School Leadership in the Early 2000s

By

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Abstract

School leadership has become a priority in education policy globally. Leadership is important for school and preschool performance because it affects teachers' motivation and capacity as well as their working environment. The purpose of this article is, through interviews with head teachers and preschool directors in northern Sweden, to make visible school leaders' understanding of the work that takes place in schools and preschools and how that affects children's and students' conditions and opportunities to learn and develop. The results of the study show that school leaders are aware of the value of their educational leadership and the importance of collegial learning, but there are other barriers that prevent the realisation of the ambitions decided at high level.

Keywords: *School leadership; preschool; compulsory school; school principal; upper secondary school*

1. Introduction

School leadership has become a priority in education policy globally. The increased autonomy for schools and more focus on education and students' performance has made it necessary to rethink the role of school leaders (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2009; OECDa, 2013; OECDb, 2013). Döös, Wilhelmson and Backström (2013) argue that leadership in today's organisations rests on a notion that a management position should be filled by a single person in charge. They state that the basis of this notion is the belief that leadership carried out by a single person is also the most effective and responsible leadership, and considering that a divided leadership has a bright future.

This article is about head teachers and preschool directors in Swedish schools. In this article the concept of school principals is sometimes used which should be interpreted synonymously with the preschool director and the head teacher/principal. In a few instances, the concept development leader is also used, which is a municipal staff member who has overall responsibility for school matters in a municipality.

As a leader in the Swedish school system, head teachers and preschool directors have a key role in the state regulated and curriculum driven activities both in schools and preschools. The main mission is to create a school and preschool of good quality for all, where the national targets are met and where all children's learning is perceived as stimulating, meaningful and secure. The head teacher and head of preschool has a central role in the implementation of the national education commission.

The Education Act clearly states that school activities should be based on research and proven experience (Education Act, 2010: 800, Chapter 1, § 5). As the educational leader of the school and as director of the teachers and other staff, the head teacher has according to the curricula overall responsibility for the operations.

The curriculum for preschools, (Lpfö98), the curriculum for primary schools, preschool class and leisure, (Lp11) and the curriculum for upper secondary schools (Gy11) clearly set out the head teacher's and preschool directors' responsibility (National Agency for Education, 2010; National Agency for Education, 2011a; National Agency for Education, 2011b).

The texts make references to the Education Act. "As an educational leader and head of the teachers and other staff at school the head teacher/headmaster has the overall responsibility to ensure that the activities as a whole are focused towards the national targets. The head teacher is responsible for ensuring that the school's performance is monitored and evaluated in relation to the national goals and knowledge requirements"(National Agency for Education, 2011a, p.18; National Agency for Education, 2011b, p.15).

In the preschool curriculum the preschool director's responsibilities are formulated as follows; "As the educational leader and head of the preschool teachers, carers and other staff in the preschool,the preschool director has the overall responsibility for ensuring that operations are conducted in accordance with the objectives of the curriculum and the commission in its entirety" (National Agency for Education, 2010, p.16).

Based on these and with the conditions that the principal gives it gives the head teacher and preschool director, who together with teachers and educators, should give schoolwork and activities in preschool structure and content.

The head teacher is responsible for the school's performance and for following up results and ensuring evaluation takes place in relation to the national goals. According to the Education Act, the head teacher should stay familiar with the daily work of the school and especially the work for development of the education and of high quality. No similar regulation exists for preschool managers, but these professionals have as head teachers an important role in the achievement of operational goals. To fulfil the national mandate, it is important that the head teacher and pre-school director have good knowledge of their responsibilities according to the Education Act, curricula and other regulations which govern the school and preschool work.

As a manager and leader, school leaders must understand the responsibility that comes with their own professional role. The head teacher must also be able to manage their own school assignments and be familiar with both the general and the specific conditions that are the basis for their own school work. A challenge for the leadership is to tie the national school assignment to the demands of the local principal and the requirements of their own school and preschool activities and its requirement for development.

The head teacher and head of preschool need to understand their own role as well as their school and preschool role and share the fundamental values expressing what is important for the school's and preschool's way of working and to be able to translate its values into action.

The general conditions apply to all types of school. They set out the expressed mission and the principles for implementation (National Agency for Education, 2010; National Agency for Education, 2011a; National Agency for Education; 2011b; Schools Inspectorate, 2014).

The head teacher's and preschool directors' way of managing activities should also be characterised by a democratic leadership. In their leadership, principals and preschool directors need to lead and develop schools and preschools based on an approach to staff and pupils that help that school's work develop democratic values among staff and pupils. Every school and preschool has its own specific requirements. This has to do with the school's and preschool's tradition and history, its work environment, employee and group of pupils composition, geographic and sociocultural circumstances, local political decisions, and other conditions. The school must adapt, develop, improve and transform education so that students are given the opportunity to learn and develop (Schools Inspectorate, 2014).

Research has shown that the head teacher's mission requires an in-depth insight into and knowledge of the many different tasks to be undertaken within the framework of the school. School leaders' actual roles that show the importance of developments really taking place at each individual school has been

demonstrated by many researchers (Ekholm, Blossing, Kåräng, Lindvall&Scherp, 2000; Kruse & Seashore Louise, 2009; Scherp&Scherp, 2007; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2009; National Agency for School Improvement, 2008; Ekholm&Scherp, 2014; Robinson, 2007; Scherp, 2011; Scherp, 2011a; National Agency for School Improvement, 2014; Höög& Johansson, 2011; Grosin, 2003; OECDa, 2013). The head teacher needs insights into how different parts of the activities relate to each other and interact. It is the head teacher's responsibility to ensure that all the activities at school work in a satisfactory manner. For this to be possible, it assumes that the head teacher can have an overview of the prevailing conditions and use and develop them so that appropriate and dedicated educational processes can be pursued at the school. The work of teachers and other school staff as well as with pupils and their guardians must ensure that everyone has a deep understanding of the goals and the results compiled and assessed.

The head teacher has to lead the school's internal workso that a high quality is maintained and developed. As a common trait, research shows that the working day of school leaders is often fragmentary and characterised by many short meetings and constant being interruption (Thomson, 2009), which many school leaders perceive as an obstacle to conducting school development (Hultman, 2012).

Preschool managers have had similar experiences and perceive their tasks as fragmented by the different requirements and expectations both from the administration and from kindergartens (Munkhammar, 2014).

Nihlfors and Johansson (2014, 2014a) argue that there is a tension between the national government school level and the local. They believe that governmental reforms to be implemented locally are a source of irritation because they are not always followed by economic resources.

Another challenge that they see is when there is conflict between central and local political signals or when stakeholders at different levels of the control system give off different signals. The question of how loyalty can be created in these contexts will be central.

The purpose of this article is, that through in-depth interviews with head teachers and preschool directors in the county of Norrbotten in northern Sweden,to make visible school leaders' understanding of the work that takes place in school and preschools and how that directly or indirectly affects children's and people's conditions and opportunities to learn and develop.

The interviews complement and deepen the survey previously conducted by Lindström and Johansson (2015). Empirical data from the questionnaire study will be partly used. The questionnaire and interview study should be viewed as a whole, where the interview study is partly a deepening of the questionnaire study. In both studies, it has been of special interest to capture the informants' views on the importance of creating the organisational conditions to enable teachers' learning and development, the collective learning processes and whether lessons learned in operations are documented, discussed and analysed.The interview study is restricted to two areas "Educational leadership" and "Collective learning processes".

Paper disposition

The article is organised as follows: the initial chapter looks at previous research and presents the theoretical framework, which is followed by the chapter describing the method. The questionnaire and interview study are presented under the headline results. The last chapter discusses the study's findings and methodology, and presents some concluding remarks.

School leadership

School leadership is placed high on the agenda around the world according to Pont et.al (2009). They state that leadership plays a major role in the school's performance because it affects teachers' motivation and capacity as well as their working environment and working atmosphere.

They moreover consider that an effective school leadership is a prerequisite for improving the effectiveness of training and qualifying. An important aspect is that the school leader is given autonomy in the matter of important decisions. But, in their opinion, it is not enough; school leaders need support for self-government and their primary responsibility to be clear and defined. School leaders also need to understand the work that best enhances student learning.

Preschool activities can be seen as a collective where adults reflect and learn together. The work teams in preschool discuss and talk about their work and reflect on and analyse one's own attitude. There is instead a need for the pre-school manager to free himself from a "family culture", according to Munkhammar (2012).

Persson, Andersson and Nilsson Lindström (2010) investigated a small number of managers within the school administration in a number of Swedish municipalities. These cannot be considered as more than just a few opinions from different managers. What unites those interviewed was that they saw the school leaders as part of a hierarchy in which decisions are taken at the top, which they are then expected to carry out.

They stressed strongly the school leaders' responsibility in ensuring public policy decisions are implemented as set out by the state education goals in the Education Act, curricula and other steering instruments. They also emphasised the school leaders' responsibility in ensuring these are implemented as a pedagogical development in the schools, and that any taxes on resource reductions would be affected.
They expected a loyalty to the decisions taken at a higher level and that school leaders could manage scarce resources in the system. The same conclusion is drawn by Nihlfors and Johansson (2014; 2014a),who believe that the loyalty between school officials and the state is greater in comparison to the local principal/head teacher and the municipal political leaders or independent school board.

Jervik Steen (2014) has found that school leaders themselves believe that the most important task is to be a good educational leader in developing the organisation of the school and making sure that pupils who have difficulties in reaching the targets receive the help they need to raise achievement.
The issue that school leaders themselves considered was the least important task was the contact with the local community and adhering to the budget. Nestor and Svedberg (2014) develop this complexity and put it in the following way: "The question of what results are meaningful and authentic meets the educational agenda of economic and political agenda of the measuring, evaluation and systematic quality work" (p. 77).

In Persson et al. (2010) some forty teachers were interviewed. The outcome of the school leader's role and importance clearly showed that the teachers wished for head teachers to be close to the activities so as to experience everyday life in school. Other aspects that emerged were that the teachers felt that school leaders should show respect for the teachers' profession, that they should be an equal colleague, and have visions.

This is as well expressed by Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007).They state that the collective expertise and competence of a school is built up in and through employee interaction in everyday life. They add that school leaders need to lead school improvement efforts by creating favourable conditions for teachers' learning in their daily work.

The National Agency (1999) argues that the principal must conduct a leadership based on a learning organisation perspective. Scherp (2013) refers to Scherp and Scherp (2007) and a completed interview. Based on this, they think that teachers call for and require school leaders' active participation and involvement in the educational activities of everyday life. The study showed that school principals and teachers agree that co-creation and leadership creating meaningfulness is the foundation, a fundamental issue for both school improvement and student learning. Timperley et.al (2007), Timperley (2013) and Hattie (2009) in their meta-studies similarly demonstrated that the most obvious improvements in student performance takes place in schools where teachers learn from each other and in their own activities in everyday life.

Robinson (2007) has analysed a relatively large number of research projects that illustrate the relationship between school leadership and student outcomes. She has found that there are mainly five perspectives on leadership that have sufficient importance for student performance and that should be highlighted. These perspectives are "Establishing Goals and Expectations", "Strategic Resourcing," "Planning, Coordinating and Evaluating Teaching and the Curriculum", "Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development" and Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment "(Robinson, p. 8).

Concretely, it is the leader who creates favourable organisational conditions for teacher learning and development and that school leaders themselves become involved and participate in this learning. Another aspect highlighted is the importance of the employees as co-creators in the process of working out, expressing and monitoring learning outcomes so that they are clear and that agreement is reached. They involve school leaders to ensure that resource allocation and use is governed by school learning outcomes, and that school leaders give priority to both formal and informal learning. Finally, according to Robinson (2007), it is important that school leaders protect the inner workings from unreasonable external demands.

In the quality report from the School Inspectorate (2010), a review from 30 Swedish schools presents how the principal leads the school's efforts towards meeting the goals.

The School Inspectorate believes that communication is crucial and that communication regarding the daily activities does occur, although reflective conversations about school development, teaching and student learning occur to a lesser extent. The School Inspectorate (2014) reveals that teachers with low confidence in the head teacher's educational leadership state problems with the assessment of students' academic achievement, on average, five times more often than those with high confidence.

Ärlestig (2008) and (2011) argues that one of the most important processes within organisations such as schools is communication. Ärlestig (2011) continues by arguing that communication both reflects and influences school activities and contributes in that way to the school's performance. Ärlestig (2011) has analysed the relationships between school organisational factors, school communication processes, head teacher educational leadership and successful schools. The results of her analyses show that head teachers overestimated their ability to communicate as educational leaders. In the schools that were considered as successful, it turned out that communicating head teachers and teachers often had a dialogue about issues related to teaching and learning. In other schools Ärlestig (2011) found an unawareness of how communication affected their work and in several of the schools she found that head teachers' and teachers' daily conversations did not involve supporting the school's long-term work towards the fulfilment of higher goals, which a dialogue could be based around (Ärlestig, 2008; 2011; School Inspectorate, 2014).

Reviews of the pre-school manager's educational leadership have, for example, shown to be more focused on creating and maintaining a good climate than working with development strategies. Often, leadership is about solving practical problems and less about working on strategies for development. Many Swedish

municipalities, 70% of the municipalities that the School Inspectorate examined, may be the reason of the criticism of the quality of work in early childhood education (School Inspectorate, 2014).

Höög (2011) has compared a small number of schools in terms of how they manage both with the educational targets and social goals of the school and suggest that successful schools are those that manage to reach both the educational targets and social goals. As an example of the social aims, the following aspects have been taken into consideration: among other things, basic democratic values, communication, cooperation and conflict resolution, initiative and responsibility, and critical review and problem solving skills.

The School Inspectorate conducted audits of schools between the years 2009-2013, which included 70 quality audits, in which the 5,600 survey responses from head teachers and 48,000 interviews clearly show that the head teacher/headmaster and school principal/head of preschool have a key role in creating the conditions for high quality teaching and school development in general. Especially important is the head teacher's/school leader's priority of the educational activities (School Inspectorate, 2014).

Theoretical framework
Our starting point in this article is that schools/preschools are part of the world system through control documents governing operations, while children and young people together with their guardians belong to the life-world.

Habermas (1984; 1996) talks about the concepts of system and life-world and about system and life-world rationalities, that is, the motives or motivations for actions that may be to achieve greater efficiency and understanding.

Habermas argues that the system worldwide tends to colonise the life-world that is linked to other principles, such as establishing consensus through values, norms and language activities. Furthermore, he believes that the life-world and the communicative action, the dialogue, needs to be reinforced and form the basis of the world system and the rational goal conduct (Habermas, 1984; 1996; Andersen, 2007).
Theories of citizenship are also central in this article. Concepts such as citizenship and active citizenship are complex, they have many dimensions and they can be studied from many different perspectives (National Agency, 2011c; Olsson, 2013; Ekman, 2007; Rönnlund, 2013; Carlbaum, 2012; Carlsson, 2006).

For example, Kjörholt (2004) describes how children construct their citizenship while Lister (2007a; 2007) highlights how people in everyday life understand and negotiate their citizenship as rights and responsibilities, membership and participation.

Hartsmar and Liljefors Persson (2013) make clear that civic education is a basic skill that is best developed in democratic schools with democratic education. They argue simultaneously that schools cannot, without the support of politicians and school authorities, on their own create democratic citizens, without making demands on society at large.

The school's values and mission are shown in the various curricula. The curriculum for elementary schools, preschools and kindergartens of 2011 reveals the following: "The school has the mission of imparting fundamental values and of promoting students' learning in order to prepare them to live and work in the community. Schools should impart the more unvarying forms of knowledge that constitute the common frame of reference all in society need" (National Agency, 2011a, p. 9) and the curriculum for degree objectives and upper secondary school subjects in secondary schools of 2011 puts it this way: "Education should teach and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society rests"(National Agency, 2011b, p. 5).

The curriculum for preschools has similar wording "An important task of the preschool is to teach and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society rests" (National Agency, 2010, p. 4).

Preschools as a social institution have to organise the child's upbringing and life, and then pass this over to the schools, which have to continue to develop the children and young people into balanced members of society in the broadest sense.

With the help of theories of citizenship and Habermas's view of system and life-world conditions, we aim to explain the opportunities children and young people have within the school context to learn and develop as future adults.

2. Method

In this chapter we describe our study design and method of analysis. To find answers to the purpose of our investigation we have chosen both a qualitative and quantitative study. Our approach is deductive and we assume our theoretical approach as the basis for the empirical study (Bryman, 2011).

The survey was conducted in Sweden's northernmost county, Norrbotten. The reason for this is that there is little, if any research at all that highlights school development in this part of the country. All of the 13 municipalities in the county of Norrbotten were included in the survey. The questionnaire, together with a covering letter, was sent to 170 addressees. The mailing included all principals/preschool managers/development leaders in the sample group. On two occasions, a reminder was sent to the addressees to respond to the survey.

The questionnaire consisted of six parts. Besides general questions on sex, education, and number of operations, the questionnaire set out a number of statements. The respondents were asked to consider statements from six different areas. These areas were: 2. Your responsibility, 3. Your leadership, 4. School development within your area of work, 5. Grading and 6. Educational assessment. A 5-point Likert scale was used where the claims were graded from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. This article uses a small portion of the questionnaire study, four of the statements that respondents answered in the previously completed questionnaire study, and three of the open responses that the respondent completed.

The results from the survey are presented in histograms, where the number of respondents is indicated with n, and the relative frequency of the respondent, the mean and standard deviation are also shown. The structure of the histogram is as follows:
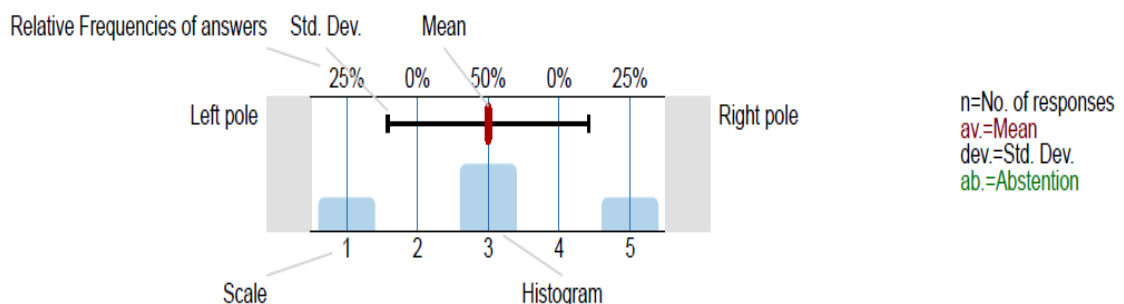

Figure 1. Histogram construction

The above figure shows the structure of the histogram reported under results. The results of the survey include sections 1-4, i.e. the general part as well as questions about the respondent's area of responsibility, leadership, and questions about the school development conducted within the work area. In part of the survey, respondents had the opportunity to express their thoughts freely. A selection of these are also included as part of the results and indicated as MN1, MN2 and MN3. The selection principle which we used was that the comments contained a clear message linked to the purpose of our study.

The qualitative part of the study consisted of 21 follow-up interviews of randomly selected respondents from all 13 municipalities included in the survey. These are referred to as informant1, informant2 - informant21. In-depth interviews focused on two areas, pedagogical leadership and how school leaders enable the collegial learning processes. The interviews lasted about 20-30 minutes. In the interviews careful notes were taken and direct citations of the respondents' answers are reproduced.

3. Results

This section presents the results of the survey and the supplementary interview study. The questionnaire was sent to 170 addressees. Of the 116 respondents 75% were female and 25% were male. However, it is important to add that the questionnaire was sent to mainly women, as they have been identified as more generally employed as the principal/preschool director/business developer.

21 randomly selected persons were interviewed. These represent all the municipalities included in the first study, the questionnaire study. The result of the interviews is structured according to the two areas of focus for the interview study, i.e. the collegial learning processes and pedagogical leadership. The left pole represents the answer do not agree at all and the right pole represents totally agree.
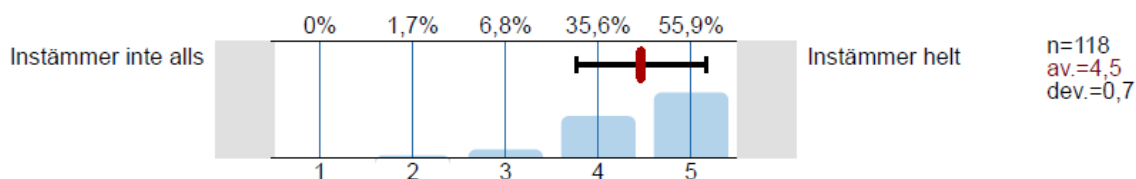
The peer learning processes
The following text appeared in the subsection of the questionnaire containing respondents' written comments.

The respondents' comments mention the importance of a learning organisation and how experiences must be documented and aggregated into an overall level, so as to enable systematic quality work throughout the whole school system, in this case a municipality.

> To achieve school improvement, I believe it is important that all schools strive to create a learning organization where their own experience leads to the documented success factors so that less desirable results can be minimized. This I believe is created based on a local agreement between management and employees, creation of consensus packaged in a functional structure. This should then be aggregated to the management level so that the same logic and learning can take place at a general level (MN1).

When asked about the possibility of developing the collegial learning, one of the interviewees in the interview study mentions the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The School Inspectorate is a state agency that examines the quality of Swedish schools. The informant says that "We have no crystal clear ideas, we have had a school inspection visit and received criticism for our systematic quality work. Basically, we are positive about their visit but critical of the mechanical response provided to standardised questions,

we consider the results of their visit to be a showcase of activities"(Informant18). The informant continues and says that "It is a big knotty problem we are grabbing hold of at the moment –and we are not very good at this" (Ibid). Other informants mention briefly the "Schools Inspectorate monitoring schedule during class" (Informant13) and "During the School Inspectorate's visit you must be really focused and prepared for their questions" (Informant10). Most of the informants mention that it is known as the principal programme,a governmental programme that is mandatory for newly employed principals and school leaders (Informant12; 13; 6).

Head teachers' programmes along with the School Inspectorate and school work are some of the Swedish government's policy instruments to influence the development of Swedish schools. The interviews revealed that the respondents studied the research papers, the general advice and guidelines and other material issued by the School Inspectorate and school work.

A smaller number of respondents said that they keep abreast of research and themselves hold lectures for staff. "I read the research papers and other reports" (Informant1) and refer to the material that the government authority National Agency publishes. The informant also stated that "Reflection is a vital element" (Ibid). Another of the interviewees said that it is important to take note of current research in pedagogy in order to lead and develop the business (Informant19). Others say that in their role as school leaders they act as coaches. "I coach my teachers, sow the seeds so that the school can develop, I lecture teachers on current research. I use the school plan material, I initiate action and then wait for the teacher"(Informant14; 15; 16). One of the interviewees also held a conference on bullying.

Figure 2 of the survey below shows that the vast majority of survey respondents agreed with the statement that teachers/educators are encouraged to talk to each other about educational issues.
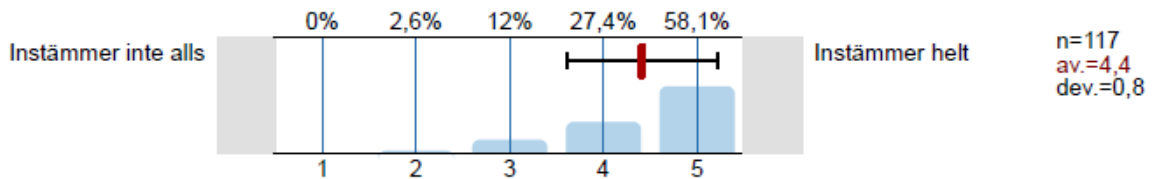

Figure 2.Within my area of responsibility teachers/educators are encouraged to talk to each other about teaching approaches.

Comment: The vast majority of respondents, 35.6% and 55.9%, agreed completely or partly with the statement that teachers/educators are encouraged to talk to each other about teaching approaches.

The interview study confirms this image from the questionnaire survey in most of the interviews. Informant (1) and (4) argues that we share each other's good examples, at our workplace we have open doors, it's an open approach (Informant1; 4). Several of the interviewees talk about team meetings as well as of the leaders of the teams and their impact on the collegial learning.

The interviews also reveal that work team meetings can sometimes act as a sort of management group (Informant2; 3; 8; 12).

In one of the comments in the survey the respondent highlights the work teams' relevance to the quality work and school development in general.

> For the most the work teams highlight their own deficiencies in fulfilling their goals when making their evaluations. My role as leader involves strengthening the work

team's opportunities for higher achievement through e.g. the skills, materials, measures in the preschool environment, etc. (MN2).

In the questionnaire study the question of how important collegial learning is considered to be in everyday life was asked. The questionnaire and Figure 3 below show that collective learning is regarded as important by more than half of the responding school leaders.
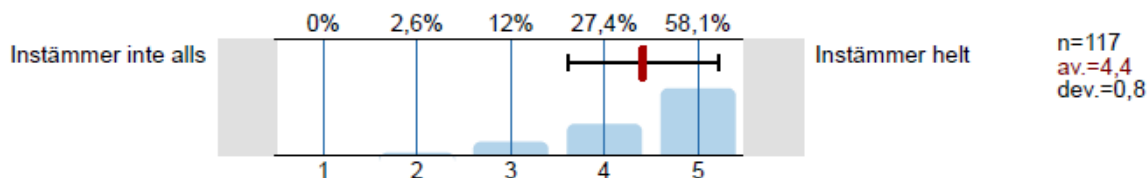

Figure 3. Within my area of responsibility is collective learning an important part of the teaching assignment.

Comment: Of the respondents, 58.1% said they agreed with the suggestion that collective learning is an important part of the teaching assignment.

The interview study reinforces the image conveyed in the questionnaire study; however, there are also other contradictory voices. "It's really important that teachers have the possibility to talk about and highlight the various methods, the teachers are a resource for one another" (Informant14) whereas others believe that "Teachers are concerned about their own things, we're working to get better" (Informant18).

One of the interviews also shows more clearly that it is not so easy to develop collegial learning despite good intentions and high ambitions. "Teachers rarely exchange ideas with each other, they are not inclined to peer learning, collegial learning need to be developed" and "Developing collegial learning requires the head teacher's presence" (Informant9; 12).

One of the interviewees, informant (12), proves this picture and says that teachers are often alone in the classroom. On the other hand, one of the other interviewees says that teachers visit each other's classes and make observations, something which they have organised themselves (Informant10).

Another of the informants says, "We work in cross-groups" (Informant16) and a third that "I ensure that there are forums for teachers to meet" (Informant5). Informant (19), on the other hand, sets aside time for collegial learning, while stressing that the time allocated is for this purpose only and nothing else, the time is earmarked, so to speak.

Several of the interviewees mention the cooperation between schools and sometimes several municipalities when it comes to marking the so-called national tests that are conducted in Swedish schools on a regular basis. In order to achieve an equivalent assessment, the cooperation and exchange between local councils and different schools is important, according to many of those interviewed. Cooperation with assessments among several schools in different local councils also brings a sense of security (Informant3; 6; 10; 11; 13; 14; 17).

During our joint assessment days, we can talk about concepts and interpretations of them in order to reach a consensus Informant (6) argues and then uses the expression PISA-fiery to mark his disapproval of the international measurements made of the students' school performance.

Two of the interviewees mention children with special needs as a particular challenge and where peer tutoring is seen as a tool (Informant5; 13). The survey asked whether the respondents in their respective area of responsibility were compilations of collegial follow-ups available to all teachers/educators. The results are shown in Figure 4 below.
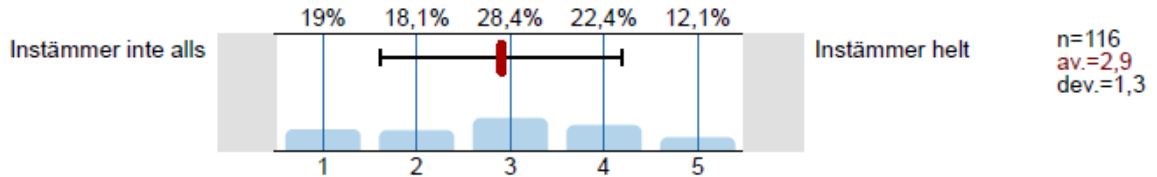
Figure 4. Within my area of responsibility, summaries of collegial follow-ups are available to all teachers/educators.

Comment: The figure shows that 19% of respondents believe that there are no compilations of collegial follow-ups available to all teachers/educators

The interview study does not reveal anything that can be regarded as different from the results. None of the interviewees mention explicitly that they document compilations of collegial follow-ups, which can be interpreted as something that is done not so often.

Educational leadership
The employment situation of school leaders often crops up in the research material. A couple of the respondents in the survey have commented on this. "The head teacher's work contains very time-consuming tasks, such as management, that obstructs their work as an educational leader" (MN3). Informant (19) calls for a good working order to be established so that the organisation can be developed and argues that they do not have time to read everything that comes their way in the form of reports or general recommendations; "We simply do not have time to sift through it, we're drowning in the information jungle". One of the interviewed school developers says that the head teachers' mission of shared leadership is perceived as too heavy. "Their mission is intense and they must find an opportunity to share the leadership with each other" (Informant15). This respondent describes a similar situation in the questionnaire study. "I have too many roles for it to be satisfactory. Conducting development is all about challenge, holding together all the threads, making the mission clear and, most importantly, the feedback and follow up "(MN2). Major structural challenges are evident in some interviews. In some communities it may involve large groups of children at preschool and leisure centres, schools threatened by closure or the lack of qualified teachers. Especially the national shortage of legitimate, qualified teachers in certain disciplines and regions has the highest priority among some school leaders. A municipality provides a monthly amount during teacher training for a smaller group of applicants. Furthermore, the local council offers a guaranteed service as a teacher in the municipality after completing the programme. Additionally, all new employees in the municipality, in various areas, receive an extra salary payment after three years of service. "This is an attempt to remedy the shortage of teachers and ensure the quality of the school" (Informant20). Similar conditions are cited by informant (21). "It is difficult to recruit, I'm in contact all the time with the Public Employment Service".

The survey asked whether the respondents were responsible ensuring that teachers' experiences outside the daily work were collected and documented. The answer is presented below in Figure 5.
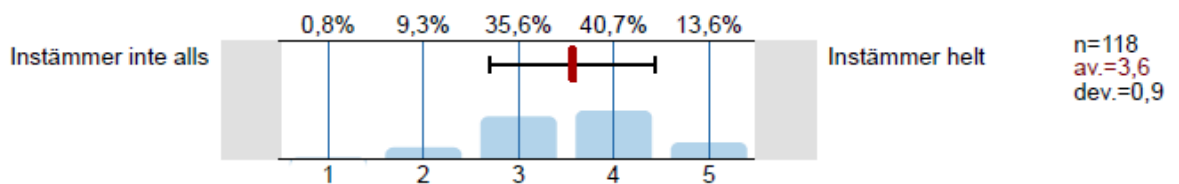

Figure 5. You ensure that teachers' experiences based on the daily work is recovered and documented.

Comment: Many of the informants, 40.7%, tended to agree that they are responsible for teachers' experiences based on the daily work being recovered and documented

Among those interviewed, only a few of mention paperwork and documentation, "I work with inquiries, I'm not just an educational leader" (Informant15) and "My work is very much about educational documentation, we work in cross-groups, we read and discuss literature" (Informant16).

When we tried to contact the informants in this interview, the responses were varied, although they clearly show their pressured work situation. "Can you come back in 5 minutes" (Informant1). Several of those interviewed brings up the matter of the timing. "I wish there was more time to be with teachers and students" (Informant3; 10; 11), "There is lots of travelling and great distances, I cannot keep up with classroom visits or school visits as much as I would like" (Informant8). One of the informants, however, manages to make school visits despite the large distances. This means the informant is appreciated by the teachers who say "We call you and you come" (Informant10). This is not an ordinary picture that emerges but more of an exception. Another of those surveyed believes that to keep life together "I cannot handle all the issues"(Informant9). Informant (7) says "I travel a lot, we do restructurings of our organisation and I do not know which schools are threatened with closure." "Young children have to travel a long way and I think of teachers that have to take care of those tired children" (Informant7). A couple of respondents believe that there actually isn't any educational leadership (Informant12; 11). One of them also said "Why can we not make it work" (Informant18). There are also examples of more philosophical answers to the time factor. "I'm thinking about how I can lead educators who will then lead their own pupils" (Informant2). The same informant continues" In my leadership, I assume reality. Schools are different, I need to prioritise different things, but everyone has to achieve the same goal." (Informant2).

However, the interviews also show that there are school leaders making visits to schools and preschools. In these cases, they are small units within a small geographic area. "I make visits to schools and preschools and summarise them afterwards. When all staff are present, I do follow ups (Informant1). "I make school and preschool visits, which are notified in advance, after that I follow this up with the educators. I also go out and make observations at schools and preschools to create my own idea about the activities, and then I gather the group. My work can be described as both proactive and reactive "(Informant3). Informant (6) speaks of an established culture of reflection. Informant (17) says "I am often out meeting the teachers in the classrooms and I am also often with the pupils." Other respondents feel that "I work at a small school, I'm involved in all the work" (Informant4), "I participate in the work in classes and take care of what is perceived as difficult" (Informant5), "I am often with the pupils, I'm also out there with them "(Informant17) and" My leadership can be described as hands-on activities"(Informant6).

The fact that pedagogical leadership is ultimately about meeting pupils' and preschool children's needs so that they meet the proficiency requirements of the school and fulfil the goals for development and care at the preschool recurs many times in the responses.

Informant (1) expresses it as "The purely educational aim is to meet the needs of all learners" (Informant1). One of the interviewees mentions that 80% of the pupils in a class have a mother tongue other than Swedish (Informant8), and that the pupils have a great need to speak Swedish as their parents have different mother tongues, and that the rest of the time they speak a different language.

The importance of a well-functioning organisation is also highlighted in the discussions. "One must be able to build his/her house in order to guide and lead, you need an organisation that provides the mandate and legitimacy, the organisation must be clear and have support for the leadership" (Informant9).

4. **Discussion**

The results of the interview study demonstrate the usefulness of conducting it in addition to a completed questionnaire study. The previous results can be rejected or validated. The study's validity and reliability can be discussed. If a larger selection of informants were interviewed, this could have affected the outcome in the way that more opinions could have strengthened the image that collegial follow-ups are made and that these are also documented, or they contribute to toning down the results. Norrbotten County is a large geographical area characterised by long distances, activities sometimes carried out in mixed age groups, many smaller communities as well as a large number of rural schools. Several minority groups also live in the area, who have the legal right to receive their education in their mother tongue. These languages are Torne Valley Finnish, Sami and Finnish. Their opinions will go some way forward in the material but a larger number of interviewees may have affected the outcome towards extensive pedagogical leadership.

Educational leadership

Döös, Wilhelmsson and Backstrom (2013) are critical of today's organisations, which often assume that a management post should be filled by a single manager. In the interview study, it is also one of the respondents who speak of the need to have a shared leadership. This study confirms the earlier picture argued by Thomson (2009), Hultman (2012) and Munkhammar (2014) that the school leader's working day is often stressful, perceived as fragmentary and often experience a shortage of time. Several of the informants speak of time or lack of time (Informant3; 10; 1; 12; 9; 7). However, there are also a number of interviewees who manage to make visits to preschools and schools and even as someone express that which can "be on everything" (Informant4). These informants working exclusively in small units are often based in the same building or in the same area usually within a limited geographical area.

The interview study confirms the view that school leaders are searching to be a democratic leader. It also shows that there is unawareness of the importance of a professional leadership, which several of the interviewees point out as well that this is reflected in Figure 2.

There is awareness of the importance of school leaders about educators need to talk about teaching arrangements in school or operational arrangements in preschool. A couple of the respondents, informant (5) and informant (13) mentions children with special needs as a particular challenge when it comes to reaching goal achievement within activities at preschool and school. As well as in Jervik Steen (2014), there is an awareness among the respondents of their role to organize learning so that pupils to be able to achieve learning objectives.

Informant (1) argues that the mission whom school officials and pedagogical leadership outermost boils down to is to meet the needs of all learners so that they can cope with the school's knowledge goals. Several informants believe that they organize time for collegial learning, ensuring that there are venues and to organize work so that teachers can work together. The interview study shows a leadership was school leaders seek possibilities to have a dialogue and cooperation with the teachers. Informant (6) claim for example the importance of a management close to the activities and close an established culture for reflection and team meetings that can serve as a management group (Informant2; 3; 8; 12). These informants show an awareness of significance of school leaders' active participation and involvement in the educational activities of everyday life. Previous studies, Scherp (2013) shows that it is precisely this that educators previously both called for and made demands on.

Collective learning processes

There is a tension between the national governmental school level and the local Nihlfors and Johansson (2014) state. They believe that governmental reforms that are supposed to be implemented locally are a source of irritation because they are not always followed by economic means. This is also evident in the interview study in which it appears that discussions have been held on that the national tests are assessed

different in municipalities, between counties and nationally. There is talk of doing assessments together in local councils or units in a council as meaningful cooperation to ensure that an equivalent assessment will be completed (Informant3; 6; 10; 11; 13; 14; 17). One of the informants (6) also expressed a frustration at the focus that is placed on some measurable results and that the so-called PISA measurements are an expression of. Another aspect that emerges is a sense of limited space for the development of all children and pupils' learning. This coincides with Robinson (2007) who found that school leaders need to protect teachers from what is perceived as unreasonable conduct in business.

The fact that the School Inspectorate visits affect the business is evident. There seems to be a two-tier approach to their visits, and something to be welcomed on one hand, but on the other at the same time is a critical undertone expressed. Their visits are something that the activities at school and preschool must relate to and accept (Informant 10; 18; 13). Nestor and Svedberg (2014) distinguish between the pedagogical-, political and economic agenda. This is a tension that recurs in the interviews. Good results after the School Inspectorate visits become a political showcase (Informant18). Educational leadership is basically an impossible task and needs to be shared between more (Informant 15). Structural challenges such as lack of skilled qualified personnel, school closures and mergers of larger units enables the economic agenda in some municipalities to receive the highest priority (Informant20: 21; 7).

The results of the questionnaire study, figure 3, show an awareness of the collective learning in. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) states that the collective expertise of a school built on and through employees' interaction in everyday life, and that school leaders need to create the conditions for this. Informant (19) makes it clear that the time allocated must go to the collegial learning and nothing else which the informant says could easily be other issues addressed. The National Agency for School Improvement (2014) reveals the importance of a clear leadership in which teachers with low confidence in the head teacher's educational leadership more often find themselves having problems with the assessment of students' academic achievement than those with high confidence.

Final words
Our starting point in this article is, as mentioned earlier, that the school and preschool is a part of the world system through the control instruments governing operations while children and young people together with their guardians belong to the life-world.

Habermas (1984; 1996) argues that systems worldwide tend to colonise the life-world that is linked to other principles which, for example, is about establishing consensus through values, norms and language activities. The interview shows several examples of this, school leaders facing major structural challenges due to the lack of qualified trained staff, a leadership that includes units in large geographical distances or operating under threat of closure and centralisation. This system has the world forced the solutions to achieve efficiency in front of the life-world goals. There are also solutions to meet the need for qualified trained teachers who can and want to work in rural and sparsely populated areas, a challenge that is structural, and increasingly about values and attitudes among the population.

Theories of citizenship are also central in this article. Lister (2007a) and (2007) highlights how people in everyday life understand and negotiate their citizenship as rights and responsibilities, membership and participation. Hartsmar and Liljefors Persson (2013) state that the school cannot create on their own democratic and actions of citizens without support from politicians and school authorities, but it makes demands on society at large. The result of this survey, above all the interview study shows that school leaders, students and parents in some municipalities in Norrbotten County have a greater challenge than others to negotiate their rights as having access to school and preschool within a reasonable proximity to their place of residence or to have access to trained staff. In this study politicians seem to be more responsive to support measures to employ qualified personnel than allow schools and kindergartens in rural areas to remain. In what way this affects children and young people construct their citizenship is not shown in this study, but it does shows that it affects them in some form as citizens.

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