch in the yard. The entrance hall is large with clear signs. The school has an active parents' council and in the entrance hall you can read the latest memo from their meetings. In the entrance hall there is also a large poster of a summary of the municipal school plan. L1 uses both e-mail and information boards for communication. The school also has a 'school grandfather' who walks around in the school and talks to the pupils. It is very apparent that we are observing a working place for both adults and young people. Teachers can have lunch with the pupils in the dining room if they want to, in which case they pay for it but get free coffee.

The school structure

The school district political board is responsible for schooling in the municipality and there is a superintendent as executive for all the schools. The municipality is divided into five school districts and each district has an administrative head and a number of principals responsible for the schools. L1 was renovated in 2000 based on pedagogical ideas, thoughts and visions developed by a group of teachers and parents together with the principal. Based on these ideas the principal recruited most of the staff. The timetable has been developed to make it possible for everyone to meet during coffee breaks and lunch breaks. The principal shares the office with the head of the pre-schools. L1 also has a remedial teacher. The principal is very informal and relaxed with the research team and with the teachers in the staff room. The principal seems to be well known by the pupils, and tries to stroll around in the school for about an hour a week, but has no specific schedule for classroom visits. There is one teaching team for the teachers in the 7th and 8th form and one teaching team for the teachers in the 6th and 9th form. The remedial teachers form a teaching team of their own. The principal and a representative from each of the teaching teams together form 'The Consultation Team' which can be compared to a leadership team. Every teaching team has its own room close to the pupils' offices. When pupils enter the 6th form they are re-mixed in order to meet new friends.

The school culture

The mix of teachers and pupils in each teaching team was developed to support collaborative work and collaborative learning. The differentiation of teaching rooms and working rooms points out the importance of teaching as well as learning and reflection in a quiet environment. Teachers and pupils approach the team in a very friendly way. The tone of the communication is not loud. Teachers as well as pupils can move around freely in the school, and they mix on the premises in a natural way. There is no bell to start or end lessons. Pupils'

work is displayed everywhere, and everyone seems to be used to visitors. Every Friday there is coffee 'on the house'. In L1 there is a module for pupils who want extra support and this module is open to everyone, no matter if you learn quickly or slowly. No teachers have left the school in the five years since it started. The premises were developed to suit both teachers and pupils. Teachers, as well as pupils, seem to be proud of what they produce, and are willing to expose their products. There is mutual respect between teachers, between pupils, and between teachers and pupils. The pupils' council seems to be active. Teachers and pupils are positive and proud when they talk about their school and their principal.

Summary

From the general school observation in L1 we learn that this school was re-constructed some years ago based on a foundation of pedagogical ideas developed by the principal, groups of teachers, parents, and pupils, to support collaboration at all levels in the school. The construction of the premises is designed to emphasise the importance of both teaching and learning. The timetable is constructed to support teachers' informal meetings during breaks. The work in school is built on teaching teams and the Consultation Team, the principal and one representative from each teaching team. The principal seems to be highly visible in school and both teachers and pupils are proud of their school and their principal. The overall impression is that L1 is well organised and equipped for collaboration. The principal takes the decisions about the internal capacities after discussions with the Consultation Team. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

The principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principal's views there are a number of important constellations for internal collaboration in L1. The Consultation Team is at the core. Then there is a local school board with teachers and pupils that meet once a month. There is a pupils' council and a parents' council that meets once a month. Pupils are present at job interviews when new teachers are employed. The pupils' welfare team is also central to the work. In the teaching teams, pedagogical discussions are compulsory and on the agenda. The idea behind having representatives from the teaching teams, and not team leaders, in the Consultation Team is that everyone should have the opportunity to feel responsibility and learn about how their school is run. It is part of the staff development strategy as well. The foundation of the work in L1 is the platform of values that were laid down before the school started and are now visible in 'the five visions'. This means, in the principal's views, that everyone feels that they are a part of the whole improvement process. No teacher has left from the school so far. The work on

the visions is evaluated every third year. Every teaching team gets professional supervision to keep collaboration at a high level, which is also part of the staff development. When new teachers are employed they are given a personal mentor. The construction of the school building was designed to support collaboration, the work in the teaching teams, and pupils' involvement in their own learning.

In the principal's views collaboration with the world outside the school-house includes collaboration with the public sector in the municipality and with different associations locally. L1 also has an international collaboration with a school outside Europe. When it comes to external collaboration the principal relies on interested individual teachers to realise the principal's decisions.

In the principal's views staff development is used to support and increase the level of the day-to-day work to enhance improvement and to fulfil local and national objectives in the teaching teams. The content of staff development is decided after hearing the Consultation Team and the teaching teams, and is then realised in the teaching teams. The effects of staff development are evaluated regularly on a yearly basis.

In the principal's views stimulating the participation in school improvement from teachers, pupils and parents is at the core of leadership. The principal is highly visible in the school and has the intention of meeting all staff and pupils every week. The impression from the teachers, according to the principal's views, is that the school is run during the coffee breaks. This openness is combined with clear and strict logistics for the work in school. The core of the work is the Consultation Team. It includes the principal and one representative from each of the teaching teams, meeting once a week. All the work in school is built on five founding visions, in relation to national and local objectives. The principal, the teachers, the pupils and the parents developed these ideas when the school started five years ago. One of the ideas is at the core of the work each year. When the research team visited the school the yearly work was concentrated on developing a constructive alignment in the K-9 perspective in the subjects, and for children with special needs. In the principal's views the school is directed by joy. There is a lot of laughter and at the same time clear leadership. Teachers have faith in their principal.

In table 6:6 below the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:6 Principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school L1

Position	Principals' views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w			w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h					

The analysis of the principal's views in school L1, as displayed in table 6:6 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are mostly 'principal distributed and team-based' (A). In L1 the principal makes the decisions about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, and it is only regarding to external collaboration forms that the principal's decisions are not realised by the teaching teams, but by individual teachers.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of L1, is that of a more successful school. The results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe L1 as a collaborating and involving secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results from both the general school observations and the principal's views indicates that L1 has a structure and a culture that provide the pre-conditions for using internal collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practise, and accordingly L1 is understood to be well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities. L1 has external collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that L1 has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide the pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as

an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly L1 is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

The four less successful schools

School A2 - General school observations

Introduction

A2 is a K-9 school. The 6th-9th forms, with 190 pupils and approximately 20 teachers, are separated from the lower forms, in a one-storey building. The school is situated in a village in a small, thinly populated municipality. The village has one dominant industry, but many people also commute to work daily. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 8%, which is below the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.03, which is also below the national average. Most students live in one-family houses. The small size of the village makes it possible for the principal, the teachers, the pupils and the parents to meet frequently in different settings, outside school. School A2 is in good condition. It has its own gymnasium, indoor swimming pool, and the public library is integrated into the school building. In the dining hall breakfast is served to make sure that all pupils get a healthy start to the day, and the lunch is cooked in the school's own kitchen. In the entrance hall all the classes have their own information board. All the classrooms have a number of computers, and there is also a special computer room with 10 computers. In the hall there are another two computers for pupils' use. Pupils have their own 'common room', furnished and decorated by the pupils. The indoor environment gives a fresh, warm and friendly impression. There are also good opportunities for outdoor activities close to the school. Teachers have their own information board in the staff room, where they also have their individual pigeon-holes.

The school structure

In this municipality there is a superintendent and a school district political board, which also manages areas other than education within the municipality. The administration of A2 is one principal, two development leaders⁶¹ and a

⁶¹ Some Swedish schools have development leaders that are teachers, sometimes with a small reduction in teaching hours, in order to support the principal in development issues such as staff development.

secretary, and it is located together in the '6-9 building.' The principal's office has a desk, a book-case, and a small table with chairs for meetings. The leadership team in A2 consists of the principal and the two development leaders. The principal is newly appointed, and used to be a teacher in the school. The principal seems to have a collegial relationship with staff and a friendly, but when necessary a strict relationship with the pupils. The principal is highly visible in the school, and most pupils seem to know the principal on a first name basis. The principal is closely involved in the social life of the community, and is involved in leisure activities for children in the village. The principal states that A2 has a good mix of staff, based on gender, age and experience, and speaks very enthusiastically about the school. Leadership largely seems to be practised by walking around and talking to people. Teachers are organised into two large, inter-disciplinary teaching teams, but grouped together in their offices subject-wise. Teachers share offices, but have access to their own computers. The whole school can be described as separated in the K-9 perspective, as K-5th and 6th-9th forms work in separate buildings and in practice only meet in the dining room and in the library.

The school culture

All members of staff meet informally during the day in the staff room. There is a collegial climate between the teachers, and between the teachers and the principal. Even though teachers show great concern for their pupils and colleagues, their willingness to collaborate outside their own teaching subjects seems to be limited. They seem to prefer collaboration within the different subjects, and also collaborate in collective activities for pupils outside the classroom. Teachers and pupils seem to enjoy being together. When they meet in the hall they call one another by their first names, but there is also an atmosphere of discipline and order in the school, and adults never forget that they are teachers during the school day. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere among the pupils, and they seem to be acknowledged by the adults in the school in a positive way. Pupils seem to like their school, teachers and principal.

Summary

According to the general school observations A2 is a small secondary school in the countryside. There is a collegial climate between teachers and between the teachers and the principal. The principal has formed a leadership team with the two development leaders in the school. The school is organised into inter-disciplinary teaching teams. The principal and the teachers are highly visible amongst the pupils. The overall impression is that A2 is well organised and physically equipped for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities for school improvement seem to be made by the principal, and

sometimes in the leadership team. The decisions seem to be realised by the teachers in their subjects.

The principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principals' views it is the principal, sometimes together with the development leaders in the leadership team that makes the decisions about the internal collaborative work in school, such as the organisation of the teaching teams. Then the individual teachers in the teaching teams carry out their teaching relatively autonomously, and have confidence in their knowledge of the pupils and of the principal's attitudes to teaching. The principal prescribes an informal structure for conversations with teachers. According to the principal's view it gives much better collaboration than formal structures for conversations. Even if the principal has decided to organise the collaborative work in two inter-disciplinary teaching teams, the principal's view is to give as much freedom as possible to the individual teachers to carry out the day-to-day work.

The principal is involved in some local external networks as an individual, but apart from that the work with the world outside the school-house is focused on increasing the health of the staff, such as through work-outs in the gym or massage, to keep all the teachers as fit as possible. The principal mentioned no international connections.

In the principal's views the principal makes the decisions about staff development, and the teachers realise the decisions individually. The principal, together with the development leaders, has developed individual staff development plans for all the teachers, and the principal understands the realisation of staff development as an individual business for each teacher. In practice that means that each teacher makes a list of requests for interesting staff development, finds suitable providers for it, and then asks for money from the principal to fulfil his or her requests.

A2 has had a new principal for six months. In the principals' views about leadership in A2 it is important to be available for the staff and make them feel that they have a lot of freedom when it comes to teaching, as they are the professionals in this field. There is the freedom to have an impact on one's own work, but freedom coupled with great individual responsibility. The principal's views of how to use the school's leadership, as an internal capacity for school improvement, are vague. Supporting the individual teacher as much as possible in doing a good job with the pupils in the classroom is at the core of the principal's views of leadership in A2.

In table 6:7 below the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:7 Principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school A2

Position	Principal's views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w		w			w
<i>Teaching team</i>							
<i>Teacher</i>	h	h		h			h

The analysis of the principal's views in school A2, as displayed in table 6:7 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are 'principal distributed and teacher-based'(B). This means that in A2 the principal takes all the decisions about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, and that the principal's decisions are realised by individual teachers in their subjects.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög, (2008) the status of A2, is that of a less successful school. The results from the general school observations and the principal's views describe A2 as a traditional and teacher-based secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates that A2 does not yet have a structure and a culture that provide the pre-conditions for using collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly A2 is understood to be not so well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities.

School D1 - General school observations

Introduction

D1 is a 6th-9th-form school with 538 pupils and 37 teachers. The school is situated in a suburb of a big city. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 30%, which is above the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.04, which is below the national average. Most parents work in the private sector or commute to other parts of the city. During the 1960s and 1970s this school was regarded as one of the best schools in the city. D1 consists of seven different buildings, including one older two-storey building, and it is situated in an area with heavy traffic, close to a shopping centre. The school-yard has an asphalt surface, is full of litter, and is not very inviting. The football pitch has an asphalt surface. The staff room is located in the main building and has been newly renovated after sabotage, which resulted in flooding. Pupils have their own café in one of the newer buildings. The classrooms are traditional and the library is in-built as a part of the main building. There is an info-TV in the library, which it is possible to watch from the hall. The main building is old, but not shabby.

The school structure

The school district political board for pre-schools and schools is politically responsible for schooling in this part of the city. They also decide on the budget for the schools. There is a superintendent as executive for schooling in this part of the city. The superintendent works together with five management teams, with two to four principals in each team. D1 has two principals. The leadership team also includes the teaching team leaders. The two principals, the secretary and the caretaker are situated in one part of the main building, a long way from teachers' and pupils' working areas. The teachers are organised into five teaching teams, including one team to support pupils with special needs. Teachers in Swedish, Mathematics, English, Social Science, Science, and 'Life Skills' do their teaching in only one teaching team. There are 120-150 pupils and about ten teachers in each teaching team. They consist of the 6th and 8th forms or the 7th and 9th forms. All the teaching teams have their own offices, situated in different buildings around the school-yard. The principals say that they believe in the internal personal power in the teaching teams and have therefore purposely dislocated themselves from the teams to release that power. The principals' offices are nicely decorated and have a small conference area, as the principals often seem to meet teachers, pupils and parents in their offices. When there is a meeting the red light is on. The principals were very positive about the visit by the research team.

The school culture

Principal 2 knew all about the visit in detail and principal 3 knew that the research team was coming. During our first day at D1 it was very noisy amongst pupils in the halls, but during day two and three the atmosphere was much calmer. The team did not see many teachers in the common staff room during the day, probably due to the fact that the teaching teams are separated in different buildings. There were no adults in the school-yard, but now and then we saw adults in the halls. When pupils were alone in the halls it was quite noisy. Principal 3 understood this first impression of the littered school-yard, but reassured that the team would get a much more positive picture of relationships and work once looking behind the cracked facade. The pupils did not seem very interested in the visit. Teachers were very loyal about their school and their principals when the team members talked to them during the observations, and they said that they really did not want to change schools. Teachers were also positive towards the researchers as visitors.

Summary

The general school observations at D1 show that the outdoor environment is not welcoming. When pupils were alone in the halls it was quite noisy. Teachers were supportive of their school and their principals during the visit. The school has two principals. They work and plan together, but gradually they seem to have divided the school between them. The school is built on teaching teams and the team leaders are part of the leadership team, together with the principals. The teaching teams and the administration are separated physically in the buildings, and we did not see many teachers in the common staff room. The overall impression is that D1 is a school that is not so well organised and not so well equipped physically for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities for school improvement seem to be made by the principals. The decisions seem to be realised partly by the teaching teams, and partly by the individual teachers in their subjects.

Principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the two principals' views the teaching teams function well when it comes to taking care of pupils' welfare issues. Building on this, the principals have recently made a number of decisions to extend the pedagogical collaboration within the teaching teams, and between the teams. The problem seems to be that these decisions have been realised in a split environment where about half of the teachers understand their work as teachers to be an individual job, based in the traditions of former national curricula and in the teachers' teaching subjects. According to the principals' views the other half of the teachers have more modern teacher education, founded in collaboration as the core of a

teacher's job. In the principals' views they have taken for granted that their decisions about collaboration have been accepted and realised by the teachers in the teaching teams. Now they have understood that this has only partly been the case, and as a consequence they have intensified the explanations of the decisions already made concerning the internal collaboration forms.

In D1 the principals' views of collaboration with the world outside the school-house, is that most of the external collaboration is with other areas of the city and is realised by individual teachers at the school. The principals in this school describe no international collaboration.

In principals' views many of the teachers would like to have more individual and subject oriented staff development. On the contrary most of the staff development is decided by the school district political board, in a three-year plan, and is then realised by the principals in all the schools in the district, with limited influence from those who are the target group for those efforts, namely the teachers.

In their views the two principals in D1 have a clear vision among themselves of how to extend the good work with pupils' welfare issues in the teaching teams, to pedagogical issues in general. They have made their decisions and they have used the two co-ordinators in each team to deliver their decisions to the teaching teams. The principals have also given the teams time to plan the realisation of these decisions concerning internal pedagogical collaboration. According to the principals' views, this is still more words than practice as yet.

In table 6:8 below the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:8 Principals' views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school D1

Position	Principals' ⁶² views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>					w		
<i>Principal</i>	w w	w			h	w	w
<i>Teaching team</i>	h					h	
<i>Teacher</i>	h	h					h

The analysis of the principals' views in school D1, as displayed in table 6:8 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are 'principal distributed and team-based' (A) as well as 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B), but in staff development also 'political distributed and principal-based' (C). In staff development that means that all staff development is decided by the political/administrative position, and realised by the principals in the school. For collaboration forms and leadership it means that the principals make the decisions, but their decisions are realised partly by the teaching teams and partly by the individual teachers in their subjects. Regarding the external collaborations they are only realised by the individual teachers.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of D1 is that of a less successful school. The analysis of the results from the general school observations and the principal's views describe D1 as a mix of both a traditional and teacher-based secondary school, and an involving and team-based school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicate that D1 does not yet have a structure and a culture that provides

⁶² Both principals express two view types regarding internal collaboration forms and leadership.

the pre-conditions for using collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly D1 is understood to be not so well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities.

School K2 - General school observations

Introduction

K2 is situated on the outskirts of a large municipality. It is a K-9 school with one principal for the 7th-9th forms, with approximately 35 teachers and 354 pupils. The share of pupils with a foreign background is 4%, which is below the national average. The parents' educational level is 2.25, which is above the national average. The school is situated in a beautiful area with no traffic. The main building is from the 1960s and has been rebuilt a couple of times to date. Apart from the main building there are separate buildings for Art and Textile Craft, one for remedial education, and a gymnasium. The pupils' lockers are new, but the floor is quite littered. The entrance is not very welcoming and the school has few signs. The library is situated close to the entrance. The principal's office, teachers' offices and the staff room are situated as far as you can get from the entrance, in the same part of the school. The classrooms are traditional, but re-furnished with new doors and windows which makes looking into the rooms possible, and the curtains are also new. There are no specific computer rooms. The staff room is large and crowded. There are well-structured and updated information boards and a white board in the staff room, and communication also takes place over the school's intranet. The teachers' offices are small and simple. New premises for the pupils have recently been opened and the response from pupils has been very positive. The research team received a high level of service and flexibility during the visit.

The school structure

A school district political board is responsible for schooling in the municipality, which is divided into different school districts. The superintendent is the executive head of schooling in the municipality and each district also has an administrative head of schooling. A principal is responsible for the work in each school. The principal seems to have good cooperation with the head of the school district. At K2 the principal for the 7th-9th forms shares the office, which has a small conference table, with the principal for the K-6th forms. Opposite the office there is a conference room. The school has a flat organisation, and there is structure and order in the school. The teachers seem to respect the principal and vice versa. The principal is often in the staff room, and also takes part in the teaching team meetings. The school is organised into four teaching teams, each team including pupils from the 7th-9th forms. Each teaching team

has a team leader who runs the meetings when the principal is not present. The meeting that two of the team members observed was focused on pupil welfare, and it was informative and effective. The discussions indicated the teachers had a pupil centred perspective.

The school culture

There are few decorations on the walls due to damage, and there are adults in the halls during breaks. Teachers knew why the team was visiting their school and they were interested in the research project and asked a lot of questions. The pupils did not talk to us until the last day of our visit. The relationship between teachers and pupils is relaxed and natural. Teachers describe the school as a 'good' school and a school where you want to stay. There seems to be a collegial and respectful atmosphere among teachers, and between teachers and pupils. However, in a conversation in the staff room with some teachers who had been working at the school for a long time, the team learned that they run the school, as principals just come and go.

Summary

The general school observations show that K2 is situated in a beautiful area. The school is partly renovated and there is an atmosphere of order and respect in the school. The principal is often visible in the staff room, but the relationships between the principal and groups of teachers seems to be tense. The school is built on teaching teams, and a pupil-centred perspective among the teachers. The team members saw many adults amongst the pupils during breaks and teachers seemed to behave naturally in their relations with the pupils. The overall impression is that K2 is a school that is well organised and well equipped for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities for school improvement seem to be made by the principal. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

Principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

In the principal's views the teachers are split into two groups: one group of teachers that has been there over 25 years and does not want any collaborative change, and the other group of teachers that are newcomers and support a more collaborative and inter-disciplinary way of working. However, the principal has now completed the re-organisation of the teaching teams. The next step is to change the practice of teaching in the teams too. In the principal's views those teachers that do not want any change regard the collegiality and openness in discussions as very high. The other, more collaboratively oriented group of teachers describes openness between colleagues as non-existent, according to the principal's views.

The principal's views of external collaboration forms describe some rather new cooperation with the local community to prevent crimes and damage done by young people in the local area. There are also two inherited EU-projects from the former principal: one focuses on subject-based staff development, and the other is a course in entrepreneurship.

This external collaboration is a part of the staff development work at the school, but the principal has also directed some of the staff development resources to support the re-construction of the teaching teams and for the preparation of a more collaborative practice in the school.

The principal was recruited to the school to develop the teaching teams, and has a long-term plan to change the practice in K2 and to rebuild the school following that plan. In the principal's views the practice at K2 today is too traditional. On arrival the principal individually re-structured the teaching teams to make them more similar. This was done by concentrating teachers' work mostly to the pupils in their teaching team, and through the decision that every teaching team should include pupils from the 7th-9th forms.

In table 6:9 below the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:9 Principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school K2

Position	Principal's ⁶³ views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w w	w	w	w		w	w
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>	h	h		h			h

The analysis of the principal's views in school K2, as displayed in table 6:9 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are 'principal

⁶³ The principal's views in K2 express two different view types regarding internal collaboration forms and leadership.

distributed and team-based' (A), as well as 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B). This means that regarding the internal collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, the principal makes the decisions, but the decisions are realised both by the teaching teams and by individual teachers in their subjects. Regarding external collaboration forms, the principal's decisions are realised only by individual teachers.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of K2 is that of a less successful school. The analysis of the results from the general school observations indicates that K2 is a collaborating and involving school, while the principal's views describe K2 as a mix between a traditional and teacher-based secondary school, and an involving and team-based secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates that K2 does not yet have a structure and a culture that provide the pre-conditions for using collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practise, and accordingly K2 is understood to be not so well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities.

School L2 - General school observations

Introduction

L2 is a K-9 school situated in the countryside area of a medium-sized municipality. There is one principal for the whole school. In the 7th-9th forms there are approximately 20 teachers and 154 pupils and there are no pupils with a foreign background in this school. The parents' educational level is 2.08, which is below the average national level. This school is under re-construction and was originally a K-6 school. Until the rebuilding work is finished the 7th-9th forms are situated in temporary premises, these classrooms are small, but the pupils seem to get along quite well. In the school-yard there is a building that pupils have participated in turning into café and recreation room. There is a small gymnasium in a separate building and the dining room is in the old building. The Home Economics teaching takes place in the centre of the municipality. The staff room is shared with the teachers from K-6 in the old building. The teachers' offices are very small and five teachers share a room and a computer. There is approximately one computer per classroom, and there is no specific computer room. A lot of information is distributed through e-mail,

but there are also information boards in each portakabin. Teachers and pupils have lunch together in the dining room, but at separate tables. The time-table for the school is in part dependent on the time-table for the school buses.

The school structure

The school district political board is responsible for the schooling in the municipality. The municipality is divided into five school districts. Above the district administration there is an executive superintendent. Each district also has an administrative head and a number of principals for the schools. The principal arrived at L2 in 2002, which was at the same time as the 7th–9th forms started at the school. The principal's office is temporarily housed in a separate building, close to the other school buildings, and the room is rather small. The visit is well organised and the principal wants feedback on the results. The principal seems to be very concerned about the staff, but the contact with pupils is not so intense. The main goal for the principal is to create a K-9 school. The principal at L2 does not have a leadership team, but meets every teaching team personally every sixth week. There are two teaching teams in the 7th-9th forms and each team has pupils from all three forms. The teaching teams have no team leaders.

The school culture

Despite the indoor environment, both teachers and pupils in the school reflect a warm and positive atmosphere. Because of the rebuilding, pupils' work is not exhibited. Adults are often seen together with pupils during the breaks. Everyone talks about 'When the new school is ready, then...'. Teachers are very interested in the visit and the research project. One of the teachers spontaneously said that he had hoped to be interviewed. Teachers and pupils have a friendly tone in their daily communication. The teachers seem to keep very close contact in their teams. They arrive at school early in the morning and stay for a while after school in the afternoon. Even though pupils speak positively about their teachers, there has been some rotation of teachers since 2003.

Summary

From the general school observations we learn that L2 has been under reconstruction for some years. Therefore the indoor environment is difficult for both teachers and pupils. The school is built on teaching teams and the teachers in the teams seem to be close. The atmosphere among staff and pupils is friendly and positive, but everyone is waiting for the new school to be finished. The overall impression is that L2 is well organised, but not so well equipped physically for collaboration. The decisions about the internal capacities seem to

be made by the principal after discussions with the teaching teams. The decisions seem to be realised by the teaching teams.

The principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership

To make the merger into a K-9 school possible, there has been a lot of focus on the teaching teams. The two teams are now functioning well, and the next challenge, according to the principal's views, is to improve the collaboration between K-6 and the 7-9. This is done by paying special attention to the pupils' welfare issues, through the creation of a vertical organisation, and by working in close contact with teachers and parents.

The work with the world outside the school-house mostly involves the traditional work with parents and the local public sector, but also collaboration with a European school for pupil and teacher exchanges. However, in the principal's views the priority during recent years has been the internal collaborative work.

In staff development the principal talks individually with the teachers to make inventories of teachers' individual needs, but also uses staff development as a lever for the entire staff to support improvement work on the school level. In the principal's views it is equally important that the individual teacher has the opportunity to develop as well as having staff development to support the collective improvement work.

In the principal's views the main mission is to develop a former K-6 school into a new K-9 school. In such a merger there appears to be a cultural collision between different traditions of understanding teaching practice. In the principal's views it is therefore necessary to build new traditions in L2, that is traditions as a K-9 school. The principal is leading this improvement process. The teaching teams have no team leaders as the principal prefers to give information and discuss with all the members of the team at the same time. The principal visits each teaching team every sixth week. One member of each teaching team is responsible for finances in the team. In the principal's views the strategy is to proceed slowly in order to get everyone 'on board', while using a leadership that is both involving and challenging. In the principal's views, based on an external evaluation of the principal's leadership, the principal is highly regarded by the staff.

In table 6:10 below the principal's views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership are shown.

Table 6:10 Principal's views of the structure and culture of collaboration forms (Cf), staff development (Sd), and leadership (L) in school L2

Position	Principals' views						
	Cf		Sd			L	
	Int.	Ext.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)
<i>Political</i>							
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	w	w		w	
<i>Teaching team</i>	h		h			h	
<i>Teacher</i>		h		h			

The analysis of the principal's views in school L2, as displayed in table 6:10 above, shows that the internal capacities for school improvement are mostly 'principal distributed and team-based' (A), apart from staff development that is also 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B). The principal's views of external collaboration forms are related to view type (B). This means that the decisions for all internal capacities are made by the principal. Regarding internal collaboration forms and leadership, the decisions are realised by the teaching teams. In external collaboration the decisions are realised by individual teachers, and in staff development they are realised by teaching teams as well as by individual teachers in their subjects.

Conclusions

According to pupils' accomplishment of both academic objectives and social/civic objectives in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003) and Ahlström and Höög (2008), the status of L2 is that of a less successful school. The results from the general school observations and the principals' views describe L2 as a collaborating and involving secondary school (e.g. Bredeson, 2003; Hargreaves, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Louis, 2007; Staessen, 1993). The analysis of the results indicates that L2 has a structure and a culture that provide the pre-conditions for using internal collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement in practice, and accordingly L2 is understood as being well prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding these internal capacities. L2 has external

collaborations. However, the analysis indicates that L2 has a culture in the external collaboration forms that does not provide pre-conditions to use the external collaboration forms as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice; accordingly L2 is understood not to be prepared for improvement processes, as a collective, regarding external collaboration forms, which in the literature is regarded as an important internal capacity for school improvement (e.g. Dalin, 1994, 1998; Gurr et al., 2003; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000).

Similarities and differences in principals' views between the more and less successful schools

Principals' views of internal collaboration forms as internal capacities for school improvement

In principals' views in the *more successful schools* the internal collaboration forms are founded in a vision that is accepted and communicated between the principal and the teaching teams as a collaborative direction for the practice in school (Leithwood, 2006). In these principals' views the decisions are made by the principal to enable teachers to work together in inter-disciplinary teaching teams around a group of pupils. It is a view of distributing the realisation of the internal collaborative work in the school to the teaching teams. This is possible, according to the principals' views since teachers in the teams, as a collective, show a willingness to take on the opportunities given by the principal, to become more influential and to take more responsibility in the internal collaborative work in the school (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). To support this internal collaborative capacity building, financial recourses are sometimes allocated from the principal to the teaching teams. In the teaching teams there is often an elected or appointed teacher, a team leader, who represents the team and functions as a link between the members of the teaching team and the principal in both directions. These views from the principals' in the more successful schools also reflect the existence of a foundation of trust among the teachers within the teaching teams, between the teams, and between the teaching teams and the principal (Bredeson, 1989; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Louis, 2007). This makes it possible to deal with problem solving and to handle the emerging autonomy of the teams. In these principals' views the teachers have their sense-making arena in the teaching teams (Scherp & Scherp, 2007), and the internal collaborative work has become a sense-making function (SOU 2004:116) for the teachers, as a collective, in the teams. The principals' views in the more successful schools indicate that these schools

are on the way to becoming what Staessens (1993) labels professional, or what Hargreaves (1998) labels collaborative schools.

The principal's views in school L1 go a little further and indicates that teachers in this school are not only adjusting their tactics, but also trying to change their performances (Gray et al., 1999) as a collective. In L1 the principal's views indicate that this school is on its way to fostering learning communities (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). However, the teaching teams' independence is relative, and when teams become too independent the principal tries to find ways to strengthen the joint collaborative culture between the teaching teams by putting together expert teams across the ordinary team structure, not by withdrawing the opportunities for more influence and responsibility from the teams.

Another interesting finding from the more successful schools comes from the views of the deputy principal (9) in school K1. This deputy holds an additional view in line with the 'principal distributed and teacher-based view type' (B), when expressing that they have been working hard for some years now to transform their school by moving away from a traditional individualistic and subject-based role of the teacher. This is a transformation of the teacher role with roots in the Swedish parallel school system, from before the reform of the compulsory school 1962 (SOU, 1961:30), to a collaborative and inter-disciplinary teacher role as described in the present National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003). According to the deputy principal's views, this is a long term process and some aspects of the past still remain in the behaviour of some of the teachers in their teaching teams.

The principals' views in the four *less successful schools* are more disparate. The principal in A2 holds a view where the principal, sometimes together with the development leaders, makes the decisions, so that the internal work in school can be realised by the individual teachers in their subjects. This can probably last, as long as both the principal and the teachers stick to the joint agreement of minding their own business, where the principal takes care of the administration and provides a good individual working environment for the teachers, whilst the teachers take care of pedagogical issues in line with the so called invisible contract (Berg, 1999).

In L2 the principal holds a view that is similar to the principals in the more successful schools that the decisions regarding the internal collaborative work in school are made by the principal and distributed to the teaching teams to realise the internal collaboration forms.

In D1 and K2 the principals also hold a view in line with the more successful schools, where the decisions are made by the principal to enable teachers to work together in inter-disciplinary teaching teams around a group of pupils. The difference compared to the principals' views in the more successful schools,

is that this view expresses these principals' vision of giving opportunities to teachers in the teaching teams as a collective, and that teachers should be more willing to accept extended influence and responsibility in the internal collaborative work (Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). However, in practice the principals face problems in realising this vision due to an unwillingness among groups of teachers to collaborate outside their own subject. Therefore the teaching teams in these schools become more like associate groups, and not creative, trusting and inter-disciplinary teaching teams (Marks & Louis, 1999; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Harris, 2002; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Scherp & Scherp, 2007). In this situation, to keep the school going, the principals have chosen to give opportunities to the individual teachers in the teams to have more influence and take on more responsibility, in part based on the subject traditions. That explains why these principals also hold a second view of view type (B) concerning internal collaboration forms. D1 and K2 could therefore be described as familiar and individualistic schools (Staessens, 1993), but with principals and groups of teachers that are striving hard to make their schools more professional and collaborative (Hargreaves, 1998). It is important to emphasise that the principals in both D1 and K2 are, in their views, well aware of the contradiction between their vision and the present situation, regarding the internal collaborative work in their schools (Hargreaves, 1992). The principals in D1 and K2 were recruited especially to turn traditional schools into collaborative/professional schools (Hargreaves, 1998; Staessens, 1993). However, the principals' views in D1 and K2 describe a somewhat different way of dealing with the present situation of teachers' unwillingness to collaborate. In D1, the principals have made the decisions about the internal collaboration forms and left the teams to handle the realisation alone. In their views this was built on the idea that the team members should organise this themselves. According to the principals, the process is proceeding too slowly. At the time of the research team's visit to D1, the principals had realised that it was necessary to describe the pedagogical idea behind inter-disciplinary work in collaborating teams more fully. K2 did not actually have teaching teams when the principal arrived some years ago. Here the principal has been very active, not only in reorganising the teams, but also in working with the teams to make their function collaborative and inter-disciplinary. The principal in K2 also describes the process as being too slow, but as we know from previous research (Calabrese, 2002; Evans, 1996; Schein, 1985, 2004) change is a difficult task since it takes time to change the basic assumptions of individuals. Still, in these principals' views they are working hard to establish a team-based culture, but they admit that they are not there yet.

Summary

In table 6:11 below, all principals' views of internal collaboration are summarised at the level of schools.

Table 6:11 Principals' views of the internal collaboration forms in the five more successful schools (ms) and the four less successful schools (ls)

		View type		
		Team-based (A)	Teacher-based (B)	Political-based (C)
School	ms	E1 F2	K1	K1
		L1 G1		
	ls	L2	D1 K2	D1 K2 A2

Principals' views of internal collaboration forms in the nine schools investigated, as described in table 6:11 above, support the findings from Blossing (2004) that some Swedish secondary schools have started to move in the direction of becoming more collaborative, while others remain traditional in terms of internal collaboration forms and inter-disciplinary teaching. Taken all together the results show that in the more successful schools and in L2 among the less successful schools, these schools in the principals' views have managed to transfer their internal collaboration forms from being a critical internal capacity for school improvement in theory, to beginning to function as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice too. In E1, F2, G1, L1 and L2 the internal collaboration forms, as an internal capacity for school improvement seem to have left the implementation phase and have become institutionalised as team-based. In these schools the internal collaboration forms could therefore be expected to serve as an internal capacity for school improvement. In the non-linear process of school improvement D1, K1 and K2 are working in the implementation phase as well as the phase of institutionalisation (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991; Miles & Ekholm, 1991). They still have work to do before their internal collaboration forms become team-based and can serve as an internal capacity for school improvement. In school A2 the principal's views on the structure and the culture of internal collaboration forms probably undermine a deeper form of collaboration in the teaching teams and support more individualistic teacher behaviour in the school. Therefore the internal collaboration forms could be expected to have a weak function as an internal capacity for school improvement in A2.

Principals' views of external collaboration forms as internal capacities for school improvement

Regarding external collaboration forms all principals' views, no matter if they run a more successful school or a less successful school, are in line with the 'principal distributed and teacher-based' view type (B). This means that the principals in all of the more successful schools, except school K1, and in school A2 among the less successful schools, shift their views when it comes to external collaboration forms compared to internal collaboration forms.

One watershed, between the principals' views regarding external collaboration forms, is whether their schools are involved in international collaborations or not. Principals in four⁶⁴ of the more successful schools and principals from two⁶⁵ of the less successful schools, describe their schools as being involved in international collaboration, such as twin city exchanges or EU-projects. An interesting feature appears in this context: 'the fiery spirit'. He or she is an enthusiastic teacher with whom international connections seem to stand or fall. The results indicate that three out of the nine schools do not offer opportunities for international collaboration to their teachers and pupils at all. This is worrying, as we know that this kind of external collaboration is highly supportive to school improvement both in the literature (Dalin, 1994, 1998; Harris, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; O'Day et al., 1995; Senge, 1990; Snyder et al., 2000) and in the Swedish National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003). A normal procedure in the schools with international collaboration, is that the principal initiates the collaboration and is responsible for applying for money. Individual teachers, the 'fiery spirits', then carry out the external collaborative work in practice.

We have an international project running with Dr. X in a non-European country. Teachers from there have been teaching here for three weeks. It has been very exiting and we are trying to continue developing it. Then I have tried to force this kind of collaboration with other schools in Europe, but we are not there yet. Partly since those who wanted to take part in it here, are on maternity leave (principal 11 school L1).

For many years we have had an exchange with a non-European country, because of members of staff that work here. Those people leave, and no one wants to fill in (principal 7 school G1).

⁶⁴ School EI, G1, KI, and L1

⁶⁵ School K2 and L2

All the principals' views in the more successful schools include the hope for an extension of their work with the world outside the school-house, while only the principal's views in school L2, among the less successful schools, express that opinion.

*Both my deputy and myself very much want to turn our school more towards the world outside the school-house. We should not just play at school here, we also have to realise that the world is a little bit bigger than our own school. ...I believe that it is **extremely** important for children and young people that they feel that what they do in school is useful to them (principal 4 school E1).*

In most of the principals' views in the more successful schools, as well as in the less successful schools, there are examples of external collaboration forms that are closely connected to what could be regarded as compulsory day-to-day work in school, such as collaboration with parents and work experience programmes for pupils. Here, there is often a specific teacher, appointed by the principal who is responsible for realising the practical work.

Summary

The principals' views of their schools' external collaboration forms at the level of schools are summarised in table 6:12 below.

Table 6:12 Principals' views of the external collaboration forms in the five more successful schools (ms) and the four less successful schools(ls)

		View type		
		Team-based (A)	Teacher- based (B)	Political- based (C)
School	ms		E1 F2 G1 K1 L1	
	ls		A2 D1 K2 L2	

As displayed in table 6:12 above the principals' views of external collaboration forms show that none of the schools have managed to transfer their external collaboration forms from being an internal capacity for school improvement in theory, to beginning to function as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice too. The external collaboration forms, as an internal capacity for school improvement, have not left the implementation phase (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991). All nine schools still have a lot of work to do before their

external collaboration forms can serve as an internal capacity for school improvement.

Principals' views of staff development as internal capacities for school improvement

In the principals' views in the *more successful schools* and in L2, staff development is described as a resource for the principal, to support school improvement for the whole school, through the teaching teams. (Bredeson, 2003; Harris, 2002; Goodlad, 1994; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001). The principal' views in E1, G1, K1, K2 and L2 also express the importance of having a part of their staff development for teachers as individuals to develop in their subjects. Even if the distribution of staff development is partly taken care of by the individual teachers it is used by the principal as a lever in order to support the school improvement processes that are going on, or to prepare the teaching teams for new challenges in a tailor-made way (e.g. Blossing, 2000; Bredeson, 2003; Dalin, 1995; Ekholm, 1989; Fullan, 1993, 2001; Harris, 2002; Scherp & Scherp, 2007). By using staff development as a common source in the school improvement process, the more successful schools and L2 have managed to transfer staff development from being a critical internal capacity for school improvement in theory, to becoming an institutionalised internal capacity for school improvement in practice (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991; Miles & Ekholm, 1984).

In A2, among the *less successful schools*, staff development is focused on the needs of the individual teacher, in their subject. The principal and the development leaders have decided together on individual staff development plans for the individual teachers. The teachers realise those decisions individually by trying to find suitable staff development from courses or conferences. This view of the principal, seeing staff development as an individual teacher's adventure, probably makes it very difficult for the principal to use staff development as a collective resource for school improvement. Consequently, staff development according to the principal's views, could be expected to have a weak contribution as an internal capacity for school improvement (Bredeson, 2003). In K2 the principal has just started to use staff development to support the reconstruction of the teaching teams and the pedagogical work in the teams.

The principals' views in D1 describe the situation concerning staff development, that teachers are asking for more individual and subject-based staff development. At the same time, the principals' views of staff development are that the decisions are made by the school district political board, and realised by the principals, following a three-year plan. The consequence of this is probably that staff development will be difficult for the principals to integrate into the day-to-day work of the teaching teams (Johnston & Caldwell, 2001;

Joyce, 1990) as the teachers seems to have very little, or no impact at all on their own staff development. Therefore staff development according to the principals' views, could be expected to have a weak contribution as an internal capacity for school improvement (Bredeson, 2003).

Summary

The principals' views of staff development at the level of schools are summarised in table 6:13 below.

Table 6:13 Principals' views of staff development in the five more successful schools (ms) and the four less successful schools (ls)

		View type						
		Team-based (A)			Teacher-based (B)			Politically-based (C)
School	ms	E1 K1	F2 L1	G1	E1	G1	K1	E1
	ls	L2	K2		K2	L2	A2	D1

Principals' views of staff development in the nine schools investigated, as described in table 6:13 above, largely support the findings (e.g. Blossing, 2000; Bredeson, 2003; Harris, 2002; Hopkins, 2001; Scherp & Scherp, 2007) that principals have to invest in people to make school improvement happen. This means that all the more successful schools, and L2 among the less successful schools, in the principals' views have managed to transfer their staff development from being a critical internal capacity for school improvement in theory, to beginning to function as an internal capacity for school improvement in practice too. Staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement, seems to have left the implementation phase and become institutionalised (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991; Miles & Ekholm, 1991) in these schools. In A2 the individualistic focus makes staff development difficult for the principal and the teachers to use as an effective collective lever for school improvement. The centralised staff development in D1 is difficult for the principals and the teachers in D1 to use as an effective collective resource in the day-to-day work with school improvement. The contribution of staff development as an internal capacity for school improvement could therefore be expected to be weak in both A2 and D1. In K2 the principal's views indicate that staff development is on its way to become an internal capacity for school improvement, but they are not there yet.

Principals' views of leadership as internal capacities for school improvement

In the *more successful schools* the leadership practice takes place within a clear, supporting and challenging environment to enhance involvement and participation among the teachers (e.g. Barth, 2001; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Scherp, 1998). The principal makes the decisions concerning leadership, and the realisation of the leadership practice is distributed to the teaching teams. This structure is derived from a clear, communicated and common vision from the principals. This is accepted by the teachers in the teaching teams as a collective, in order to create the pre-conditions for a leadership practice of extended involvement and participation (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Johansson, 2000; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Mullford, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Such involving leadership opens up for the teaching teams to become the hub of the realisation process, and to be included in the leadership practice in school, both through their teaching subjects and across subject boarders (Barth, 2001). In the principals' views the teaching teams are organised to serve as pre-conditions for an involving and participative leadership practice. There is structural and cultural awareness in the way the leadership is distributed and performed. Thus, in the principals' views, teachers will become collectively participative in the work in school, and teachers in the teams in the more successful schools are willing to accept this involvement (Fullan, 2001; Höög et al., 2003; Spillane, 2006). In the principals' views, the teaching teams have become the sense-making arena for teachers' work in the leadership practice in school (Scherp & Scherp, 2007). The team leaders become the extension of the principal's leadership direction, and function as a two-way link between the principal and the teaching team. However, the principal in school L1 adds to that picture of involving leadership describing a system with an on-going representative assembly in the teams, with the clearly stated goal of spreading the leadership practice to the entire staff, in order to make more teachers aware of leadership and acquainted with it. This is a view of leadership where both action and interaction are simultaneously connected and performed in leadership practice (Spillane, 2006).

In the principals' views, leadership in the more successful schools is moving in the direction of becoming a 'sense-making function' (SOU 2004:116) amongst the teachers too, and is becoming leadership where internal collaboration and staff development are seen as natural tools for the principal in the improvement process. Leadership that is not only connected to position, but is also a matter of extending involvement and participation in the leadership practice throughout the school, but with the principal still the formal head (SKOLFS:17, 2003; Johansson, 2000; Mullford, 2007).

In the *less successful schools* principals' views of the leadership in their schools once again paint a more divergent picture. The principal in school L2 describes

an 'involving leadership' in line with the principals in the more successful schools. The main difference when compared to the leadership in the more successful schools is that L2 has no team leaders. The principal works directly with the teaching teams, and consequently the principal works without a leadership team, attending a lot of meetings in the teams instead. In the principal's views the argument is that it is better that all members of the teams hear and discuss everything at the same time.

In school A2 the principal's views describe a 'traditional leadership'. This is a view of a leadership, which preserves a structure and a culture of individualism and departmentalisation, on the one hand between teachers as individuals and on the other hand between teachers as the representatives of different subject traditions. In this view type, the relationship between teachers and principals is very much in line with the so-called invisible contract of school leadership (Berg, 1999), where principals take care of the administration in the school and teachers take care of the pedagogical issues. As mentioned above, A2 is organised into teaching teams, but the principal's view is that in reality the 6th-9th forms are one big team. Therefore the principal describes it as natural to focus leadership on management, and consequently the leadership practice in school is structured in such a way as to give the individual teachers as much freedom as possible to organise their work in school themselves.

In D1 and K2 the principals' views express both the involving leadership and the traditional leadership. In these schools the principals' views of an involving leadership practice have become the leadership vision the principals strive for. The improvement task for the principals in these schools involves both a process of tearing down the already established traditions of individual structures and cultures that support a traditional leadership, and a process of rebuilding new structures and cultures of involvement and participation to serve as a foundation for an involving leadership. It is a process of transforming the principals' personal vision of today, into a common vision among the teachers to improve their leadership practice towards an involving school of tomorrow (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood & Day, 2007). According to the principals' views, quite a few teachers in these two schools, seem to see this improvement work as a threat towards their traditional understanding of the teacher's job as an individual occupation with a lot of individual decisions and freedoms during the working day. These schools are in a phase of improving their leadership practice, which both creates natural forms of resistance among teachers (Bredeson, 1989; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Schein, 1985, 2004) and also needs to allow time for grief over changing traditional patterns (Evans, 1996). The principals are well aware of the contradictory relationship between these two views in their schools, and they have dedicated their work to fulfilling the vision of a leadership built on involvement and participation. On the one hand the process and outcome of

this 'ideological-battle' is critical for whether leadership is to remain an internal capacity for school improvement only in theory, or if it is to become an active internal capacity for school improvement in practice in these two schools. On the other hand, it might also have a personal impact on the principals' decision to stay in their schools or to change their work place.

Summary

The principals' views of their leadership are summarised in table 6:14 below at the level of schools.

Table 6:14 Principals' views of the leadership in the five more successful schools (ms) and the four less successful schools (ls)

		View type					
		Involving (A)		Traditional (B)			
School	ms	E1	F2	G1	K1	L1	
	ls	L2		D1	K2	D1	K2

Principals' views of their leadership in the more successful schools and in L2, as displayed in table 6:14 above, indicate that leadership has moved from being an internal capacity for school improvement in theory, to functioning as a collective internal capacity for school improvement in practice. In all these schools, the involving leadership has left the implementation phase and has become largely institutionalised (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991; Miles & Ekholm, 1991). Leadership in these schools could therefore be expected to serve as an internal capacity for school improvement. However, in the non-linear process of school improvement there is still institutionalisation work to be done in these schools.

As described above, the principals' views of leadership in three of the less successful schools (A2, D1, and K2) are characterised mostly in a traditional way as a human action for different reasons (Spillane, 2006). The principal and teachers in A2 seem to feel at ease with the already institutionalised traditional leadership, but as long as leadership focuses mostly on the teachers' well-being, rather than involving more people in the leadership practice, leadership can not be expected to serve as an internal capacity for school improvement. In two of these schools, D1 and K2, leadership is also understood as interaction (Ibid.) in the principals' visions for improving the structure and culture of leadership in their schools and making it more involving. These schools are struggling with initiation and implementation at the same time (Ekholm & Plough-Olsen, 1991). Principals and teachers in these two schools probably have to finish their

ideological-battle and then sit down to negotiate, before leadership can be expected to serve as an internal capacity for school improvement.

However, these scenarios of the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement in the nine schools, will remain only as long as the principals and the teachers accept the current power relations in the school, and as long as they are satisfied with the modes of realisation. In other words, as long as the present classification and framing in their schools remains in place (Bernstein, 2000).

7. FINAL DISCUSSION AND AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One reason for studying internal capacities for school improvement has been that policy makers at the state and municipal level, and sometimes principals and teachers in the local schools too, seem to take the existence of internal capacities for school improvement in schools for granted, or even worse, ignore the question itself. The consequence is often isolated improvement projects with little or no connection to the direction of the school, the people in the school, or the school practice. Of course such isolated projects might be interesting and useful for the people involved, but are often useless in terms of school improvement as they seldom contribute to the improvement of the school as a whole, and often come to an end when the money is gone (Bredeson, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Goodlad, 1994; Hargreaves, 1998). Another reason for studying the internal capacities for school improvement has been the on-going performative change in schools in the western world at the beginning of the 21st century. This means that principals and teachers in Swedish secondary schools have to relate to a working situation of growing accountability for their schools (Möller, 2008). For principals, the previous cross-pressure of living inbetween the fulfilment of objectives from the state and those of the school district political board (Person et al., 2004) has now gradually also become an ideological cross-pressure. It is a cross-pressure of living between a pedagogical result orientation, investigated through inspections and national and international tests, and a pedagogical process orientation, with shrinking finances at the level of the municipality. Put together these implications underline the need for continuous preparation for the improvement processes in school, not only for principals and teachers, but also for all the different stake-holders in school.

It is necessary to improve schools for school improvement to happen. As for an athlete or a dancer, not performing without practicing is taken for granted. People in schools also have to practice the internal capacities for school improvement in order to perform well. It is practicing to develop a collective readiness for school improvement, as well as the collective capacities to handle improvement processes. It is practising for school improvement that is both people and practice focused, and recurrent in order to become effective and sustainable with regard to pupils' accomplishment of the academic objectives as well as the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum (SKOLFS: 17, 2003). This is not an easy task as schools are complex to lead, manage and

improve (Berg, 2003). Therefore, school improvement has to be treated as a complex and time consuming process, and not as a quick fix (Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2002; Hopkins, 2001).

Here, the focus has been on three critical internal capacities that the pre-study described above, as well as the literature review (e.g. Harris, 2002), found to be crucial for people in schools to perform well in order to create readiness for school improvement, as well as the capacities to handle the improvement process: collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership. These internal capacities have been studied through the principals' views in five more successful and four less successful Swedish secondary schools. From this improvement scenario this chapter will discuss the method used and the results found in relation to previous research, as well as the contribution of these results to the research of today, and the implications for future research areas.

The analysis model unfolds additional perspectives in the understanding of internal capacities

Research in school improvement in general, has been criticised for having too strong an organisational and structural focus when studying the work processes in schools, and by doing so to sometimes have neglected the level of day-to-day school practice (Blossing, 2000). The work by Hopkins (2001), Harris (2002) and Stoll (1999) focuses on the importance of the internal conditions in schools that make it possible for principals and teachers in school to get their work done. By adding the conceptual perspective of views (Hult, 1990; Olofsson, 1993; Zetterström, 1988) in a model developed for analysis, inspired by Bernstein (2000), the theoretical concepts of structure and culture have been used. As described in the introduction, here the structure refers to the division of labour in a school. That is where the power to decide about the internal capacities is positioned and exercised in a school. Culture refers to the distribution of work in a school. That is, where the realisation of the power is positioned and how it is realised in the day-to-day school practice. A further use of the terminology of Bernstein to become more specific, is the understanding of power as the classification in a school. Classification is what constitutes the boundaries, in the following example, between the boundaries of internal collaboration forms. Classification can be weak or strong, and show us how things are kept apart or brought together in a school. One example is the differences between a 'principal distributed and team-based school' (A) and a 'principal distributed and teacher-based school' (B). (A) is a school based on teaching teams with collaboration within and between the teams, and an interdisciplinary way of teaching. Such a school has a weak classification with regard to internal collaboration forms. Consequently a school with a strong classification (B), is a school where teachers work individually and are

autonomous in their classrooms, and where the subjects are kept apart from each other in the day-to-day school practice. Such a school is 'principal distributed and teacher-based' (B). This understanding helps us to unfold and further understand the position and use of power in a school. How the power is realised, and at what position in the school system the realisation takes place, provides information to unfold and further understand, the framing in a school. A school with weak framing (A) is one where teachers get and take opportunities, to be involved in shaping the day-to-day school practice together, while a school with a strong framing (B) is one where teachers' involvement in the shaping of the day-to-day school practice as a collective are limited. By using the model for analysis of the principals' views the results provide additional perspectives on how the power and the realisation of power, regarding collaboration forms, staff development and leadership as internal capacities, are viewed in schools. With such information at hand it increases the possibilities for principals and teachers to understand their present situation in the improvement process. It also provides them with a further understanding of how to proceed in the improvement process at hand.

Even if there is a strong accord for studying school improvement from the perspective of principals in the research literature (e.g. Ekholm et al., 2000; Harris, 2005; Johansson, 2000; Leithwood, 2006; Mullford, 2007), one could of course argue that the more different stake-holders' views that are investigated, the greater the understanding of the internal capacities. Used as a model for analysis of the day-to-day school practise in a specific school, as an instrument to support the improvement process, I would fully agree. However, in this study the research interest has been to extend the knowledge about principals' views of specific internal capacities for school improvement, and to investigate whether there are differences and/or similarities in those views within and/or between schools with different levels of success. Having said that, I agree with Ekholm et al. (2000) arguing that there are no simple connections between the way principals act and the results of a school. Here the purpose has not been to try to find relationships between principals' views and schools levels of success, but to identify, interpret and describe principals' views in schools with different levels of success.

In order to be able to use the general school observations as a second empirical source to build up the descriptions of the schools, it was necessary to re-write the observation forms in line with the theoretical concepts in the analysis model. By so doing, it was possible to analyse both the principals' views and their practice in the same usage. The general school observations served as an important second source giving information about the observed relations of power and the realisations of power in the schools. Another purpose in including the general school observations was to assist in the description of the

nine different school contexts for the reader. Having an understanding of the general school context helps the reader to follow and value the analysis made.

From the twelve interpreted interviews with the principals, three qualitative and precise view types were constructed from the principals' ideological views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. These constructed view types are the gestalts that bridge the ideological link between society and the principal's views of the internal capacities in their schools (Franke-Wikberg & Zetterström, 1984). Therefore, they are at the core of the results. It is important to underline that I as the researcher, constructed the view types from the interpreted interview texts of the principals' views. This was the crucial and most difficult part of the process of analysing the empirical material. Here the interview texts were interpreted with the focus on understanding the position of power and how the power is exercised according to collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, and where and how the power is realised in the school practice. By treating the view types as a part of the result, the result itself becomes more transparent for the reader. The qualitative, precise view types make it possible for others to interpret the interview texts and the school observations (Olofsson, 1993). In order to test the reliability of the results, one researcher from inside the SCL-project and one researcher from outside the project, repeated the categorisation of schools, regarding internal and external collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, in relation to the constructed view types. The results of the test was that the researcher within the SCL-project made 13/13 (1.0) categorisations in the same way as the results in the thesis, and the researcher outside the project made 11/13 (0.85) categorisations identical to the results presented above.

The width of the variation in the interview texts is also dependent on how well the interviewer managed to handle the follow-up questions. However, to investigate that would require a more specific text analysis, which has not been possible here.

Based on the results I would argue that the use of both principals' views and the general school observations, analysed in the model by unfolding the power relations and the realisation of that power in schools, complements the present knowledge-base of internal capacities in schools, which both deepens and alters the understanding of a schools' internal capacities for school improvement.

Of course, theoretically there are many possibilities for positioning power and the realisation of power in a school, as displayed in table 7:1 below.

Table 7:1 Theoretical possibilities of positioning power (w) and the realisation of power (h) in schools

	POSITIONS			
	Political	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Teaching team</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Power	w	w	w	w
Realisation of power	h	h	h	h

Drawing on the possible combinations of the power and the realisation of power in table 7:1 above, allows for a variety of theoretical view types of principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for improvement in schools. The theoretically possible view types are displayed in table 7:2 below.

Table 7:2 Theoretically possible view types of principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement

Position	View type				
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
<i>Political</i>			w		
<i>Principal</i>	w	w	h		
<i>Teaching teams</i>	h			wh	
<i>Teacher</i>		h			wh

So, how could the different combinations of what and how, the power and the realisation of power, concerning collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, unfold in the theoretical view types displayed in table 7:2 above?

In *view type A* the power concerning collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, is located to the position of the principal. The realisation of the principal's decisions is taken care of in the teaching teams as a collective. These teams are inter-disciplinary, but subject issues could also be discussed and realised in the teaching teams.

The teaching teams can have a teacher as team leader. The team leader could be a member of the leadership team. A structural proposal from the principal is always discussed in the teaching teams before the decision is made by the principal. The teachers in the teaching teams, as a collective, then realise the decision. The team leaders continuously report back to the principal from the team.

In *view type B* the power of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, is located to the position of the principal. Even if the school is organised into teaching teams the individual teacher takes care of the realisation of the principal's decisions. Teachers' loyalty is to the tradition of teaching as an individual profession. A proposal is often presented and discussed at a staff meeting before the principal makes the decision. The teachers then individually realise these decisions according to the traditions in their teaching subject, sometimes supported by the principal. Results are discussed at staff meetings.

In *view type C* the power of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, is located to the political position. The principal takes care of the realisation of the decisions at the local school level. Both principals and teachers have very little impact on their own work in this view type. This is very much an example of a centralised and top-down view of school improvement.

In *view type D* both the power, as well as the realisation of the decisions of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, are positioned to the teaching teams. The principal is officially the head of the school, but he or she concentrates on the administrative work, while the teaching teams take care of pedagogical issues. In this view type schools have installed the so-called 'invisible contract' (Berg, 1999) between the principal and the teaching teams. If the individual team becomes too independent, a number of small schools within the big school can evolve. The principal in this view type of school might have problems keeping the school as a whole on track, to fulfil its local and national objectives.

View type E is similar to type D, but here the invisible contract is 'written' between the principal and teachers as individuals. The power and the realisations of the decisions of collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, are positioned to the individual teachers, influenced by the traditions in the teacher's teaching subject, and the status of his or her teacher education. Collaboration with colleagues outside the teaching subject mainly takes place in the staff room and often has very little to do with teaching. When it comes to teaching each teacher, in his or her teaching subject, is sovereign in the classroom.

Why was it only possible to construct three qualitative and precise view types from the principals' views in the nine schools in this thesis? The two missing view types are the one where the teaching teams have the power to make the decisions and also realise the decisions (view type D), and view type E where the individual teachers instead of the teaching teams have the power to decide and realise the decisions. The last two view types indicate that the principal has abdicated from his or her responsibility for the improvement work in the school, as formulated in the national objectives (SKOLFS: 17, 2003). That is never the case in the results from the nine schools. In their views, the principals in the more successful schools and also in the less successful schools, are loyal with respect to the national objectives and their responsibility as principals. All the principals are active and eager to make the improvement work function well in their schools. This is also interesting in relation to the resent findings from Scherp & Scherp (2007). They claim that their results indicate that the invisible contract (Berg, 1999) between principals and teachers no longer exists. However, the results from the principals' views in the main study indicate that those principals do take part in the practical pedagogical work in their schools by interacting and challenging teachers in their teaching practice. What seems to differ between principals' views in the more successful schools and their views in some of the less successful schools, is that in the less successful schools there are groups of teachers that are not yet willing to give up the teaching profession as an individual endeavour, in line with view type (B) in table 7:2 above. Therefore, from the perspective of principals' views, the results in this thesis both support and deny the findings of Scherp and Scherp (2007) that the invisible contract no longer exists.

The what and how questions in internal capacity building

From previous research it is well know that a school that is collaborative (Hargreaves, 1998) or professional (Staessens, 1993) is more supportive towards enhancing school improvement. To make it possible to use staff development as a lever for school improvement, it has to be included as part of the overall direction of the school. It should connect to the day-to-day work in schools and be linked to teachers' collective learning and growth, in order to support pupils' learning (Bredeson, 2003). A positioned as well as a distributed leadership (Johansson, 2000; Mullford, 2007), in a democratic leadership environment (Johansson & Zachrisson, forthcoming, 2008) that involves the teaching teams in the leadership practice, is also regarded as supportive of enhancing school improvement. What we know less about are the power relations regarding internal capacity building in schools, and where the decisions about the internal capacities are realised in schools' practice. By

developing and using the analysis model, it is possible to describe where and how in the local school system, the decisions about internal capacities for school improvement are made and realised, as shown above.

In the principals' views, according to the internal collaboration forms, in four of the more successful schools⁶⁶ and in L2 among the less successful schools, they describe the power as located to the position of the principal, and the realisation of the power as located to the position of the teaching teams. In these principals' views this means that the principals' decisions follow a common, communicated and accepted direction for the school, in order to achieve the academic and social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum. The realisation of the decisions in the teaching teams is characterised by a willingness to collaborate within and between the teams, and mutual trust amongst teams, teachers in the teams and between the teams and the principal. Staff development is, in the principals' views, structured to support the teaching teams fulfilling the decided, communicated, common work-plans in practice too. By so doing, staff development has become a natural part of the day-to-day work in the school, and has left the back yard of schooling (Bredeson, 2003). In these principals' views, the leadership is an involving leadership. In school L1, this is exemplified by the rolling schedule of representatives in the Consultation Team, to give all teachers the chance to learn more about and to practise leadership. From the principal's views in L1 we can see, not only a change of strategies, but also a change in teachers' performances (Gray et al., 1999). In the principals' views in the more successful schools, most of the teachers in the teams demonstrate a trust and willingness and to retain and further develop a team-based and involving realisation of the leadership practice. The teaching teams feel at ease with the opportunities they have to influence and take on more responsibility for the entire work in school. The principals' views in these schools demonstrate a collective readiness among the teachers for improvement, as well as the collective capacity to handle the improvement process regarding the internal capacities investigated.

The principal's views in L2, one of the less successful schools, describe the power in the school located to the position of the principal, and the realisation of that power located to the position of the teaching teams. Still, L2 is ranked as a less successful school in the SCL-project. There could be many explanations for this situation, two of them being focus and time. For the last couple of years, L2's focus has not only been on pupils' accomplishment of academic and social/civic objectives. The principal's main focus has been to develop a K-9 school and at the same time to rebuild the school. The K-9 school seems to be

⁶⁶ K1 is in the principals' views in part teacher-based regarding internal collaboration forms.

in place socially now and soon the new school buildings will be ready as well. The results show that the internal capacities for improvement already give L2 a readiness for improvement, and show that L2 has the capacities as a collective to perform effective school improvement (Harris, 2002). The rebuilding has been under way for a couple of years. And everyone in the school is waiting for the new school to be finished, then...., and changing basic assumptions amongst individuals take time (Schein, 1985, 2004). To bring two different school traditions together also takes time. Still, from the perspective of the internal capacities, the future possibilities of L2 becoming a more successful school seem quite positive.

According to the principal's views in A2 both the principal and the teachers seem to be satisfied with the present situation. Power is located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions is distributed to the individual teachers in their subject traditions, organised into two teaching teams. A2 is analysed as being a less successful school and the results from the main study indicate no change in that situation, with regard to the internal capacities of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership. At the time of this study A2 had neither the readiness, nor the capacities to perform school improvement effectively, according to the analysis of the principal's views.

The situation in K2 and D1 is rather special. Using the analysis model made it possible to unfold the power and the realisation of the power in these two schools. In both schools the principals have been recruited to change the schools from traditional schools preserving individualism and departmentalisation, into involving schools extending teachers' involvement in general in the school practice through the teaching teams. According to the principals' views the principals themselves have a strong vision of how to accomplish this transition. The principal in K2 uses the strategy of pushing the teachers hard to actively make this happen. The principals in D1 are waiting for the teaching teams to start realising the decisions of making the school more involving and team-based in practice too. In both schools there are small, but strong, groups of teachers that feel their position as autonomous teachers in their classrooms and their subjects is threatened. There is an on-going 'ideological battle' between two view types, the involving and collaborative way of schooling vs. the traditional and individual way of schooling. On these two 'battlefields' it is not so much a fight about whether the power should remain at the position of the principal or not; the struggle is about the realisation of the decisions in the teaching teams as a collective, or as individual teachers in their subjects. It is about keeping individual control of the work in school, or moving into a team-based system of control where the day-to-day work is shared with others. It is about taking on more responsibility for the entire school practice, or not. It is about individuals letting colleagues into their teaching performance. In general it is about facing the risk of losing autonomy as a teacher in one's own subject.

The principals in D1 and in K2 seem to be in between the ideological cross-pressure of pedagogical result orientation and the pedagogical process orientation. On the one hand, the results from these two schools show that the collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership, are viewed by the principals as collective internal capacities for improvement to make their visions reality. On the other hand, the principals' views indicate that they will not be able to create a collective readiness and the collective capacities to handle the improvement process, until a majority of the teachers feel confident and are willing to become a team-based and involving school.

These results support the findings of Harris (2002) about effective school improvement. Even if further research is necessary, these results also indicate that the use of the analysis model unfolds 'the what question', the power relations, and 'the how-question', the realisation of power in internal capacity building in schools. That in turn provides the research in this area with additional perspectives from which to understand principals' and teachers' readiness for improvement, as well as their capacity to handle the improvement process.

Is there a world outside the school-house?

The principals' views of external collaboration forms, as internal capacities for school improvement, are interesting. In all nine schools the principals rely totally on interested, individual teachers, the 'fiery spirits', to realise their decisions about external collaborations. In the literature there is no question about the importance of external influence as an important capacity and an inspiration for schools to improve (Dalín, 1994, 1998; Harris, 2002; Senge, 1990; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; O'Day et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2000). How does the involving and team-based structure and culture in the more successful schools, change all of a sudden into a traditional and teacher-based structure and culture? The main reason is probably that the principals' views indicate that their external collaboration is mainly in the form of innovation that is not put into a longer improvement perspective (Fullan, 2001). In some cases it is also a question of resources in terms of time and money to give the teaching teams the opportunity to concentrate on external collaborations. In other cases, such as in L2 the focus on the K-9 perspective has been a priority. However, the findings of Little (1990) could be interesting for the external collaborative work. External collaboration is about learning from others, outside your traditional school context. This could also be people from outside school, colleagues from other schools in the area, or colleagues from totally different school contexts in other countries. To begin with getting new impressions is often positive, but as soon as the collaboration advances it demands a willingness on the part of the participants to open up, not only their own

classroom door, but also their own perspectives on managing, teaching and learning. On top of all that, the teachers might be having to do it all in a foreign language. For many teachers perhaps that is too heavy burden. At the time of this study the analysis of the principals' views of external collaboration forms as internal capacities for school improvement, is that they will contribute neither to building up the readiness for improvement nor increasing the ability to handle the improvement process.

Conclusions

The overall contribution of this thesis to previous research, regarding internal capacities for school improvement, has been the development and use of the model for analysis of principals' views and school practice in the same usage. The use of structure and culture as the theoretical concepts in the analysis made it possible to compare qualitative similarities and differences within and between the nine schools, by unfolding the power relations and how and where the power is realised in the nine schools investigated. By so doing this study has opened up the possibilities for additional perspectives in the understanding of schools' collective readiness for improvement, as well as schools collective capacities to handle the improvement process.

The results indicate both similarities and differences in principals' views within, as well as between schools and between schools with different levels of success according to pupils' accomplishment of the academic objectives *and* the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum.

- The results indicate that the principals' views in the more successful schools in general describe their schools as more team-based and involving, than do principals' views in the less successful schools.
- The results also indicate that according to the principals' views of external collaboration forms, all the schools still have giant steps to take in order to improve the present teacher-based collaboration forms kept going by 'fiery spirits', in order to connect the school as a whole to the local, regional, national and international world outside the school-house.
- The results further indicate that in the principals' views in the more successful schools, staff development is generally used as a lever in the planned improvement process for the whole school, while staff development in the principals' views in the less successful schools, generally, is more intentional and individual.
- The results also indicate that the leadership in the principals' views in the more successful schools, is an involving leadership, with the aim of

extending teachers participation in the leadership practice, while the leadership in the principals' views in the less successful schools, is more mixed between traditional and involving.

Finally the results indicate that the use of principals' views as the unit for analysis, creates an opening for researchers, professionals, and policy makers to add new perspectives to their present perceptions of internal capacities for school improvement. By unfolding the power relations and how and where the power is realised within and between schools, and between schools and the community, such an analysis could help all the stake-holders in school to add additional perspectives to a schools' collective readiness for improvement, as well as collective capacities to handle the improvement process. It enables an understanding not only of what supports, preserves or delays the improvement process in schools, but also how the support, preservation or delay is decided and realised. It is therefore possible to state that both parts of the aim of this thesis have been fulfilled.

Areas for future research

The focus in this thesis has been on principals' views on collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. In order to gain both a deeper and a wider understanding of the pedagogical work processes involved, in improving schools for school improvement, it is necessary to extend the unfolding of power relations and the realisation of power, not only at the level of the local school, but also to the level of the municipality. To make the model function as an instrument for analysis of the internal capacities before starting a school improvement process in practice, further development of the model and the analysis as such is necessary, as is making it possible to compare views from different stake-holders in the improvement process. Such a methodological development of the present analysis model is one important area for future research that evolves from the results.

A second area for future research is how the work with the internal capacities for schools improvement is affected by standardised reform. International research (e.g. Giles & Hargreaves, 2006) as well as Swedish research (e.g. Blossing, 2004) has shown that secondary schools are especially resilient to change. Blossing also showed that Swedish secondary schools have gradually become more collaborative and involving. In their research Giles and Hargreaves (2006) described innovative secondary schools as being especially imperilled by standardised reform. The results from my thesis indicate that principals' views in more successful secondary schools describe their schools as more involving and more collaborative, than do principals' views in the less successful secondary schools. With a partially implemented stronger focus on

standardised reforms such as schools' accountability for pupils' results already in place, it could be useful to follow, in a longitudinal perspective, what happens with principals' and teachers' ideological views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement in secondary school, over time and in relation to the stronger focus on schools' accountability.

The results indicate that in the principals' views the external collaboration forms are quite limited in terms of internal capacities for school improvement. When external collaboration exists, it is built on enthusiastic teachers that more or less run these external projects as their own, a pattern that is also backed up by the principals. In the principals' views there are no differences in practice between more successful schools and less successful schools. We know from previous research, referred to above, that external influences are important for the improvement processes in schools. Therefore a third area for future research would be an international study of principals' views of local, national, and international collaboration, as internal capacities for school improvement, to reflect the situation in Swedish secondary schools in relation to other international contexts in education.

Finally, results from research on gender and school leadership (e.g. Franzén, 2006) show the difficulty of separating male and female leadership behaviour according to gender. Franzén described more a male and/or female behaviour, as performed by male principals and female principals. The importance of elaborating the gender perspective in the social division of labour and the social distribution of work in schools, in relation to the perspective of principals and teachers, is definitely a challenging area for future research.

8. SUMMARY IN SWEDISH

Utgångspunkter

Enligt Lpo 94 har rektor det formella ansvaret för att leda skolan så att ett kontinuerligt och långsiktigt förbättringsarbete integreras i det dagliga arbetet i skolan. Lärarna förväntas samarbeta i arbetslag och eleverna skall vara delaktiga i planeringen av sitt eget lärande. Undervisningen skall präglas av tvärvetenskaplighet och uppmuntra till problemlösning och reflektion. Förbättringsarbetet skall genomföras inom ramen för en obligatorisk skolgång för eleverna och där lärarna skall värdera och bedöma elevernas prestationer. Detta skall ske i en skola där de sociala målen skall bedömas som lika viktiga som kunskapsmålen för elevernas lärande och resultat. Rektors möjligheter att skapa förutsättningar för en skolförbättring som, i samklang med skolans uppdrag, är både långsiktig, effektiv, mänsklig och integrerad i det dagliga arbetet i skolan, beror på externa omständigheter såväl som på skolans samlade interna förutsättningar att hantera förbättringsprocesser. De externa omständigheterna, som t.ex. elevupptagningsområdets socioekonomiska karaktär är ofta svåra faktorer att påverka för den enskilda skolans rektor och lärare. Det som är möjligt att påverka är skolans egen interna beredskap och kapacitet för att hantera förbättringsprocesser. Dessvärre finns det knappast några generella lösningsmetoder. På samma sätt som det tas för givet att en idrottare eller en dansare inte uppträder utan att vara väl förberedd för sin uppgift, lika självklart borde det dock vara att utveckla den enskilda skolans samlade beredskap och förbättringskapaciteter så att ledning och lärare är väl förberedda för att hantera skolförbättring.

Den här avhandlingen är en del i forskningsprojektet *Structure, Culture, Leadership: prerequisites for successful schools?* (SCL-projektet)⁶⁷ och fokuserar på tre interna förbättringskapaciteter som i en förstudie inom avhandlingens ram och i tidigare forskning inom området har visat sig vara betydelsefulla för rektorer och lärare i skolor som tillsammans vill vara väl förberedda inför en förbättringsprocess och samtidigt ha kapaciteter för att kunna hantera själva förbättringsprocessen tillsammans i praktiken: interna- och externa samarbets-

⁶⁷SCL-projektet startade 2003 och avslutas 2008. Projektet är lokaliserat till Centrum för skollärandeutveckling vid Umeå universitet och leds av professor Olof Johansson med en vetenskaplig ledningsgrupp bestående av docent Jonas Höög, Umeå universitet, professor Leif Lindberg, Växjö universitet och docent Anders Olofsson, Mittuniversitetet, Campus Härnösand. Projektet har finansierats av Vetenskapsrådet.

former, kompetensutveckling och ledarskap. En av orsakerna till att studera interna förbättringskapaciteter i svenska 7-9 skolor har varit att det ibland tycks vara så att beslutsfattare på både kommunal och nationell nivå, såväl som rektorer och lärare tar skolans förbättringsberedskap och förmåga att hantera förbättringsarbetet för given, eller till och med ignorerar frågan i sig. En konsekvens av detta kan då bli isolerade skolförbättringsprojekt, med liten koppling till skolans inriktning, skolans personal och den dagliga verksamheten. Sådana förbättringsprojekt kan givetvis vara värdefulla för de direkt inblandade, men bidrar sällan till en mer långsiktig utveckling för hela skolan, då de ofta avklingar när projektmedlen tar slut. En annan orsak har varit den performativa förändringen i de västerländska skolorna under början av 2000-talet. Rektorer och lärare måste idag förhålla sig till en arbetssituation som lägger ett större resultatansvar på den enskilda skolan. I dag 2008, tycks rektorer leva i ett ideologiskt korstryck mellan en pedagogisk resultatorientering, genom en utökad satsning på inspektioner och test av elever i allt lägre åldrar, och en pedagogisk processororientering för att bl.a. genomföra och hantera olika typer av skolförbättringsprocesser. Detta skall dessutom genomföras inom ett krympande ekonomiskt utrymme för skolan på kommunal nivå. Sammantaget understryker dessa indikationer nödvändigheten av en kontinuerlig förberedelse för förbättringsarbetet i skolan, inte bara för rektorer och lärare, utan också för övriga intressenter inom skolområdet.

Fokus i avhandlingen är på skolans interna förbättringskapaciteter. En skolas *interna förbättringskapaciteter* är den samlade förmågan hos rektorer och lärare i en enskild skolkontext, som krävs för att skolan som helhet skall vara väl förberedd inför och kunna genomföra en skolförbättringsprocess. Det betyder att både ledning och personal har de kunskaper och färdigheter som krävs för att kunna hantera de förbättringsprocesser som är nödvändiga för att kunna genomföra skolans uppdrag i enlighet med gällande styrdokument. Interna förbättringskapaciteter är möjliga att både utveckla och lära sig att hantera. De interna förbättringskapaciteterna har här studerats genom rektorernas föreställningar och genom generella skolobservationer.

Den första delen av syftet med avhandlingen var att fånga, tolka och analysera rektorernas föreställningar om den egna skolans samarbetsformer, kompetensutveckling och ledarskap som interna förbättringskapaciteter, i de fem mer framgångsrika 7-9 skolorna och de fyra mindre framgångsrika skolorna i SCL-projektet, och att jämföra de kvalitativa skillnaderna och/eller likheterna i rektorernas föreställningar inom och mellan de nio skolorna. Den andra delen av syftet var att försöka beskriva och analysera skolans verksamhet och rektorernas föreställningar i samma språkdräkt och analysmodell.

Vad gör en skola mer eller mindre framgångsrik?

En avgörande del i den här forskningsprocessen är kategoriseringen av de nio skolorna som mer eller mindre framgångsrika. Skolframgång kan mätas på olika sätt. I det svenska skolsystemet finns det ett antal metoder att mäta elevers måluppfyllelse avseende kunskapsmålen i läroplanen. Bland de vanligaste metoderna kan nämnas elevernas godkända betyg i samtliga ämnen i årskurs nio, behörighet för gymnasiestudier, meritpoäng och resultat på nationella utvärderingar och internationella test. Sådana resultat är offentliga via t.ex. Skolverkets databaser för landets 7-9 skolor. I enlighet med den gällande svenska läroplanen, Lpo 94, är dock inte en god måluppfyllelse avseende kunskapsmålen tillräckligt för att en skola skall betraktas som framgångsrik. I den svenska grundskolan är elevernas måluppfyllelse avseende kunskapsmålen *och* de sociala målen nödvändiga för bedömningen av om en skola är framgångsrik eller inte. En framgångsrik 7-9 skola i Sverige är således en skola där elevernas resultat uppfyller både kunskapsmålen och de sociala målen i läroplanen.

Instrument för att mäta de sociala målen är ovanligare också i Sverige. Inom SCL-projektet har det utvecklats ett instrument för att mäta de sociala målen, Social and Civic Objectives in Schools (SCOS),⁶⁸ som bygger på innehållet i Skolverkets BRUK-material. Genom att mäta elevernas uppfattningar i årskurs nio om hur skolan arbetar med och uppfyller de sociala målen i läroplanen, är SCOS det första svenska instrumentet som fokuserar på de sociala målen i ett bredare perspektiv och där eleverna är dem som utvärderas.

För att jämföra de 24 skolorna i SCL-projektet avseende skolors framgång, gällande både kunskapsmål och sociala mål, kombinerades skolornas Z-värden avseende medelvärdet av skolornas meritpoäng för åren 2004-2006 för att mäta kunskapsmålen. Den skalan kombinerades med skolornas resultat på SCOS-skalan som mäter uppfyllelsen av de sociala målen för varje skola. Därigenom skapades en standard som innehöll både skolornas uppnåelse av kunskapsmålen och de sociala målen. Från denna jämförelse mellan de 24 skolorna i SCL-projektet, utkristalliserades fem skolor som låg över medelvärdet på båda skalorna och fyra skolor som låg under medelvärdet på båda skalorna. De fem skolor som låg över medelvärdet på båda skalorna benämns här *mer framgångsrika skolor* och de fyra skolorna som låg under medelvärdet på båda skalorna benämns *mindre framgångsrika skolor*. Väl medveten om att det finns andra möjligheter att mäta skolframgång i olika nationella skolkontexter, valdes dessa nio skolor ut som mest intressanta för avhandlingens syfte.

Det empiriska materialet samlades in av tre forskningsteam som vart och ett bestod av både forskare och doktorander från SCL-projektet. Varje team besökte åtta skolor i fyra kommuner under 2,5 dagar vardera. Av det empiriska

⁶⁸ För en djupare beskrivning av SCOS se Ahlström och Höög (2008).

material som samlades in av forskningsteamerna används protokollen från de generella skolobservationerna och de transkriberade, 2,5 timmar långa och halvstrukturerade intervjuerna med de tio rektorerna och de två biträdande rektorerna vid de nio skolorna, som empiriskt underlag i avhandlingen.

Tidigare forskning

Forskningslitteraturen inom skolförbättringsområdet är omfattande. Där finns tydliga resultat som pekar på betydelsen av en skolas interna förutsättningar att stödja skolförbättringsprocessen. Förståelsen av en effektiv skolförbättring i den här studien bygger på den del av skolförbättringsforskningen som menar att för att möta de ökande kraven på skolors resultatansvar från olika intressenter i skolsystemet, måste skolan bygga upp en beredskap för förbättring, såväl som de interna förbättringskapaciteter som påverkar hur man kan hantera förbättringsprocessen.

Vad menar då den tidigare forskningen är viktiga förbättringskapaciteter och vad är det som karakteriserar dessa som stöd, både före och under en förbättringsprocess? Analysen av forskningslitteraturen avseende effektiv skolförbättring och kapacitetsbyggande i skolan pekar ut tre interna förbättringskapaciteter som visat sig ha stor betydelse för skolförbättringsprocessen: interna såväl som externa samarbetsformer, kompetensutvecklingen och ledarskapet.

En samarbetande skola beskrivs som mest effektiv för skolförbättringsprocessen. Forskningslitteraturen betonar vikten av samarbetande arbetslag och en strävan mot att utveckla lärgemenskaper (learning communities) inom skolan, såväl som med världen utanför skolhuset. Viktiga ingredienser i samarbetet i och utanför skolan handlar bl.a. om att bygga upp en grund av förtroende och tillit mellan ledning och lärare och mellan lärare i arbetslagen. Att skapa en vilja att samarbeta och att samarbetet blir en meningsskapande funktion för lärarna i arbetslagen.

Rektor har en viktig uppgift genom att på olika sätt stödja lärarna i skolförbättringsarbetet. Enligt tidigare forskning är det nödvändigt att förändra skolans tradition avseende kompetensutveckling för lärare och knyta den närmare skolans vardagsarbete. Kompetensutvecklingen måste utvecklas från att ha varit ett individuellt intresse och ansvar för den enskilde läraren i ämnet, till att kunna användas som en hävstång för rektor och arbetslag i det samlade arbetet med hela skolans förbättringsarbete.

Inom skolförbättringsforskningen betonas vikten av både chefskap och ledarskap och en förståelse för betydelsen av både skolans struktur och kultur i den praktiska ledningen av skolan. Det mest effektiva ledarskapet för skolförbättring beskrivs som ett ledarskap som innebär ett formellt ansvar hos rektor som chef att stödja utvecklingen av både människor och organisation och leda det pedagogiska arbetet i skolan, men också ett ledarskap som kommer till

uttryck på många sätt i vardagsarbetet genom lärarnas ansvarstagande och initiativkraft i en interaktion mellan rektor, lärare och den egna skolkontexten i syfte att genomföra skolans uppdrag.

En modell för att analysera rektorers föreställningar och skolans verksamhet i samma språkdräkt

Förståelsen av föreställningar⁶⁹ är här baserad på utvecklingen av konceptet i projektet *Long-term effects of higher education* (LONG-projektet) vid Umeå universitet under åttiotalet. Föreställningar förstås här som överlappande principer för hur vi tolkar och utvärderar världen. I relation till värderingar och attityder förstås föreställningar som mer abstrakta, generella och permanenta. Rektorernas föreställningar om de tre interna förbättringskapaciteterna blir på det sättet den 'gestalt' som konstituerar den ideologiska länkningen mellan samhället och rektorernas uppfattningar. Att arbeta med föreställningsbegreppet innebär är att visualisera tolkningen, för att beskriva de föreställningskategorier som har konstruerats i mötet mellan forskaren och texten. Att studera och tolka föreställningar handlar om att kunna se bortom de enskilda uttrycken i en text och försöka förstå hela bilden av det studerade fenomenet i akt och mening att skapa ett sammanhang som är meningsfullt. Det handlar om att konstruera de olika föreställningskategorier som intervjutexten förmedlar. Fokus här är att konstruera föreställningskategorier för att göra det möjligt att förstå, analysera och jämföra vad rektorerna i olika skolor och i skolor med olika framgångsnivå, tänker om samarbetsformer, kompetensutveckling och ledarskap som interna förbättringskapaciteter. Rektorernas föreställningar och de generella skolobservationerna analyserades i samma analysmodell, genom att använda de teoretiska begreppen *struktur* och *kultur*. Struktur uttrycker här maktrelationerna i skolans förbättringsarbete och kultur används här i betydelsen av hur maktrelationerna förverkligas. Förståelsen av struktur och kultur refererar till den brittiske utbildningssociologen Basil Bernsteins begreppsapparat, där struktur tolkas som skolans arbetsdelning. Det innebär var arbetsdelningen avseende de interna förbättringskapaciteterna är lokaliserad och hur den genomförs. Kultur refererar här till skolans arbetsfördelning. Det innebär hur arbetsfördelningen avseende de interna förbättringskapaciteterna genomförs och vart genomförandet är lokaliserat.⁷⁰

Användningen av analysmodellen och rektorernas föreställningar tillför ytterligare perspektiv till beskrivningen av skolans förbättringskapaciteter,

⁶⁹ Se t.ex. Zetterström (1988).

⁷⁰ De funna lokaliseringmöjligheterna i skolsystemet för struktur och kultur är den politiska nivån i kommunen, rektorsnivån, arbetslagsnivån och den enskilda lärarnivån.

genom att visa hur maktrelationerna och förverkligandet av maktrelationerna, avseende de interna förbättringskapaciteterna, förstås av rektorerna i skolan. Den typen av information ger rektorer och lärare i skolan en vidgad kunskap i att förstå skolans beredskap för och förutsättningar att hantera den faktiska skolförbättringsprocessen. Den kunskapen kan sedan bidra till en ökad förståelse av hur skolförbättringsprocessen kan utvecklas över tid. För att kunna använda skolobservationerna i samma språkdräkt som rektorernas föreställningar, för att tydligare beskriva resultaten på skolnivå, var det nödvändigt att skriva om observationsprotokollen i linje med de två teoretiska begreppen struktur och kultur i analysmodellen.

Huvudresultat

De konstruerade föreställningskategorierna är kärnan i resultaten, eftersom de gör kriterierna för tolkningen synliga för läsaren och tydliggör att det är forskaren som tolkar texterna och konstruerar de olika föreställningskategorierna utifrån den tolkningen. Tre olika föreställningskategorier har konstruerats avseende skolans interna och externa samarbetsformer, kompetensutveckling och ledarskap som interna förbättringskapaciteter. I den första föreställningskategorin fattar rektor besluten på egen hand eller tillsammans med sin ledningsgrupp när det gäller samarbetsformer, kompetensutveckling, eller ledarskap. Dessa beslut realiserar i skolans arbetslag som betraktas som kärnan i skolans verksamhet. I den andra föreställningskategorin fattar rektor också besluten, ensam eller tillsammans med sin ledningsgrupp, när det gäller de tre förbättringskapaciteterna, men här realiserar besluten av de enskilda lärarna i sina ämnen. I den tredje föreställningskategorin, som bara påträffades avseende kompetensutveckling, fattas besluten på den politiska eller administrativa nivån ovanför den lokala skolan och besluten realiserar av skolans rektor.

Den andra delen av resultaten är beskrivningen och analysen av de nio skolorna som byggs upp av skolobservationerna och rektorernas föreställningar om de tre förbättringskapaciteterna. Resultaten från båda empiriska materialen är analyserade i den tidigare beskrivna analysmodellen.

Analysen av *de fem mer framgångsrika skolorna* (E1, F2, G1, K1 och L1) och en av *de fyra mindre framgångsrika skolorna* (A2, D1, K2 och L2), skola L2, avseende interna samarbetsformer, visar att makten att fatta besluten är i rektorernas föreställningar lokaliserad till rektorsnivån och realiseringen av besluten är lokaliserad till arbetslagen.⁷¹ I dessa rektorers föreställningar följer deras beslut en gemensam inriktning för skolans verksamhet som bygger på att uppnå både kunskapsmålen och de sociala målen i läroplanen. Denna

⁷¹ I en av de mer framgångsrika skolorna, skola K1, realiserar besluten om de interna samarbetsformerna delvis också hos de enskilda lärarna i deras ämnestraditioner.

inriktning är både kommunicerad och accepterad av arbetslagen. Realiseringen av besluten i arbetslagen karakteriseras av en vilja till samarbete och en tillit till kollegor både inom och mellan arbetslagen och mellan arbetslagen och rektor.

I dessa rektorers föreställningar beslutar de om kompetensutvecklingen på ett sådant sätt att den ska bli ett stöd för arbetslagen att fullfölja den bestämda inriktningen också i praktiken. På det sättet realiseras kompetensutveckling som en del i vardagsarbetet på ett naturligt sätt i arbetslagen.

Skolans ledarskap är ett ”involverande” ledarskap i dessa rektorers föreställningar. Rektor i skola L1, exemplifierar det involverande ledarskapet genom att beskriva hur de har ett rullande schema för arbetslagens representation i ’konsultationen’, skolans motsvarighet till ledningsgruppen. Syftet med detta är att successivt ge alla lärare möjlighet att få mer insikt i och praktiskt pröva olika delar av ledarskapet i praktiken. I rektors föreställningar är detta inte bara ett försök att ändra skolans strategier. Det är också ett sätt att förändra själva lärarrollen till att också innefatta en vidgad syn på, och en delaktighet i, skolans ledarskap i praktiken. I de mer framgångsrika skolorna och i L2 bland de mindre framgångsrika skolorna, uttrycker rektorerna i sina föreställningar om ledarskapet som en förbättringskapacitet också att lärarna visar en vilja att ta en aktiv del i ledarskapet och att de har tryggheten att också göra det. Sammantaget beskriver rektorernas föreställningar i dessa skolor en gemensam beredskap bland lärare och ledning för skolförbättring och att de interna samarbetsformerna, kompetensutvecklingen och ledarskapet verkar som gemensamma interna förbättringskapaciteter på deras skolor.

Analysen av resultaten i en av de mindre framgångsrika skolorna, skola A2, visar att både rektor och lärare är nöjda med den situation som råder på skolan. Tolkningen av skolobservationerna är att skolan är en skola med goda fysiska förutsättningar för samarbete. Analysen av rektorernas föreställningar om de tre förbättringskapaciteterna visar att skolan är en traditionell skola. På A2 fattar rektor besluten och de realiseras av den enskilde läraren i sina ämnen och deras tradition, även om skolan i praktiken är organiserad i två arbetslag. Detta tolkas i analysen av A2 som att vid tiden för denna studie har A2 inte, i rektors föreställningar, en samlad beredskap för skolförbättring och de interna och externa samarbetsformerna, kompetensutvecklingen och ledarskapet fungerar inte som gemensamma interna förbättringskapaciteter.

Situationen på de resterande två mindre framgångsrika skolorna, skola K2 och D1 är mer komplicerad utifrån analysen av skolobservationer och rektorernas föreställningar. I båda dessa skolor har rektorerna rekryterats för att utveckla skolorna från traditionella skolor som bygger på lärarens autonomi i klassrummet och i ämnet och har en åtskillnad mellan ämnen och mellan personer, för att utveckla involverande skolor som präglas av en utökad delaktighet hos arbetslagen i hela skolans verksamhet. Rektorerna på dessa skolor ger uttryck för båda dessa föreställningskategorier. Dels har de en tydlig

föreställning om att det är den involverande och samarbetande skolan som är målet för deras arbete. Dels beskriver de att den traditionella skolan existerar i delar av lärarkollegiet. Genom att använda analysmodellen var det möjligt att tydliggöra maktförhållandena i båda föreställningskategorierna och hur och var makten realiserar i dessa. I K2 pressar rektor lärarna hårt för att snabba på den ideologiska förändringen från en individbaserad verksamhet till en lagbaserad verksamhet. De två rektorerna i D1 har valt att vänta ut arbetslagen så att de själva skall se sina möjligheter att skapa en mer samarbetande och involverande skola. I rektorernas föreställningar finns det mindre grupper av lärare som känner sin autonoma lärarroll hotad och därför på olika sätt motarbetar förbättringsarbetet. På dessa skolor visar analysen att det pågår en ideologisk kamp mellan den involverande och samarbetande föreställningskategorin och den traditionella och separerande föreställningskategorin om hur skola skall bedrivas. Rektorernas föreställningar indikerar att dessa skolor inte kommer att kunna skapa en gemensam förbättringsberedskap, eller använda samarbetsformerna, kompetensutvecklingen och ledarskapet som gemensamma förbättringskapaciteter förrän majoriteten av lärarna är villiga, ser en mening med och känner en trygghet i samarbete och utökad involvering i hela skolans verksamhet.

Forskningslitteraturen beskriver det externa samarbetet som en betydelsefull del i en skolas beredskap för skolförbättring och som en viktig förbättringskapacitet i sig. Rektorernas föreställningar om skolans externa samarbete som en intern förbättringskapacitet är intressant. I alla nio skolorna litar man helt på att enskilda, intresserade lärare, s.k. eldsjälar, skall realisera de beslut som rektor fattar om de externa relationerna. Varför ändras de involverande och lagbaserade skolorna plötsligt till traditionella och individbaserade skolor när det gäller samarbetet med världen utanför skolhuset? Huvudorsaken är förmodligen, vilket också rektorernas föreställningar indikerar, att deras verksamhet i externt samarbete oftast sker som isolerade innovationer, som inte finns med i skolans mer långsiktiga förbättringsverksamhet och som också finansieras med specifika ekonomiska medel. Vid tiden för analysen av resultaten visar rektorernas föreställningar om de externa samarbetsformerna, att de inte kommer att bidra till att bygga upp en gemensam förbättringsberedskap eller fungera som en gemensam intern förbättringskapacitet för någon av skolorna.

Även om vidare forskning är nödvändig visar analysen av resultaten i stort att analysmodellen ger forskaren möjlighet att synliggöra maktrelationerna i skolan och hur de förverkligas i skolorna med avseende på de tre interna förbättringskapaciteterna. Detta i sin tur innebär att forskningen om skolans interna förutsättningar för skolförbättring, därigenom får ytterligare perspektiv för att bättre förstå rektorers och lärares samlade förbättringsberedskap och hur samarbetsformer, kompetensutveckling och ledarskap kan fungera som gemensamma interna förbättringskapaciteter. Det är intressanta resultat eftersom tidi-

gare forskning har visat på betydelsen av en samlad beredskap för skolförbättring på den enskilda skolan och utvecklade gemensamma interna förbättringskapaciteter för att hantera förbättringsprocessen. Denna avhandling tydliggör, med hjälp av rektorernas föreställningar som enhet för analyserna och genom att använda en analysmodell för kvalitativa beskrivningar, kvalitativa skillnader och likheter, i hur och var i det lokala skolsystemet arbetsdelningen och arbetsfördelningen genomförs med avseende på tre kritiska interna förbättringskapaciteter, i fem mer framgångsrika och fyra mindre framgångsrika svenska 7-9 skolor

Slutsatser

Det övergripande bidraget från denna avhandling till tidigare forskning om interna förbättringskapaciteter är utvecklingen och användandet av den analysmodell för kvalitativa beskrivningar som använts för att kunna analysera både skolobservationerna och rektorernas föreställningar i samma språkdräkt. Användandet av struktur och kultur som de två teoretiska begreppen i analysarbetet, gjorde det möjligt att jämföra de kvalitativa skillnaderna och likheterna inom och mellan de nio undersökta skolorna, avseende de tre interna förbättringskapaciteterna, genom att synliggöra maktrelationerna och var och hur dessa förverkligas. På detta sätt har denna studie bidragit med ytterligare perspektiv till förståelsen av skolors samlade beredskap för förbättring såväl som skolors gemensamma interna kapaciteter för att hantera skolförbättringsprocesser.

Resultaten indikerar både likheter och skillnader mellan rektorernas föreställningar både inom skolor och mellan skolor och mellan skolor med olika framgångsnivå.

- Resultaten indikerar att rektorernas föreställningar i de mer framgångsrika skolorna generellt beskriver sina skolor som genomgående mer arbetslagsbaserade och involverande än vad rektorerna i de mindre framgångsrika skolorna gör.
- Resultaten visar också att när det gäller rektorernas föreställningar om de externa samarbetsformerna har samtliga skolor stora kliv att ta för att förflytta sig från dagens verksamhet som hålls uppe av individuella eldsjälur, till att koppla ihop skolan som helhet med den lokala, regionala, nationella och internationella världen utanför skolhuset.
- Resultaten indikerar vidare att rektorernas föreställningar i de mer framgångsrika skolorna mer genomgående använder kompetensutveckling som en hävstång i förbättringsprocessen för hela skolan, medan kompetensutvecklingen i rektorernas föreställningar i de mindre framgångsrika skolorna beskrivs som mer tillfällig och individuell.

- Resultaten indikerar också att ledarskapet i rektorernas föreställningar i de mer framgångsrika skolorna är ett mer involverande ledarskap som syftar till att utvidga lärarnas medverkan i skolans ledarskapspraktik. Rektorernas föreställningar i de mindre framgångsrika skolorna beskriver ett ledarskap som pendlar mellan det involverande och det traditionella.

Slutligen indikerar användandet av rektorernas föreställningar som enheten för analys att det öppnar för att ge forskare, professionella och beslutsfattare ytterligare perspektiv vad avser skolans samlade förbättringsberedskap och gemensamma interna förbättringskapaciteter. Genom att tydliggöra maktrelationerna och förverkligandet av maktrelationerna avseende de interna förbättringskapaciteterna på en skola, så kan skolans gemensamma förbättringsberedskap och användande av interna förbättringskapaciteter beskrivas och förtydligas. Det förbättrar möjligheterna att förstå inte bara vad som stödjer, konserverar eller fördröjer förbättringsprocessen på en skola, utan också hur stödet, konserveringen eller fördröjandet beslutas och realiseras. Det är därför möjligt att konstatera att båda delarna i avhandlingens syfte är uppfyllda.

9. SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

Points of departure

This thesis is part of the Swedish research project *Structure, Culture, Leadership: prerequisites for successful schools?* (The SCL-project)⁷². The focus is on three internal capacities that are found to be important for principals and teachers in schools if they are to perform well as a collective in order to create readiness for school improvement, as well as the internal capacities to handle the improvement process: collaboration forms, staff development, and leadership. One reason for studying internal capacities for school improvement has been that policy makers at the state and municipality level, and sometimes principals and teachers in the local schools too, seem to take the existence of internal capacities for school improvement in schools for granted, or even worse, ignore the question itself. One consequence can be isolated improvement projects with little or no connection to the direction of the school, the people in the school, or the school practice. Of course such isolated projects might be interesting for the people involved, but they seldom contribute to the improvement of the whole school, and often come to an end when the money is gone. Another reason has been the on-going performative change in schools in the western world at the beginning of the 21st century. Principals and teachers in Swedish secondary schools have to relate to a working situation with growing accountability for their schools. Principals seem to live in an ideological cross-pressure inbetween a pedagogical result orientation, investigated through inspections and national and international tests, and a pedagogical process orientation, with shrinking finances at the level of the municipality. Put together these implications underline the need for continuous preparation for the improvement processes in school, not only for principals and teachers, but also for all the different stake-holders in school. It is a preparation for school improvement that has to be both people and practice focused, and recurrent to become effective and sustainable with regard to pupils' accomplishment of the

⁷² The SCL-project started 2003 and finishes 2008. It is located at the Centre for Principal Development, Umeå University, and is led by professor Olof Johansson with co-directors reader Jonas Höög, Umeå University, professor Leif Lindberg, Växjö University and reader Anders Olofsson, Mid Sweden University, Campus Härnösand. The Swedish Research Council finances the project.

academic objectives as well as the social/civic objectives in the present Swedish National Curriculum.

These internal capacities have been studied through the principals' views, and through general school observations in the five more successful and the four less successful schools in the SCL-project. In the entire SCL-project 24 secondary schools were investigated.

The principals' views of the internal capacities are used as the unit for analysis to capture different modalities in order to understand, compare and communicate what is decided, and how these decisions are realised in each of these nine schools. Here the decisions are understood as the *school structure*, and the realisation of the decision is understood as the *school culture*. The principals' views are used as the unit for analysis in order to capture the principals' different ways of understanding the internal capacities for school improvement. This is done in order to make it possible for me as a researcher to be able to understand the opportunities to lead a school in accomplishing school improvement that is both effective and sustainable, depending on external circumstances as well as on internal capacities. The external circumstances, such as parents' socio-economic status or the financial situation of the school district political board, are often difficult for an individual principal in a school to alter. The focus here is on principals' views of schools' *internal capacities for school improvement*. In this thesis schools' internal capacities for school improvement is understood as the abilities of the principal and the teachers as a collective, within a certain school context, to be prepared for and be able to handle the improvement process in order to fulfil the national and local objectives for their school. It is possible both to build and to learn to master the internal capacities for school improvement.

The aim is to analyse the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement, in the five more successful and the four less successful Swedish secondary schools in the SCL-project, and to compare the qualitative similarities and/or differences in the principals' views within and between the nine schools. The aim is also to describe and analyse the school practice in the same usage and model as the principals' views.

What makes a school more or less successful?

A crucial issue is the categorisation of the nine schools investigated as more successful and less successful. School success could be measured differently. In the Swedish school system there are multiple tools to help principals measure the level of pupils' accomplishment related to academic objectives. Traditionally the most common methods have been subject grades, the number of pupils leaving the 9th form with satisfactory grades in all subjects,

qualification for the upper-secondary school, the average level of merit points, and national and international tests, for example. In Sweden, such statistical data for measuring and ranking secondary schools are easily accessible in the public realm. However, according to the present Swedish National Curriculum for the compulsory school, this is not in itself sufficient for a school to be successful. In Swedish secondary schools pupils' accomplishment of the academic objectives, *as well as* the social/civic objectives is equally important. Consequently, in Sweden a successful school is a school where pupils accomplish both the academic and the social/civic objectives as prescribed in the National Curriculum.

Instruments for measuring the social/civic objectives are rarer, something which also applies to the Swedish school system. However, in the SCL-project this kind of instrument, Social/Civic Objectives in Schools (SCOS)⁷³, has been developed. In assessing pupils in the 9th form, to measure how well schools accomplish the social and civic objectives in the present Swedish National Curriculum, SCOS is the first Swedish instrument that focuses on the social/civic task of schools in a broader sense.

In order to rank the 24 schools in the SCL-project, according to academic outcome as well as social and civic outcome, the SCL-project has chosen a relative comparison between the schools. In order to compare the schools to measure school success, the Z-values⁷⁴ of the schools' mean merit-values in 2004-2006 to cover the academic objectives, and the SCOS-scale to cover the social/civic objectives for each school, were combined to create a standard to measure school success. From this comparison procedure, five schools were found to be above the middle of the ranking for both scales. These schools are labelled the *more successful schools*. Four schools were found to be below the middle of the ranking for both scales. Those schools were labelled the *less successful schools*. Consequently, whilst being well aware of other possibilities for interpretation of school success in different national school contexts, these nine schools were chosen as best serving the aim of this thesis.

The empirical material was collected by three research teams from the SCL-project, consisting of both professors and doctoral students in each team, during a 2.5 day visit to each school. Each team visited eight schools in four municipalities. The empirical material used was general school observations, following a specific manual, and individual, 2.5 hour long, semi-structured interviews with the ten principals and two deputy principals in the nine schools, also following a specific manual.

⁷³ See Ahlström and Höög (2008).

⁷⁴ $Z=(X-M)/S$, where Z is the normalized value, X is the value for each school, M is the mean and S is the standard deviation for the 24 schools.

Previous research

The amount of research literature in the field of school improvement is huge, and there is a strong accord regarding the importance of internal pre-conditions in schools to support the improvement process. The understanding of effective school improvement here, is that in order to meet the expectations of schools' accountability from the different stake-holders, to enhance pupils' outcomes in line with the local and national objectives, it is necessary for schools to build a collective readiness for improvement, as well as internal capacities to handle the improvement process.

According to previous research, which internal capacities is it critical to build in order for schools to enhance improvement, and what can we learn about the characteristics of these internal capacities in order to support schools before and during the improvement process? Analysing the research literature on effective school improvement and capacity building in schools pointed out three crucial internal capacities to enhance improvement: internal as well as external collaboration forms, staff development and leadership.

A collaborative school seems to be most effective for the improvement process. In the research literature the collaboration form to strive for, in order to prepare schools for improvement, is the development of learning communities in school, and together with the world outside the school-house. In order to build collaboration forms a collective foundation of trust between the principal and the teachers in a school is necessary, as is a willingness among teachers to collaborate. It is about creating a willingness and a reason for collaboration among teachers in a school.

To make school improvement happen, principals have to support teachers' development. It is therefore necessary to change the tradition of staff development by connecting it to the day-to-day school practice. Staff development has to improve from having been an individual interest and the responsibility of the teachers, to becoming the lever for the principal and the teaching teams to use in the improvement work for the whole school.

In the school improvement literature on the improvement process, there is an emphasis on both the principal and the leadership, and the need for both a structural and a cultural awareness in the leadership practice. The most effective leadership practice to enhance school improvement seems to be both a positioned and distributed leadership.

A model for the analysis of principals' views and their practice in the same usage

The understanding of views⁷⁵ is based on the development of the concept in the project 'Long-term effects of higher education' (The LONG-project) at Umeå University in the 1980s. Views are understood as overlapping principles for how we interpret and evaluate the world. In relation to values and attitudes, views are regarded as more abstract, general and permanent. Principals' views become the 'gestalt' that constitutes the ideological link between society and the conceptions of the principal. The reason for working with views is to visualise the interpretation in order to describe the views that have been constructed in the meeting between the researcher and the text. To study views is about looking beyond the single expressions, and trying to understand the whole picture of the investigated phenomenon, in order to create a context that is meaningful. It is about constructing different view types to make it possible to understand and compare what principals in the nine schools think about collaboration forms, staff development and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement. The principals' views and the school practice through the general school observations are analysed in the same model developed for analysis using the theoretical concepts of structure and culture. In order to be able to use the general school observations as a second empirical source to build up the school cases together with the principals' views, it was necessary to re-write the observation forms in line with the theoretical concepts in the analysis model. By so doing, it was possible to analyse both the principals' views and their practice in the same usage. The structure expresses here the power relations in school improvement, and the culture expresses how the power relations are realised. This understanding of structure and culture refers to the work of the British educational sociologist Basil Bernstein. Structure refers to the division of labour in a school. That is *the power to decide* about the internal capacities, and where it is positioned⁷⁶ and exercised in a school. The culture refers in this case to the distribution of work in a school. That is *the modes of control*, about the internal capacities and at what position⁷⁷ in the school system the control takes place. By using the model for analysis of the principals' views the results provide additional perspectives on how the power and the realisation of power, regarding collaboration forms, staff development and leadership as internal capacities for school improvement are understood by the principals in schools. With such information at hand it increases the possibilities for

⁷⁵ See Zetterström (1988).

⁷⁶ The positions found are the political position, the principal position, the position of the teaching teams, and the position of the individual teacher in the local school system.

⁷⁷ The positions found for the location of the power and/or the realisation of power are the political level, the principal level, the level of the teaching team, and the level of the teacher.

principals and teachers to understand their present readiness for the improvement process, and the pre-conditions to handle this process. It also provides them with additional knowledge of how to proceed in the improvement process over time.

The main results

The constructed view types, interpreted from the interview text are at the core of the result, as they make the criteria for the interpretation visible to the reader, and emphasise that it is the researcher who adds on the interpretation of the texts and constructs the different view types. Regarding collaboration forms two view types have been constructed. The *principal distributed team-based collaboration form (A)*, where the decisions (the structure) are located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions (the culture) is located to the position of the teaching teams, and the *principal distributed teacher-based collaboration form (B)*, where the decisions are located to the principal position and the realisation of the decisions is located to the individual teachers in their subject traditions. According to staff development three view types have been constructed: *principal distributed team-based staff development (A)*, where the decisions are located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions is located to the position of the teaching teams, a *principal distributed teacher-based staff development (B)*, where the decisions are located to the principal position, the realisation of the decisions is located to the individual teachers in their subject traditions, and *politically distributed principal-based staff development (C)*, where the decisions are located to the political and/or administrative position in the school district, and the realisation of the decisions is located to the principal at the individual school. Finally two view types have been constructed regarding leadership: an *involving leadership (A)*, where the decisions are located to the principal position, the realisation of the decisions is located to the teaching teams, and a *traditional leadership (B)*, where the decisions are located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions is located to the individual teachers in their subject traditions.

The second part of the results are the descriptions of the nine schools, built up from the interpretation of the general school observations, in terms of the theoretical concepts of structure and culture, and the principals' views of collaboration forms, staff development and leadership, as internal capacities for school improvement. The results from the descriptions of the school practice through the general school observations, and the results of the principals' views, were then analysed with the analysis model, and related to one or more of the constructed view types, concerning the three internal capacities for school improvement.

The analysis of the *more successful schools* (E1, F2, G1, K1, and L1) and in school L2 among the *less successful schools* (A2, D1, K2 and L2), concerning the internal collaboration forms, shows that the power to make the decisions is located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions, the modes of control, is located to the teaching team position⁷⁸. In these principals' views the principal's decisions follow a common, communicated and accepted direction for the school, in order to accomplish the academic and social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum. The realisation of the decisions in the teaching teams is characterised by a willingness to collaborate within and between the teams, and mutual trust among teams, teachers in the teams and between the teams and the principal.

In the principals' views staff development is also structured to support the teaching teams to fulfil the decided, communicated, common direction of the school in practice. By so doing staff development has become a natural part of the day-to-day work in the school and a lever in the school improvement process.

In these principals' views, leadership is an involving leadership. In one of the more successful schools, school L1, this is exemplified by the rolling schedule of representatives in the 'Consultation Team', to give all the teachers the opportunity to learn more about, and also practise, leadership tasks. From the principal's views in L1 there is not only a change of strategies in the school, but also a change of teacher performance. In the principals' views in the more successful schools, and in one of the less successful schools, school L2, most of the teachers in the teams demonstrate a willingness to keep and further develop the team-based and involving realisation of the leadership practice, and have the confidence to do it. The teaching teams feel at ease with the opportunities they have to influence and take on more responsibility for the entire work in school. The principals' views in these schools describe a collective readiness among the teachers for improvement, as well as a collective capacity to handle the improvement process regarding the internal capacities investigated.

The analysis of the results in one of the less successful schools, school A2, shows that both the principal and the teachers seem to be satisfied with the present situation. The interpretation of the school observations shows that the school has the physical pre-requisites for collaboration. The analysis of the principal's views shows that the school is a traditional school. The power is located to the principal position, and the realisation of the decisions is located to the position of individual teachers in their subject traditions, but organised into two teaching teams. At the time of this study A2 did not have the collective

⁷⁸ One of the more successful schools, K1, is partly teacher-based according to internal collaboration forms.

readiness, nor the internal capacities to handle the school improvement process effectively.

The situation in the remaining two less successful schools, K2 and D1, is rather special. In both schools the principals have been recruited to change their schools from traditional schools, preserving individualism and departmentalisation, into involving schools to extend the teachers' involvement in general in the day-to-day school practice. According to the principals' views the principals themselves have a strong vision of how to accomplish this transition. By using the analysis model it was possible to unfold the position of the power to make decisions, and how and where the realisation of the power takes place in these two schools. The analysis of the results shows that the principal in K2 uses the strategy to push the teachers hard, and to actively make this transition happen. The principals in D1 are waiting for the teaching teams to start realising the decisions of making the school more involving and team-based in practice too. In both schools, in the principals' views, there are small but strong groups of teachers that feel their position as autonomous teachers in their classrooms and their subjects is threatened. There is an on-going 'ideological battle' between two view types, the involving and collaborative way of schooling vs. the traditional and individual way of schooling. It is about facing the risk of losing autonomy as a teacher in your subject. The principals' views indicate that they will not be able to create collective readiness and collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process, until a majority of the teachers are willing to collaborate, see the reasons for collaboration, and feel confident about becoming a team-based and involving school.

The research literature in this field emphasises the importance of external influence as an important internal readiness and capacity for schools to improve. The principals' views of external collaboration forms, as internal capacities for school improvement, are interesting. In all nine schools the principals rely totally on interested, individual teachers, 'the fiery spirits', to realise their decisions about external collaborations. How did the involving and team-based schools, change all of a sudden into traditional and teacher-based schools? The main reason is probably that the principals' views indicate that their external collaboration is mainly in the form of isolated innovations that are not put into a longer improvement perspective. At the time of this study the analysis of the principals' views of external collaboration forms as internal capacities for school improvement, is that they will not contribute to building up a collective readiness for improvement or the collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process.

Even if further research is necessary, the analysis of the results indicate that the use of the analysis model unfolds the power relations and the realisation of power in relation to the three internal capacities for school improvement investigated. That in turn provides the research in this area with additional

perspectives in order to better understand principals' and teachers' collective readiness for improvement, as well as their collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process. There are interesting findings as previous research shows that to make school improvement effective, schools need to have a collective readiness for improvement, as well as having the collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process. This thesis adds to that the principals' views of how and where that collective work takes place in five more successful and four less successful Swedish secondary schools.

Conclusions

The overall contribution of this thesis to previous research, regarding internal capacities for school improvement, has been the development and use of the model for analysis of principals' views and school practice in the same usage. The use of structure and culture as the theoretical concepts in the analysis made it possible to compare qualitative similarities and differences within and between the nine schools, by unfolding the power relations and how and where the power is realised in the nine schools investigated. By so doing this study has opened up the possibilities for additional perspectives in the understanding of schools' collective internal readiness for improvement, as well as schools' collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process.

The results indicate both similarities and differences in principals' views within, as well as between schools and between schools with different levels of success according to pupils' accomplishment of the academic objectives *and* the social/civic objectives in the National Curriculum.

- The results indicate that the principals' views in the more successful schools in general describe their schools as more team-based and involving, than do principals' views in the less successful schools.
- The results also indicate that according to the principals' views of external collaboration forms, all the schools still have giant steps to take in order to improve the present teacher-based collaboration forms kept going by 'fiery spirits', in order to connect the school as a whole to the local, regional, national and international world outside the school-house.
- The results further indicate that in the principals' views in the more successful schools, staff development is generally used as a lever in the planned improvement process for the whole school, while staff development in the principals' views in the less successful schools, generally, is more intentional and individual.

- The results also indicate that the leadership in the principals' views in the more successful schools, is an involving leadership, with the aim of extending teachers participation in the leadership practice, while the leadership in the principals' views in the less successful schools, is more mixed between traditional and involving.

Finally the results indicate that the use of principals' views as the unit for analysis, creates an opening for researchers, professionals, and policy makers to add new perspectives to their present perceptions of internal capacities for school improvement. By unfolding the power relations and how and where the power is realised within and between schools, and between schools and the community, such an analysis could help all the stake-holders in school to add additional perspectives to a schools' collective internal readiness for improvement, as well as collective internal capacities to handle the improvement process. It enables an understanding not only of what supports, preserves or delays the improvement process in schools, but also of how the support, preservation or delay is decided and realised. It is therefore possible to state that both parts of the aim of this thesis have been fulfilled.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix 1

Structured questions to the principals in the pre-study⁷⁹

How much do you focus on these internal capacities for school improvement in secondary school?

Not at all important *Very important*

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers work together in teaching teams

An internal structure where pupils' results are constantly evaluated against the goals

Staff development that gives teachers new knowledge *and* new skills

Meeting places where teachers can discuss and exchange teaching strategies

A school budget that reflects the goals decided on

A learning environment that makes it possible for every pupil to learn according to their own needs

The possibility for teachers to constantly compare their way of working with the best in the field

A common understanding of teaching among teachers

⁷⁹ Inspired by Snyder (1988).

An increased understanding of the *what* and *how* questions in education

An environment of organised feed-back from the local community to improve the school practice

Mixed-age teaching

A common understanding of time to enhance team-work

A classroom environment *and* teaching forms that create learning for all pupils'

A common understanding of the social/civic objectives

A supportive leadership

A collaborative culture

An environment where teachers observe each other and give feedback on what they see

An understanding of school improvement as a time-consuming process over time

A culture of trust

A working partnership between school and parents

A culture of high expectations of teachers' performance

An environment where team leaders can be trained in leadership

Pre-requisites for teachers to build individual professional networks

A culture of high expectations of pupils' performance

A formal system of pupil democracy

A safe school environment

A shared leadership

A culture of learning for both teachers *and* pupils

A common and school-wide vision for the school

A system for early identification of pupils with special needs

A challenging leadership

Pupil democracy in practice

An environment where teachers and pupils
develop new knowledge together

Appendix 2

The General School Observation Form⁸⁰

School:

Date:.....

Principal 1.....

Principal 2.....

The principal's presentation of the school, approximately 10-15 min, is recorded. A tour around the school, notes made on the form where it is suitable below. What the principal chooses to show us, what is put forward, and how it is commented is important. How does the principal behave during the tour? Are we introduced? How is our visit prepared?

Observation form

During the time we spend in each school we will get a lot of impressions, information and interactions with people in and around the school. In order to systemise the information and make it possible to put together a picture of each school we suggest that each team follows this form as strictly as possible to make notes and continuous observations. As we will have somewhat different opportunities for specific information events (like meetings with different groupings of teachers) the content in the forms might differ a little.

A form can be organised in different ways. We have chosen to suggest the starting point of our main concepts: structure, culture and leadership. The structure, as well as the leadership, is covered with other instruments, while the culture is the area where observation gives us a lot of information that is difficult to capture in other ways, as it is very much a question of the symbols that each school expresses.

We have also chosen the model to function from the outside, working inwards.

⁸⁰ The observation form was used by all three research teams in the SCL-project. The translation is my own.

We get our first impressions when we enter the school for the first time, and then these are added to until we (probably) end up in the principal's office.

Structure	
Where is the school located in the community: In the forest or integrated in a housing area? How is the school related to the surroundings? The level of inclusion could be key. What else is there in the surroundings, sports fields, a kiosk, and heavy traffic? How many buildings does the school consist of, how are they related to each other?	
What is the superficial impression? Military – Bohemian could be ends of a continuum.	
Are the school-yard and the entrances 'functional'? Are they easy to find?	
How are the different premises and functions located and organised?	
How is the leadership function organised in relation to staff rooms and classrooms, distances, availability and functionality?	
What about resources in general, like premises and computers? What impression do the premises make?	
Describe the classrooms. How are they equipped?	
Describe the staff-room(s). How are they equipped?	
Describe the teachers' offices. How are they equipped?	
Describe the principals' office. How is it equipped? Space for visitors, literature, arts, personal things. Describe the principals' administrative support.	
Describe the pupils' leisure-time premises. How are they equipped?	
How is the time structured during our visit? Is it strict, governed, exact – loose, adapted, comme ci comme ca?	

Culture	
What is the first impression that the school wants to give? How does it expose/express itself to the visitor? What languages are used? What symbols are chosen? Signs, decoration etc. Does the school convey signals of openness or closeness?	
How do pupils in the school-yard approach us? Do they know who we are? How do they ask us what we are doing there? Do they seem to like strangers?	
How do the pupils socialise? Level of conflicts, form of social intercourse, groupings, type of activities in-doors and out-doors.	
What signals of traditions and history do the premises convey? Paintings, statues, 'words of wisdom', exhibition of prizes and awards, other object on display. How are different premises decorated?	
What signals do the premises convey about status? Flat/hierarchical organisation. What signals do the premises convey about the mission of the school, knowledge/collaboration?	
How do pupils socialise in the school, physical contact, language, groupings, dress code.	
How do the pupils take care of their environment? Who uses the leisure time premises?	
What impressions do we get of collaboration/conflicts, individuality/collectively, activities?	
How are meetings, activities etc. announced?	
How is our project understood? Is research something strange, uncomfortable, enforced, or exciting, natural and necessary?	
What about the relationship between work and leisure time? When do staff arrive in the morning and leave in the afternoon?	

Leadership	
Who meets us? How are we received by the staff? Do they acknowledge us? How are we welcomed? Which language is used? How informal are they? Do they know why we are here? Do they seem curious? Do they ask questions? How do they show us the way?	
Is there a system of adults being with the pupils during breaks? How does it function? How many adults are visible during breaks? What responsibility do the adults take?	
How can the relationships between staff and pupils outside the classroom be interpreted?	
How do the staff describe their school? Knowledge/comfort/upbringing? What impression do staff want to give about their school? Are they trained in that, and do they understand its importance?	
How do members of staff relate to each other? P to T and vice versa, T to T?	
How do members of staff relate to the pupils, and vice versa?	
How does the principal act in relation to pupils?	
Are there parents in school? What do they do? What does their relationship to others in the school look like?	
Finally you should try to classify the school according to one or some of these frequently used cultural concepts; Carrier school, Knowledge school, Professional school, A school with contrived collegiality, Cultivated school, Compulsory school, Balkanised school, A living apart school, Familiar school, Individualistic school, Social school, Collaborative school.	

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