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Swedish National Agency for School Improvement

13 February 2007

Dnr. 2006:608

Improving school leadership

Background report

Sweden

February 2007

This report was prepared by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement for the OECD Activity Improving School Leadership, following common guidelines the OECD provided to all countries participating in the activity. Country background reports can be found at www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership.

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Chapter 1. The national context of schooling

Sweden is a Nordic country which shares borders with Denmark, Norway, Finland and the Baltic Sea. With a population of nine million people, around one third lives in the three major cities of Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. Half of its area is covered by forests. The Swedish population is just above nine million, and the municipalities contain on average around 30,000 people. However, there is a very wide variation in population size, with some municipalities containing just a few thousand people, and others well over 100,000 people.

Compared with the OECD average, Sweden is a wealthy, healthy and well educated society. Its GDP per capita was 28,100 US\$ in 2004, compared to 26,000 US\$ GDP per capita total OECD. Overall educational attainment is quite high, with at least 80% of the population having attained upper secondary education and an average life expectancy at birth of 82.8 for women and 77.7 for men. Furthermore, it has one of the highest OECD employment rates to population ratios, with 74% of the population in the ages between 16 to 65 at work, third only to Switzerland and Denmark and also one of the highest OECD employment rates for women, only after Portugal. Around 78% of all mothers of children below 7 were working in 2003.

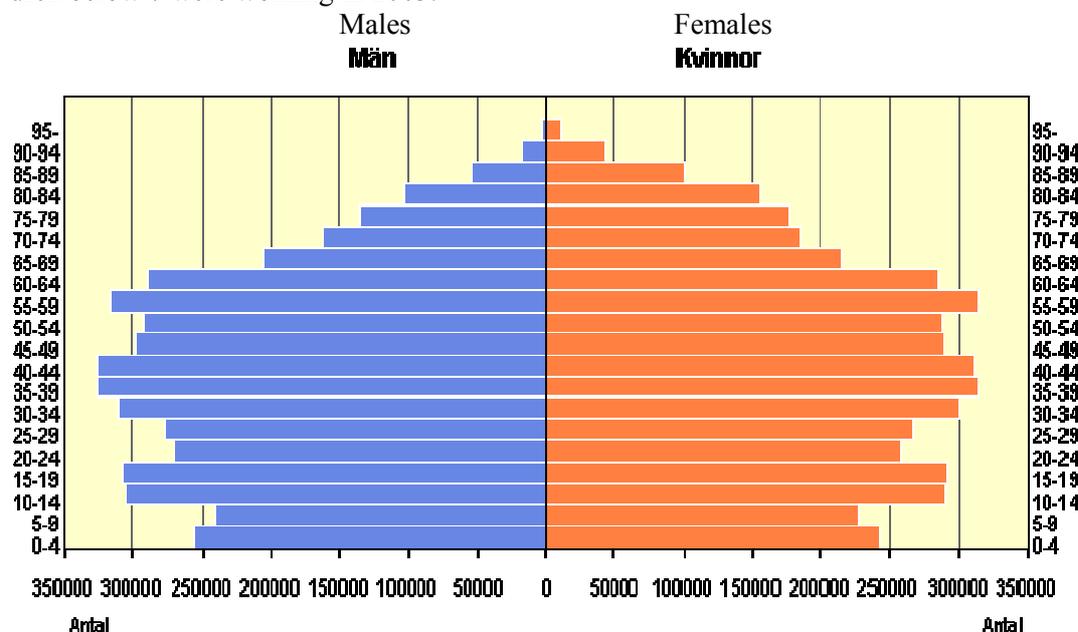


Figure 1. The population of Sweden distributed in five year intervals. (Source SCB, 2005.)

As can be seen from the diagram above Sweden is an ageing society. In 2000, it had the highest old-age dependency ratio in any OECD country. 17% of the whole population is over 65. In 2005 around 12% of the Swedish population is foreign born; representing 203 countries around the world and more than 60% of those who have migrated have Swedish citizenship. Sweden has a strong political tradition which stresses the redistributive role of the state, social inclusion and equality, underpinned by high levels of taxation and public spending. It is the OECD country with the highest total government revenues (58.1% of GDP) and total government expenditures (58.3%): 51.4% of GDP is based on tax receipts as compared to an OECD average of 39.6% (OECD, 2004c). It also is second in social expenditure as a proportion of GDP of all OECD countries. It has one of the lowest poverty rates in all OECD countries, with less than 5.3% of the population below the poverty levels (as opposed to an OECD average of 10.2%) and also has one of the lowest levels of income inequality in OECD countries.

Swedish spending on education is amongst the highest in the world. In 2003, Swedish total public expenditure on all types of education was 6.5% of GDP compared with an OECD average of 5.6%:

Public funding of education stood at 6.3%, compared to an OECD total of 5%, while private spending in education ranks among the lowest in OECD countries (OECD, 2004a, Table B2.1a). This makes Sweden among the most generous countries in proportionate terms, although it has to be said, that in recent years, funds for educational institutions have decreased slightly (OECD, 2004a, Table B3.1).

The number of people among the adult Swedish population that are at regular work is high, 78% of 20 to 65 years old. The amount of persons participating in the working forces is almost equal between men and women. Historically work has been seen as a right of the individual. Work itself is a basic value of the society. This places an important role of the inner life of the schools. The value of work is one part of the social training of the school and many parts of the activities of the schools prepare for the participation in working life. As parents are so highly engaged in the working forces the schools for the younger children also play an important role in the leisure time planning.

In Sweden as well as in other modern societies large changes has occurred according to the nature of working tasks. Less complicated jobs are more and more rare. Old industrial jobs have been replaced by machines and technological solutions. More and more jobs are allocated in the field of trades and services in different sectors. The rapid changes that occur within the working market make the schools and school leaders forced to identify what happens. The changes have to be reflected more quickly in the content of the school work. As larger parts of the working life are dependent on initiatives of entrepreneurs the schools have not only to prepare the students to become employees. They also have to be prepared to fulfil the role of entrepreneurs. Students need to be supported to develop creativity, social competence and initiative, all qualities that the school leaders need to promote in each single school.

The distribution of money between different sectors in society has changed during the last years. In Swedish *municipality*¹ the largest costs are for health care and the care taking of elderly people (40%). In second place you find schooling (32%) and in third place costs for pre-schools and child care (13%) (SKL, 2005). This shows that education has a stable position among politicians as well as among the public. Sweden has been known as a highly equalitarian society with a well developed well fare system. Also in this aspect there is consensus between political parties. However the development during the last decade has led to a larger variation between different income groups. This creates a new reality for schools as children and youth from different homes have different materialistic prerequisites when they attend school. School leaders and teachers have to be aware of and balance this situation.

The level of educational attainment of the population is relatively high, with less than 20% of adults having below upper secondary education, and almost 18% having tertiary education. Enrolment rates in the different education levels are quite high from pre-school all the way through post-compulsory education. Many young adults (18-25) in Sweden combine education with significant participation in work during studies. Thus, while secondary education may not be fully completed at the expected ages, some may be doing so at later ages.

The Swedish population is not only highly educated, but also highly literate. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey, Sweden had the highest average score out of 22 countries, and also one of the lowest spreads, with high literacy levels even for those adults who had not reached upper secondary education.

In terms of the literacy scores of 15 year olds based on the Project for International Student Assessment (PISA), Sweden has performed above the OECD average in reading, with a small standard deviation. However, in scientific and mathematic literacy, while high, performance has not reached the

¹ There are 290 Swedish municipalities. Each of the municipalities is responsible for the use of taxes within several areas such as technical services (water, sanitary), elderly care, child care and schooling. The municipality has a local parliament reflecting the votes of the inhabitants and several boards with a political composition that also reflects the local opinions.

same levels as reading. Still, it is important to say that the spread of these results has been smaller than in the OECD on average, except for scientific literacy. PISA results for Sweden also show that there are small differences in performance between schools, implying that performance is largely unrelated to the schools children attend, although comparison of results from 2000 and 2003 do show increasing –while still relatively small- differences between and across schools.

Table 1: Mean Performance and Standard Deviation on Reading, scientific and mathematic literacy, 2003

| Country | Reading | Standard Deviation | Scientific literacy | Standard Deviation | Mathe- matics | Standard Deviation |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Norway | 500 | 104 | 484 | 104 | 495 | 92 |
| Denmark | 492 | 98 | 475 | 102 | 514 | 91 |
| Finland | 543 | 89 | 548 | 91 | 544 | 84 |
| Sweden | 514 | 92 | 506 | 107 | 509 | 95 |
| OECD | 494 | 100 | 500 | 105 | 500 | 100 |

Source: OECD (2004), Learning for tomorrow's world: First results from PISA 2003, Paris.

Chapter 2. The school system

Brief history and recent development

The education system has been an integral component of the Swedish concept of the welfare state. Compulsory schooling was already introduced in 1842. In the 1960s, Sweden had nine years of free compulsory education for those aged 7 and over. It provided a comprehensive education, with all children following a similar curriculum determined by the government. Upper secondary education was voluntary and offered different programmes, from vocational training to programmes preparing for university studies. Parallel to this, there has also been a strong tradition of public support to adult liberal education, encouraging the accumulation of social and human capital. The schooling system has focused on providing equality of opportunities and equivalence of outcomes. The result of this is that almost all Swedes now stay on in full-time education beyond the minimum school leaving age. The adult education system reinforces this equality of opportunities to adults by also offering the possibility of a second chance to adults who missed it in the first place and giving another route to jobs with higher pay or better conditions.

The Swedish education system has undergone a number of important reforms in the past 25 years which have a strong bearing on the task of school leaders. A process of decentralisation has left the government with few policy levers at a national scale: During the 1990s, the education system was decentralised from the government to local authorities and schools in order to encourage greater innovation and flexibility in the system and to stimulate local democracy; to reduce spending across the public sector; and to promote increased efficiency by introducing more market forces in education (e.g. more competition among public schools and the encouragement of approved independent schools). The reasons behind the transformation of the system from a highly centralised to a highly decentralised one were not only rational. During the 1980's the municipalities showed the state that they were fully competent to manage their own affairs and many requests were made that more autonomy had to be given to the municipalities. It was also a reaction to the severe economic recession that Sweden experienced in the early 1990s.

The government has retained overall responsibility in defining the national objectives and guidelines of education and curriculum, and the municipalities have freedom to determine how they want to accomplish this. While the government and parliament continue to play a substantial role in school education, the system is now goal and result-oriented. Within the framework of the guidelines adopted by Parliament and the Government in the Education Act, ordinances, curricula, syllabuses and timetables, the local authorities decide how school education is to be organised and what resources to allocate for this purpose out of their budgets.

Within this decentralisation trend, support for alternative schools has been promoted. Thus, while all students attend publicly funded schools, around 11% of schools, catering for 8 % of enrolled students, are so called *approved independent schools*². These schools are open to everyone, follow the same curricula and receive grants from the municipalities according to the same criteria as the municipality's own schools.

In 1998 preschools were defined as one part of the educational system. The large expansion of the child day care system in Sweden started in the 1960's to make it possible for women to participate in the labour market. Questions about children day care were handled by the Ministry of social affairs. During the 1980's and 1990's municipalities in Sweden restructured their inner organisation. The development that children and youth go through was seen as a whole issue. Many municipalities combined child care questions with questions about development during the schools years under one over-head organisation. The change has meant a lot for many school leaders in the municipalities as they

² Approved by The National Agency for Education

have become responsible not only for compulsory schools but also for preschools in their part of the municipality. Preschool teachers and child care takers have become new professional groups that school leaders are expected to lead in their schools. For these professional groups the new structure has meant that preschool activities are seen more as education than care taking. In the end of the 1990's the state followed the municipalities and the responsibility for child care went over from the ministry of social affairs to the ministry of education also at the national level.

The structure of the school system

The Swedish public school system is made up of compulsory and non compulsory schooling. Compulsory schooling includes regular compulsory school, Sami school, special school, and programs for pupils with learning disabilities. Non-compulsory schooling includes the preschool class, upper secondary school, and upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities, municipal adult education, and adult education for adults with learning disabilities.

All education throughout the public school system is free. There is usually no charge to students or their parents for teaching materials, school meals, health services or transport.

The Education Act

According to the Swedish Education Act, all children and youths shall have equal access to education. All children shall enjoy this right, regardless of gender, where they live, or social or economic factors. The Education Act states that the education shall "provide the pupils with knowledge and, in co-operation with the homes, promote their harmonious development into responsible human beings and members of the community." Consideration shall also be given to students with special needs.

Responsibility and governance

The curriculum, national objectives and guidelines for the public education system are laid down by Swedish Parliament and Government. Now valid are Curriculum for the Preschool (Lpfö 98), Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Preschool Class and the Leisure-time centre (Lpo 94) and Curriculum for the Non-compulsory School System (Lpf 94).

Within the objectives and framework established by Government and Parliament, the individual municipality may determine how its schools are to be run. A local school plan describing the funding, organization, development and evaluation of school activities shall be adopted. Using the approved curriculum, national objectives and the local school plan, the principal of each school draws up a local work plan. This shall be done in consultation with the schools teachers and other personnel.

The National Agency for Education shall evaluate, follow up and supervise the public school system in Sweden. Every year, The National Agency for Education presents a current overview of the school system to Government and Parliament. This forms the basis of a national development plan for schools. The National Agency for Education has a supervisory role to ensure that the provisions of the Education Act are being complied with and that the rights of the individual student are respected.

The government also influences the work of the schools through the National Agency for School Improvement. This agency is intended to support and stimulate local authorities and schools to achieve the national objectives and to improve quality in priority areas. Its responsibilities include the professional development of principals and teachers. The two national agencies that work towards municipalities and schools operate independently of the government.

The school year

The school (academic) year normally begins at the end of August and runs to the beginning of June the following year, comprising a total of about 40 weeks. The regular school week is five days long, Monday through Friday. A longer holiday of just over two weeks is taken from around the 20th December to the beginning of January.

Preschool

Preschool is well established and comprises children in the age of one to five years. Three out of four children participate in preschool at the age of 3-4 years. Preschool activity is jointly financed by the municipality budget and parental fees, usually income-related.

Preschool Class

Municipalities are obligated to provide a place in a preschool class for all children beginning the fall term of the year the child turns 6. The preschool class program shall comprise a minimum of 525 hours per year and stimulate the learning and development of each child, as well as lay the foundations for continued schooling.

How the preschool class is arranged may differ between municipalities. Most often, it is organized and located in connection to a compulsory school, leisure-time centre and/or preschool.

While attendance is voluntary, 93 per cent of all six-year-olds attend a pre-school class, normally lasting three hours a day.

Compulsory Education

Included in compulsory schooling are the regular compulsory school, Sami school, special school, and programs for pupils with learning disabilities. The 9-year compulsory school program is for all children between the ages of 7-16 years. Upon the request of the parents, a child may begin school one year earlier, at the age of 6.

Sami children can receive education in Sami School that covers grades 1-6. This schooling corresponds to the first 6 years of compulsory school.

Special schools offer a 10-year program for the deaf and hard of hearing. Programs for pupils with learning disabilities include compulsory school and training school for pupils with severe learning disabilities.

In Sweden there are today 4 908 compulsory schools. During the first three to seven years the class is taught by the same teacher, supported by a number of specialist teachers responsible for instance for handicrafts or sports. Gradually subject teachers are introduced during school year six and seven. These subject teachers follow the students during their last three or four school years. Students receive marks for the first time in grade 8, at the age of fifteen. As there are many sparsely populated areas in Sweden, school size varies. A compulsory school may have less than thirty teachers. In cities there are usually around 70-80 teachers to be found in a school. The work is led by a principal, who not only manages the teachers, but also manages the people who work at the school in student care, counselling, health, maintenance and food services. In the compulsory schools, run by the municipalities, the average student number is 213. In the 585 independent compulsory schools in which the municipalities are not driving the schools, the average number of students is 127.

Upper Secondary Education

Almost all compulsory school students, 92 percent of a year group, continue on directly to upper secondary school and the majority of these complete their upper secondary education in 3 years. The upper secondary education is non-compulsory schooling.

Upper secondary education is divided into 17 national 3-year programs. All of the programs shall offer a broad general education and basic eligibility to continue studies at the post-secondary level. Alongside the national programs, are also a number of specially designed- and individual study programs.

Upper secondary education for the learning disabled offers vocational training in the form of national-, specially designed- or individual programs, similar to those of regular upper secondary. The national programs for the learning disabled are however fewer in number and specially oriented to vocational training. Upper secondary programs for the learning disabled are 4 years in length.

Most of the upper secondary schools are also headed by the municipalities and they have the same high degree of responsibility as the compulsory schools have. In the upper secondary schools all different educational programs are kept under the same organisational roof. Students that are aspiring to

go to universities are working side by side with students that have chosen to study with more of a vocational goal in focus. The teachers follow the students during one, two or three years. Teachers usually work in teams to be able to use the time of the students in effective ways. The principal is the manager of an upper secondary school, but may have several deputy principals to work together with that usually have responsibilities that follows the special study areas that the school can offer the students. The principal appoints the staff, decides on the individual salary of the teacher as is done in the compulsory school and take decisions on economical issues as well as on issues that deals with the use of time and localities. Upper secondary schools are usually larger organisations than compulsory schools are. The average upper secondary school run by a municipality has 614 students. There are 266 independent upper secondary schools in Sweden. In these schools the student average is 177 per school. About 13,4 % of the students in the age of 17-19 attend these kinds of schools in Sweden.

The students can choose between the 17 national 3-year programs, 14 of which are vocationally oriented. All these programs provide a broad basic education and basic eligibility for higher studies. Core and shared subjects take about one-third of the students' study time, both in theoretical and vocational programs. In order to follow one of the 17 national programs students are required to have at least pass compulsory school grades in Swedish (as a mother tongue or as a second language), English and mathematics. About 50 % of the students attend programs that prepare them for different vocations and 32 % of the students attend programs that prepare them directly for university studies. About 10 % of the student attends specially designed programs. Apart from the national programs there are specially designed individual programs in which 8 % of the students participate. These individual programs are for students who, due to insufficient qualifications or other reasons, cannot start a national or specially designed program immediately.

Student work is assessed on a continuous basis, with marks awarded for the completion of each course. National tests have been developed in certain subjects. No final examination is taken, but a leaving certificate is awarded. A very important feature of upper secondary school is that all tracks (academic as well as vocational) give access to tertiary education.

Adult Education

A person has the right to begin an upper secondary education in a regular upper secondary school up until the year he/she has turns 20. After that, there are different types of municipally run adult education programs. Among these are municipal adult education (Komvux) and education for adults with learning disabilities (Särvux). Komvux and Särvux are basic education, corresponding to compulsory school and programs for pupils with learning disabilities, respectively, and non-compulsory education, corresponding to regular upper secondary and upper secondary courses for pupils with learning disabilities, respectively.

Komvux also offers continuing education programs, which give specialized skills in a particular occupational field.

The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning serves as a complement to municipal adult programs for people who are unable to study in the town or community where they live. Part of the program is done by distance, in addition to students making regular visits to the school for teacher directed instruction.

Swedish for immigrants (SFI) is designed to provide newcomers with knowledge of the Swedish language and Swedish society. Municipalities have an obligation to offer SFI to new adult immigrants. SFI programs may be organized in different ways depending on the municipality.

University and Post-secondary Education

More than one third (43 %) of students continue on to study at the postsecondary level within three years of completing upper secondary school (2002). Universities and institutions of higher education offer students specific programs or individual courses of study. Most universities and post-secondary institutions in Sweden are state-run, and are located in more than 20 towns and cities across the country.

The right to choose ones school and independent schools

Most children attend a municipal school close to their home. However, students and their parents have the right to choose another municipal school, or a privately run (independent) school. About 6 % of the compulsory school students attend an approved independent school (2002).

Independent schools are open to everyone and must be approved by The National Agency for Education. The municipality in which the student resides pays the school a per student/per year grant. The education of independent schools shall have the same basic objectives as municipal schools, but may have a profile that distinguishes it from the municipal school. For example, schools may have a particular religious character or use a special educational approach such as Montessori or Waldorf. If an independent school does not comply with applicable regulations, The National Agency for Education may withdraw its approval.

Independent schools above the compulsory school level can be one of two kinds: those that correspond to municipal upper secondary, i.e., those that offer upper secondary programs and receive municipal grants, or those that offer supplementary programs. Among the latter, are schools with programs in fine arts and handicrafts.

In addition to the types of schools mentioned, there are also a number of international schools in Sweden that receive partial government funding. These schools are intended primarily for the children of foreign nationals whose stay in Sweden is temporary.

Special education and special schools

The Swedish Education Act states that all children shall have equal access to education, and that all children shall enjoy this right, regardless of gender, where they live, or social or economic factors. Special support shall also be given to students who have difficulty with the schoolwork. Most students with a need for special support are taught in regular classes in compulsory- and upper secondary schools. There are also a certain number of special remedial classes for students with functional disabilities, and for students with social and emotional problems. However, most children with learning disabilities attend a program for pupils with learning disabilities (Särskola).

Special support and remedial teaching

A student, who for some reason has difficulty following lessons in class, can receive support in one of several ways. Examples include having a special education teacher support and assist the child in the classroom, or teaching the child in a special remedial group outside the regular classroom.

Students who are sick for an extended period of time, or who frequently miss school due to illness, are entitled to be taught at the hospital or in the home. This instruction is only given with the consent of a physician. The instruction given shall correspond as far as possible to regular classroom instruction.

Special needs education

According to a 1988 parliamentary decision regarding a new teacher's training program, all compulsory school teachers shall receive the equivalent of a half term of study in special needs education. In addition to this, there is also a 3-term specialist training program in special education. Special needs teachers can offer regular teachers support and guidance in teaching students with particular difficulties. This can be done either by the special needs teacher teaching the entire class, parts of the class, or only those students in need of compensatory training.

School principals are responsible for establishing an action program in consultation with the student's parent or guardian.

Students with functional disabilities

The Swedish Institute for Special Needs Education is responsible for providing special needs support to students, parents, schools and municipalities, so that functionally disabled students receive the best education possible. The support targets children with hearing- and vision impairments, children with physical- or multiple disabilities, as well as disabled immigrant students, vision-impaired preschool

children, and deaf-blind adults. The Institute also has a resource centre that develops, produces and distributes teaching materials and other aids for special needs education.

Reduced study program

Schools are not always able to offer an education suited to every student's interests and abilities. For students who feel that the regular education is simply too demanding, the school can arrange a reduced course of study.

This can mean either reducing the timetable, or alternating work experience with school subjects. A student following a reduced program does not receive a complete final grade (leaving certificate) from compulsory school, but can nevertheless be offered a place in upper secondary school.

Upper secondary school

The principles of equal education for students with special needs, as well as strive for integration, applies to upper secondary school as it does to compulsory school. The support measures available in compulsory school shall also be available in upper secondary.

Most youths with functional disabilities attend regular upper secondary schools. There are also special national secondary schools for the deaf, hearing-impaired and physically disabled students. These include the national upper secondary for the deaf and hard of hearing in Örebro, and national secondary school for physically disabled students in Umeå, Stockholm, Göteborg and Kristianstad.

Adult education

Education for adults in Sweden can take the form of municipally run adult education programs (Komvux), education for adults with learning disabilities (Särvux), and Swedish for immigrants (SFI). A supplement to municipal adult education, are the national schools for adults (SSV).

Persons with functional disabilities often encounter particular difficulties associated with studying. Physical access is a requirement, as are the availability of suitable aids, teaching materials and personal assistance. In some cases, the state can provide funding to alleviate the shortcomings in these areas. The aim is for no-one to be excluded from studying as an adult.

Special School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The school for the deaf and hard of hearing is a bilingual school (Swedish and sign language) that offers deaf and hearing-impaired students an education that taps into their strengths. Special schools have a broader responsibility towards their students, e.g., for providing recreational activities, transportation, and in some cases also accommodations. Special school education is compulsory and is a 10-year program.

There is one national- and five regional schools for the deaf and hard of hearing. The regional schools are located in Lund, Vänersborg, Örebro, Stockholm and Härnösand. The national school in Gnesta also teaches deaf and hard of hearing students with learning disabilities and students who have been deaf and blind since birth.

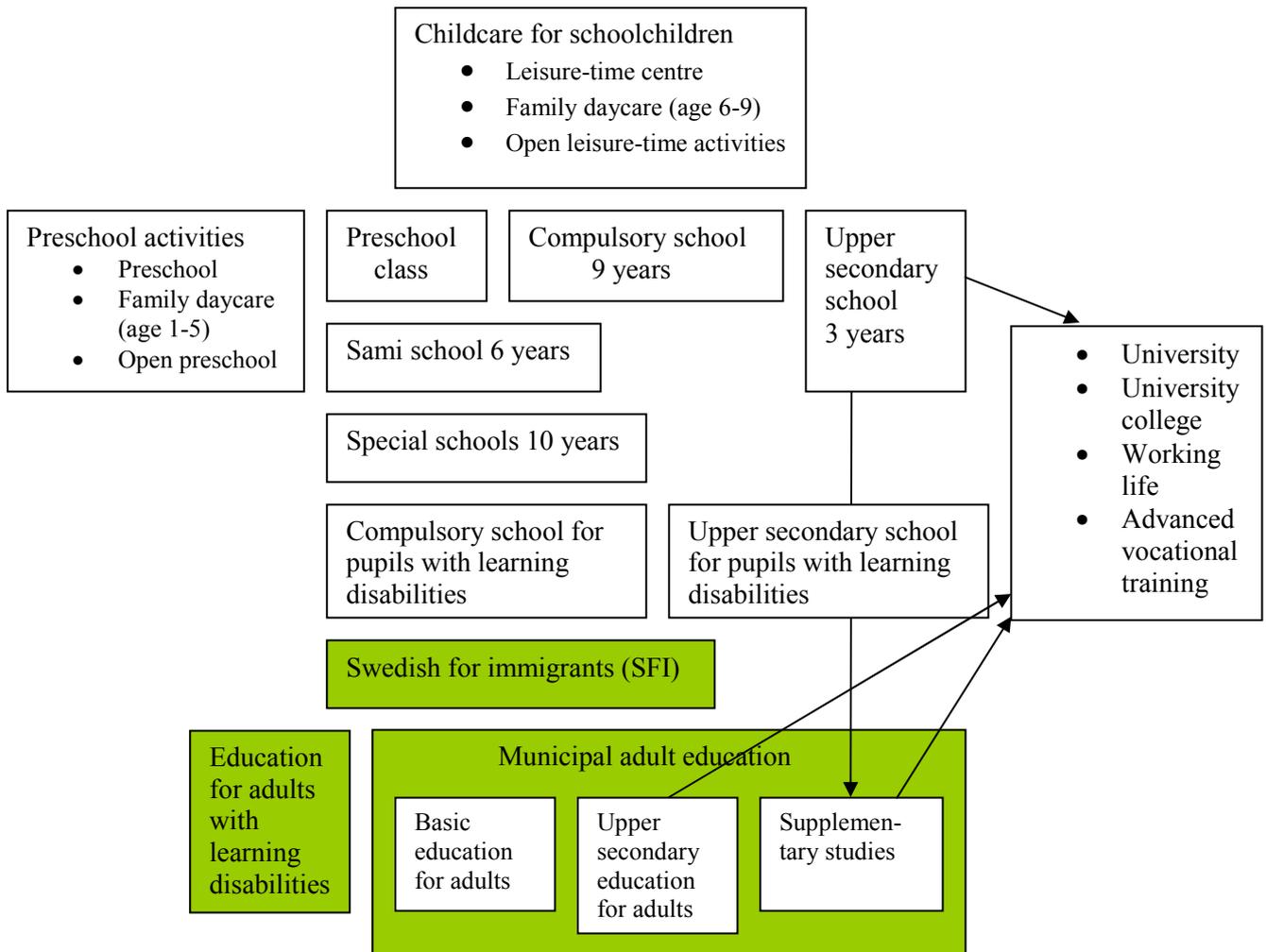
The agency responsible for these schools is the National Agency for Special Schools for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Resource centres

There are four state resource centres for special needs education. The centres' activities target children and youths who are visually-impaired, with or without being hard of hearing, deaf or having learning- or severe language disabilities, as well as deaf or hard of hearing students with learning disabilities, and the staff who work with these children. The task of the centres is to promote a rounded development for these groups within the public school system for children and youths. Activities include special needs research and training, and providing information, education and further training for the students' parents or guardians as well for teachers and other staff. The centres shall also collect and distribute information, and remain up-to-date concerning research and development in education and development of children and youths of the groups targeted.

The central administration agency for the resource centres is the Swedish Institute for Special Needs Education.

Figure 2: Structure of the Swedish Education System



The relation between central and periphery of the educational system

The compulsory school system has been in operation since 1962. At that time the school system was highly centralised. Aims for the schools and guidance on how to reach the aims were presented by the government or by national boards. Almost everything that took place in a compulsory school was rigorously set out in different sets of guidelines at that time. Although the schools were governed by specific boards of the local municipalities, in the early sixties these boards only had real power over housing, school-meals, teaching-materials and school transport. Money was distributed to the schools from the state on the basis of key numbers of students. The money to be used for teacher and school leader salaries was decided after negotiations at the national level, following seniority tariff principles. Beginning in the mid-seventies the Swedish school system has changed from being a highly centralised system to become a school system where power is devolved to the local school so they can meet their specific challenges.

Step by step the governance system of the compulsory school has changed during the latter part of the twentieth century in Sweden. The central guidelines ("läroplan") were rewritten in 1969, 1980 and in 1994; the 1994 (Lpo 94) version is short and concise. The board of education of the municipality has been given much more power over and responsibility for school finance. The state distributes a lump sum of money to the municipalities. They distribute the money to the schools. At the school level the school leaders have significant power over the distribution of the money. Recruitment of teachers is

carried out by the local school, where the school leader cooperates with the teacher unions not only about hiring new teachers, but also about the individual level of each teacher's salary. The state still formulates the central aims for the schools, but the schools are responsible for the educational process, to reach the goals and for the use of the resources that have been allocated to the school.

The Swedish school system is based on management by objectives. On the basis of the curriculum, each municipality is required to set out the general objectives for its school in a local school plan. In addition, every school has to devise a local work plan, based on the curriculum and local priorities. Within this framework, teachers have freedom to determine teaching methods and select teaching materials. The curricula prescribe compulsory subjects, subject syllabuses and curricular aims. Swedish, English and mathematics occupy a prominent position. Students also study practical arts subjects, health and physical education, social sciences, natural sciences, technology, home economics and another foreign language. There is a national timetable with the number of hours per subject, but municipalities and schools decide themselves on the distribution of hours and in what year a subject is to be introduced. The goals are set in the curriculum for year five and nine. During the first years of the new decennium 79 municipalities have participated in a development project where they have been free to work without any regulation of the use of the time at school.

Education based on tax money

Sweden allocates considerable resources to schooling. Almost 100% of the funding for schools, including independent schools, is from public sources (the OECD country average is 93%). Schooling is free in Sweden, and parents are able to choose the school that their child attends (subject to capacity constraints). Municipalities are also required to provide students with free transport for compulsory schooling in the municipality.

The funding of schools comes from both the central and municipality levels of government. The funding has three main components:

- General grants from the government to municipalities to assist with providing the wide range of services for which they are responsible, including schools.
- Specific-purpose grants from the government to municipalities that are earmarked for particular purposes, such as assisting disadvantaged students and the training of principals.
- Grants that the municipalities make from their own sources of revenue.

In total, around 80% of school funding comes from the municipalities based on local taxes, and 20% directly from the government.

There are three aspects of school funding that reflect the decentralised nature of Swedish schooling and society more generally:

- the municipalities are able to choose the amount of funding that they allocate to schools provided that they comply with their legislative obligations and meet the national objectives;
- most funds are allocated to schools in a block grant, and principals are able to determine the division of funds between different categories of expenditure, including different types of teachers and non-teaching staff; and
- “funding follows the student”: when a student changes school, the operating grant that applies to that student is reallocated to their new school.

These features lead to a system in which there are strong competitive pressures on schools and teachers to perform well.

Types of personnel

Swedish schools have more categories of staff employed than schools in most other countries. One reason is that functions like school health services and school meals are integrated parts of the educational system and therefore appear at the school. The following were the facts in 2005 (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2005)

- In **Child care** 126 000 people were full time employed (pre school teachers, child care attendants, leisure time teachers and managers) plus 11 000 people who were preparing meals and working as caretakers and cleaning assistants. Among pre school teachers 3 % are men, among children's nurse 4 % and among recreation instructors 21 %.
- In **Schools** – (pre school, compulsory school, upper secondary school, special schools and adult education) - 165 600 people were full time employed working as all kind of teachers, counsellors (2500) and school leaders (8 500)³.
- In **School health care** – (compulsory school, upper secondary school and special schools) – were 15 700 people full time employed. Doctors (88), school nurses (2135), well fare officers (1369), school psychologists (631), different specialists (2654) and student assistants (8788).
- In **School administration** – were 28 800 people full time employed. Administrative staff, school librarians, IT-specialists, caretakers, cooks and cleaning assistants.
- At the municipality level the **director of education's office** includes staff working with economy, evaluation, strategic planning, statistics, school buildings, coordination, cooperation with other authorities, transports, overall personnel planning and support.

Trade unions

Sweden is a country where most people in the labour market have chosen to become a member of a trade union. More than 80 % are enrolled in unions which from an international point of view is a very high proportion. There are two trade unions recruiting and organizing teachers. The largest one is called *Läraryrket* (Swedish Teachers Union). With 230 000 members at all educational levels it is the fourth largest trade union in Sweden. *Läraryrket* also organize 8 000 school leaders in a certain association consisting of principals, deputy principals and other persons with leading positions in the school system. Historically *Läraryrket* have been the dominating organisation among pre-school teachers and class-teachers. *Läraryrket* belongs to TCO (The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees) an umbrella organisation consisting of 17 affiliated trade unions with totally 1.3 million members. Their members work in many different parts of the labour market – schools, health care, the police, industries, IT and telecom.

The other organisation is called *Lärarnas Riksförbund – LR* (National Union of teachers in Sweden) and counts 80 000 members also working at all educational levels. Historically LR has been the dominating organisation among subject-teachers and teachers with an academic background. LR belongs to SACO (The Swedish confederation of Professional Associations). SACO is a confederation of 25 independent associations with almost 600 000 members, all of whom are academics or graduate professionals with a university or college degree.

The main targets for both teacher unions are to raise the professional status of teachers to promote professional development, to ensure time for school development and a favourable real wage for their members, to improve the working environment in schools, to increase research for and by teachers and to achieve more funding for education.

³ Including principals and deputy principals

The two unions of teachers have a formalized cooperation at the national level. When they meet their counter-part The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) in negotiations concerning salaries and other working conditions they speak with one voice.

Sveriges Skolledarförbund (The Swedish Association of Principals and Directors of Education) has 7 500 members consisting of principals, deputy principals and other persons with leading positions within the school system. Their members work at all educational levels. This union also belongs to the over head organisation SACO.

The main target for the unions of school leaders is to improve the working conditions. Still most school leaders have districts to run that are too large to be managed in a proper way. Many school leaders are frustrated that they have too many tasks to handle and they feel that they have not the expected time to coach their staff and to meet with their students. By tradition matters concerning wages are important. A future challenge is to create understanding among politicians that school leaders need to have time within their ordinary working time to participate in higher education and research so that the professional knowledge can be developed.

There is an ideological cleft between the two unions of school leaders. Lärarförbundet has a strong belief that teachers and school leaders – as the educational is a whole unit - shall belong to the same union. Sveriges Skolledarförbund considers that teachers and school leaders play different roles in the school system. The view of this union is that school leader work is a specific profession with certain interests and should therefore be handled in a certain organisation.

Opinions about the role of schools, the quality of education and the status of teachers and school leaders.

In the Swedish society there is a deep and shared understanding about the high value of education, both for the development of individuals as well as of the society. In political terms this is expressed among other things by the demands that all students shall have passed after finishing the compulsory school, that all students have the right to attend upper secondary education and further more that fifty percentage of the students in a year group are expected to study at the university. In economical terms Sweden invests in 2005 6,3 % of the GNP in education, which is a very high proportion seen from an international point of view.

Younger students have mainly a positive attitude towards the school as is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes of girls and boys towards the school. 2 800 students aged 10-12 years old. Source: The National Agency for Education (2004).

| | girls | boys |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Appreciate the school they attend | 87 | 89 |
| Appreciate the work at school | 76 | 67 |
| Mostly like what is done at school | 88 | 77 |
| Care much about their school work | 80 | 68 |

When the Swedish students grow older, their attitudes towards the school become less positive.

Studies have been made among parents about their views about schools. When they have been asked about their opinions about schools (2004) 74 % of the parents say that they estimate the work done in the preschool highly positive. Corresponding figures for the compulsory school parents are 65 % and for the upper secondary school are 68%.

Among the Swedish population yearly opinion studies are made of what trust people have for different institutions of the society, for instance the health care system, courts, police forces, universities, parliament, government and among others also the compulsory school (Holmberg and Weibull, 2005). Among the twenty institutions that were included in the opinion study the compulsory school was seen

as the fifth most trustworthy institution. As the study have been repeated over a twenty year period comparisons have been possible over the years. All institutions have lost confidence among the public over the twenty years, except one – the compulsory school.

Among school people a dominating problem is the uneven quality of schools. Excellent results are reached by many schools, while others have large difficulties to reach the aims. For instance schools in areas with large proportions of immigrants or with students from homes with weak traditions of studies do not reach real good results. In those schools it happens that not more than 50 % of the students are passing the compulsory school demands. Much discussion also takes place about the fact that around 10 % of a year group of students in the Swedish compulsory school do not pass. In the upper secondary school 75 % of a year group leaves the school with a complete upper secondary school certificate, a fact that challenges the staff of the school.

International comparative studies show that Swedish students do well in such topics as English, reading, civics and science, but the results in mathematics are more problematic. The results of the tests that are used in the international comparisons have intensified the debate about the balance between the two main tasks of the school system – to develop the students' knowledge and skills and their social competence. The rapid development of independent schools, often profiled and small, are seen by many people as a disappointment reaction, headed towards the public schools and the difficulties they have to offer a safe and secure learning environment.

The status of teachers shows a somewhat mixed picture. Seen from the inside of the profession many teachers consider that the status for some categories has declined during the last thirty years. Especially subject teachers of the compulsory school and the upper secondary school have experienced this. On the contrary teachers in pre schools often declare that they have had a raise in status. When you look at the entrance of the teacher education, young people seems to have a high value of the teaching profession. Most teacher educations have many more applicants than there are study places. Places for teachers of mathematics and science are one exception. When the public have given their opinions about different institutions of the society they have also expressed that the confidence for teachers in the compulsory school are higher than the confidence that they feel for education as a whole.

The status of school leaders among the public is still high. There are many places outside school where school leaders are chosen to fill important functions, for instance in different associations and in political life. Seen from the inside of the profession the last years have indicated a shift in the perception that teachers hold of school leaders. Earlier a school leader was more seen as an administrator that should not bother too much of the daily teaching processes. The power of the school leader was very limited compared with today's situation. One of the main expectations from teachers was that the school leader should protect their staff from unnecessary interventions from inspectors and politicians. Today teachers are well aware of the fact that they cannot establish and develop a well functioning school without a competent and future oriented school leader. Today's competition between schools, both among public ones and between these and the independent schools, demands competent, creative and driving school leaders. If a school in Sweden of today cannot show good results and therefore lose students, the school also loose money, which immediately has impact on the staff situation. The society has given school leaders a key role in the educational system with large responsibilities for children, staffing and money, which reflects a high status of the profession.

Chapter 3. School governance and leadership

School leaders in Sweden

In Sweden school leaders - as the title says – are expected to lead and not administer the work in schools. They have the right and also the duty to act as managers of their organisations. School leaders in public compulsory or upper secondary schools are appointed by the board of education in their municipalities or by the director of education (in larger cities). A school leader in an independent school is appointed by its board.

On top of the school organisation in a municipality one often finds a director of education. Most directors of education have contracts with a certain time limit. The director of education works very close to the political level in the municipality. He or she is an overall “school expert” and the one who prepares all proposals for the decision making in the board of education. He or she has also to execute and follow up all decisions made by the politicians. All communication between the political level and the professional one is supposed to go through the director of education. That means that politicians are not expected to give orders to a single principal.

The director of education steers and supervises the principals in his/her school organisation. Often all principals in the municipality are members of the director of education’s steering group where matters concerning strategy, development, economy and results of the organisation are discussed. All kind of reports go to the office of the director of education where they are put together before they are presented for the politicians. At the same time the director of education is the one who gives support to his/her school leaders, is their coach and challenges them to improve the work of their schools.

There is no special law regulating the responsibility of a director of education. Every single municipality - if they decide to appoint a director of education - describes his or her tasks and duties in a certain document. There are about 300 directors of educations working in different municipalities.

One category of the school leaders is the principal, which is responsible for a school district consisting of one or more schools. Principal is a position you find in compulsory school, upper secondary school and adult education. According to the Education Act every school in Sweden shall have a principal who has a good knowledge of rules and regulation valid for Swedish schools. As principal you have a responsibility to keep yourself well informed about the daily life in your school(s). You shall also as a principal actively work with improving education at your units. The Education Act also states that to be appointed principal you have to have gained “pedagogical cognizance” by training and experience.

Even in the curriculum the responsibility of principals is stated in thirteen short descriptions. The principal has the overall responsibility for what is going on at the school. The organisation as a whole shall be ordered in such a way that it works in such a direction that the national goals and aims are fulfilled. There are in the curriculum even more detailed instructions concerning the students working conditions, for example that the principal has to supervise that teachers support the students, that teaching materials of good quality is chosen, that coordination of teaching occurs, that the students health care works, that bullying is fought, that cooperation with parents works and so on.

The legal security of the students is very much in focus in Sweden. The principal is the one who interpret and handle all rules and regularities. A student that considers his principal has made a decision mistake can appeal to a certain instance which will judge in the actual case.

A new law says that if a school has not done all that can be expected, to protect a single student from being bullied or has received other offending aggressions, the student has a right to be economically compensated.

The principal gets directives from both the state level - laws and other national steering documents intentions are to develop an equivalent Swedish school - and from the local level.

The local steering documents consist for example of instructions about how to handle budget and economy, routines for information, different kind of policy-programmes which are valid for all activities run by the municipality. As principal you can choose whether you would like to spend some of your working time teaching classes or not. Most principals do not use this possibility mainly because of all meetings inside and outside school that they have to participate in. They have problems to set a regular time with classes every week and they do not want to disfavour their students.

Another category of school leaders is the deputy principals. They can be appointed either by the director of education or by the principal where the position is actual. The deputy principals are often leaders of a certain sector or a specific level of a school. Their responsibility often concerns pedagogical matters. They are members of the management team of the school and report to the principal. It is very common that deputy principals have teaching tasks.

In many schools there are also work unit leaders or leaders of teams of teachers. These leaders are teachers with a limited task to coordinate mainly pedagogical matters within a working-unit. They are teachers and usually they do not see themselves as teachers and do not identify themselves as school leaders.

School leaders responsibility and management

A main goal of the highly decentralised system was to create more flexibility and to allow the individual schools to decide how they want to achieve the objectives set by government. Principals, teachers and other staff are responsible for the content and results of the education provided at each school. The principal has overall responsibility for translating national and local objectives into concrete teaching objectives. All schools must prepare quality statements. The content and organisation of teaching, among other things, are specified in the school's plan of work. The duty of the principal is to develop this plan in consultation with the teachers. Principals are responsible for the development of their school, the students' results and the school's success in achieving its goals, as well as for ensuring the quality of the teaching provided. The principal's role includes responsibility for financial management, personnel management, the work organisation, environment, educational development and quality improvement.

The principal selects the teachers to work at the school (in response to open advertisements) and is able to negotiate individual employment and salary conditions within the limits set by local and national collective bargaining arrangements. Teachers have a high degree of autonomy for the selection of teaching methods and for student assessment. The Swedish school management structure is today designed in many different ways at the school level. However, there are some main streams of designs. One rather common structure in the compulsory schools is to change from large school management areas with a team of school leaders that manage a cluster of schools to small school units where the common principle of "one school house - one leader" is practised. Where the idea of a larger school management area is kept, they are often divided into several working units and in each of them a teacher has a responsibility as the unit-leader. In most such schools, both among larger compulsory schools and the upper secondary schools, the principal and her/his assistants use these teachers as coordinators of the school management process. The principal, her/his deputies and the unit-leaders meet regularly to decide on important local topics such as how the Local Working Plan is to be developed, money for teaching- materials, in what way the in-service training of the teachers will be organised during the coming year or what money there is need for during the next year, etc.

In both compulsory schools and in upper secondary schools in Sweden the teachers have quite a strong position. The principal calls the teachers to common meetings a couple of times during the school year to inform them about important matters and to have a possibility to discuss them internally. If a change is proposed by somebody with power to do so, the usual pattern is that there is a consultation round

among groups of teachers, before a decision is made. The unions of the teachers are also consulted in different matters like selections of new principals, distribution of money in the school, plans of the in-service training of the school. The Teachers Unions are usually highly respected by the decision-makers and they are important partners too, but sometimes also a clear obstacle for the principal, when it comes to changes in school structure and planning of teachers work.

In a Swedish compulsory school there is also a committee in which the school leaders regularly meet representatives of the teachers, the parents and the students. In this committee the principal has to inform the different parties and discuss with them about issues that are important to them, like changes of the structure of the geographical borders of the school management area, about the budget of the school, about the overall time planning of the school year, issues of bullying etc.. In some compulsory schools this committee is used as a real decision-making body, in some other compulsory schools it is only a formal meeting where information is given. The state policy is that these committees with parental participation shall be real decision making bodies in the future.

Student participation in school management

In compulsory schools students are by law guaranteed influence in the school. Teachers are requested to involve their students in the planning of the education flow and school leaders are expected to involve the students in the decision-making process at the school. Since the end of the 1970's it is a routine in compulsory schools that each class (in a class you usually find about 25 to 30 students) hold weekly "class councils" where the students and a couple of their teachers discuss the inner life of the class. Decisions are taken in this body about changes of the day to day routines of work and of social life.

In the upper secondary schools the students participate in the decision-makings at the school level in a school conference, which have the power to decide about important issues at the school. The budget is discussed and decided on. Policy decisions about e.g. evaluation strategies that will be used in the school are taken there, as well as the load of knowledge testing at the school etc. This school conference has partly taken over the power that the principal traditionally had. However the conference must not decide about issues where the principal has the right to decide according to law and regulations. The principal of the school is the chairman of the school conference. The number of representatives of the staff shall be the same as the number of representatives elected by the students. In the upper secondary school the parents have no representatives in the decision-making bodies.

Rewarding performance and commitment

Swedish schools use a system of individual salaries. Through this system schools can reward committed teachers. The system makes it possible to use some teachers' best competencies in a better way. The system can link better performance to better pay. However, the system combines several objectives and in that sense certain aims of the system still have not been entirely implemented, although it has been in place for a full decade. Because the system is strongly labour market driven it endangers the performance-related side of the system. The salary system seems to serve the purpose of attracting young teachers rather well. The system has led to higher salaries for young teachers, but it is not well geared to give recognition to experienced teachers who have reached high standards of professional performance. Even before they have proven anything, new teachers can demand for a high salary just in order to start in the school. When the school is in a region where teacher shortages are high, the school will be inclined to give in to the high salary demands of beginning teachers. This system absorbs funds that can no longer be invested to reward high standards of performance. The salary system is a great concern for school leaders.

The system does not necessarily differentiate between performance and commitment. Teachers who are prepared to take on more jobs and responsibilities can be better rewarded. The same goes for teachers who are performing very well, but there are no clear, objective indicators available. The system does not explain how evidence that teachers have reached higher standards of performance can be measured in ways that are credible to teachers and to the public. There seems to be a lack of clear processes for evaluating the performance of teachers in many schools, which makes life less easy for school leaders.

Challenges for school leaders

School leaders need to use themselves and their staff to speculate about the future to be able to adjust the content and working patterns of the school to the future needs of the students as adults. Some tendencies that challenge old habits of schools are obvious already today. Another urgent matter seems to be, to build in the consequences of the over use of natural resources, especially coal and oil and the wild dumping of the different garbage products of the modern life, in the lives of schools. Through the learning at school everybody needs to understand the relationship between cause and effect, so that the personal responsibility of each member of society becomes obvious for all students and so that they can contribute to a sustainable development. The content of schooling needs to deal with the principle of conserving nature, the practical solution of peaceful co-existence between people, the interwoven relationship between economy and life quality as well as about practiced democracy. The ongoing wars in Iraq and elsewhere show that there is a strong need to bring in more of peaceful conflict solution as a topic in schools to prevent future human catastrophes. To bring in more productive thoughts than using heavy violence when solving conflicts between people is an important task for schools, as the norms to use other problem solving strategies need to be wide spread through the nation. The existence of HIV in large parts of the world cries for more focus on health and sex themes in different subject areas in schools. All these subjects need to be taken for serious if the future life for humans will become a reality. Teachers need to change their specialities and school leaders need to work strongly for large changes regarding the traditional subjects, the content and of the working patterns of the schools.

The new content that is needed has to be dealt with in another way than most of the learning of the school of today. The strong division of knowledge into different subjects is not feasible any more. Learning needs to take place with broader themes as a ground. A conflict between different interests and possible synergies that may be found between these has to be investigated by the learners, which leads to other tasks and other habits for the testing of knowledge at school. The content that is covered at school needs to be followed from ancient time via actualities into the future if the learning will be useful to help sustainability of society and of nature. Problem solving will be more close to real life situations, which requires closer contacts between the school and working life. Global perspectives need to be mixed with local to help the students to find their role in the ongoing processes. To prepare the students for their future role of responsible adults they need to meet expectations on responsibility and democratic participation already at school. This demands new strategies for teachers and school leaders to lead the young in their learning. Old role relationships need to be changed into new ones. As learning more often need to happen in close contact with nature and society and by the help of modern digital media, other old habits of schools, like the reliance on text books, need to be challenged.

The changes that schools and thereby school leaders face in the future are large. To be able to manage the expectations that schools face today, teachers and their school leaders need to broaden their knowledge about the processes that take place when their school changes, so that they may learn together and so that the school itself learns. A new content of the role of the teacher is at hand to help the profession to cope with the new expectations. Teachers of future schools will be engaged in continuous learning together with colleagues and school leaders to be able to improve their schools. They therefore have to focus on learning as a scientific concept and as a practical state of activity not only for students but also for themselves and for their school leaders. Teachers in the future will surely go on delivering lessons but to be able to cope with the new responsibilities of autonomy and responsibil-

ity for the school that they are working at, they need to focus much more on diagnosis of learning and of leadership for learners. Knowledge about ways that can be used to diagnose such healthy status among humans as that of learning has not been well developed so far. Teachers and school leaders in the future need to engage themselves in a process of knowledge production in this area as the research work runs slowly. The need for knowledge about diagnosis of learning is acute and has to be taken care of immediately. The knowledge about the different ways that teachers can use when they lead learners in their efforts to learn are much better developed and can be collected by teachers and school leaders from already existing sources.

The modern expectations on schools also imply expectations on teachers and school leaders to act professional in their relations to colleagues and to adults that the school depends on. Teachers need to learn about the group dynamics that occur when teachers work together in teams to be able to find their new professional profile. Many teachers have been used to work in individual isolation, where feed back from colleagues has been a seldom occurring phenomenon. In well functioning schools this has changed and feed back as well as cooperative work will become a daily routine. These new routines need to be met by better knowledge that teachers and school leaders have to learn. Their learning also needs to focus on the relations that develop between teachers and parents which are responsible for the young persons that learn at the school.

As schools of the future are expected to act more as responsible units with a good deal of autonomy to find out effective ways to stimulate the learning activities of the students, teachers and school leaders need to collect more of the knowledge that exists about the life of local organisations. They need to study what people in other schools and in other organisations have learnt about the ways in which goals are kept in mind, in what ways norms develop in local organisations and how reward systems at the local organisational level may be designed to stimulate better work. They also need to see that there are many ways to organise time to reach good learning results at the local level, so that they can leave ancient constructions like 45- or 60-minutes lessons that maximise the teaching and instead find out time rhythms that maximise learning. Teachers and school leaders also need to learn more about different ways to group people at the school to reach different pedagogical aims and they need to develop knowledge about the many variations in which school based reviews can be designed, to see that this part of their work has many inbuilt possibilities. In Sweden there also seems to exist a need for teachers and school leaders to learn more about different ways that they can follow to appear more often in the public dialogue about education and learning and about the quality of schools that goes on at the system level. As teachers and school leaders seldom appear in the debate about these things, their views have little influence on the policies that are developed for the schools. They need to organise their actions in this field to be able to become a more evident part of the ongoing dialogue about education, which also demand learning from the collective body of teachers as well as by the school leaders.

Expectations on Swedish school leaders to improve the results in schools are very high. A more efficient control of the students' knowledge-status in different grades is planned. More national tests are announced. The government has presented plans to use more frequent national tests in the lower parts of the compulsory school. Earlier support to weak students shall be given priority. More and earlier marks will be implemented. Today a student receives marks not until grade 8. Grade 6 will be the school year where marks will be introduced.

The demands increase for a more safe and secure working environment of students in schools. The rights of the students shall be strengthened, bullying shall be strongly combated and students shall have a right to receive economic compensation if school has not been enough active to prohibit and stop violation and serious injuries. This new and sharpened elements in ordinary school life means among others great demands on school leaders to keep a well functioning documentation system.

The work with the fundamental values found in the national steering documents has to be focused even the next years and needs a lot of time. The government has announced a new Education Act that

in a more distinct way will clarify what kind of rights school leaders and teachers have to create order and a quiet working situation in schools.

School leaders will the forthcoming years spend a lot of time on profiling, marketing, and showing results of their schools. The awareness of parents increases and more and more families chooses – where it is possible – schools for their children. The internal competition among public schools will continue as well as the competition with independent schools. This situation will also lead to a hard competition for the good and successful teachers. In today's compulsory school more than 20 000 non-teacher-educated persons are working with teaching.

The government has also announced that the structure of the upper secondary school will be altered and divided into three sectors. There will be one stream for higher study preparation, one for vocational training and one built on an apprenticeship system. A consequence for school leaders is that they have to develop more frequent and deep going relations with industrial and commercial sector and with different branches.

The economic conditions vary between schools. School leaders are fully dependent on and are expected to work within the economical frames that the municipality assigns to a school. It is the task of the school leader – after discussions with representatives of staff, students and parents – to finally decide how the assigned money shall be used. The ambitions of people working in a school are very often higher than the resources assigned. Difficult priorities – seldom popular – must be done by the principal.

Swedish schools follow a goal and result-oriented steering model governed by politicians. The national goals, expressed in the Education Act, in the curricula and in other education ordinances will be supplemented on the level of the municipalities with different types of local steering documents. Mostly – but not always – there is an accordance between the goals presented in different documents. Otherwise there is a risk that school leaders find that there is a conflict between different political interests. The Swedish steering model presumes that politicians and professionals respect the role of each other. Politicians decide about aims and goals, assign resources and follow up the results. This implies that the politicians have to be well informed and well familiar with the conditions under which the school leaders operate. The execution and responsibility for the results rest on the professionals, teachers and ultimately on the school leaders. Within the framework of assigned money school leaders also have to handle the development of salaries for teachers and other staff. The lack of qualified teachers may lead to a situation where young and inexperienced teachers can negotiate their salary to a relatively high level.

The Swedish school has experienced a rapid feminization. In pre-school only 2000 of 74 000 employed are men. In compulsory school 25 000 out of 90 000 are men. Among school leaders the gender ratio is 40/60 for males/females. The uneven ratio between sexes in schools is a problem both on macro and micro level. Too many children only meet women in their homes as well as in school. Children need role-models and it is of great importance that they can meet both males and females in schools. Recently presented studies show that boys are less successful in their school work than girls are.

Daily many school leaders have to challenge the norm system of young people, to handle the increasing violence in society, to work against segregation and to try to compensate insecure circumstances during the period of growth and also balance many children deteriorating psychical and physical health. Multicultural societies contain many development possibilities, but at the same time many risks of collisions and problems that school leaders are expected to solve.

In Sweden 90 of the Swedish municipalities have less than 10 000 inhabitants and cover two thirds of the geographical area of the country. The economy of the municipalities varies. The number of immigrants also varies. All these variations imply that the role of the principal has many features. To be a

principal in a larger city with students from 40 to 50 nations is another job than being a principal for three small schools at a distance of 120 km in the far northwest of Sweden.

Schools exist in a changing world. Communication is running with a much higher speed than before. People are connected with each other over long distances via internet and mobile phones in ways that were unthinkable some years ago. Working life has quickly changed so that many monotone and muscle demanding jobs have been robotised and computers have changed almost any work area in radical ways. School leaders have to relate to all these changes, not only in the school, but also in the broader society.

Large local variations in assessment routines

The quality of local evaluations is highly varied. In some schools a team of teachers and some parents go together and make a small study of the work in the school. The evaluation team may base their written document on interviews that have been held with different people at the school, teachers as well as students. In other schools the base of the evaluation may be questionnaire data, collected among parents, students and teachers. There are no standardized ways of making these local evaluations. Although there are many ways to do it, in some schools there are no local evaluation done at all.

In Sweden both The National Agency for School Improvement and The National Agency for Education have produced some materials for the schools to use when they make their school based evaluations. Some of it is available on the web. There are several books existing at the market, in which the schools can find practical solutions on many of the problems that you have to face when you evaluate your own school.

Looking at the way Swedish schools assess their own qualities, one find that the schools usually have quite a wide approach. They try to find out how the students learned the different subjects and also what the teachers did to make them learn. Schools are interested in the way in which they contribute to the social development of the students, as it is stated in the central guidelines that schools shall contribute to this development. Therefore schools are interested to map out their quality of their inner lives. They try to collect information about the ways students participate in the internal democracy of the school, how they tolerate other people, to what degree they co-operate and if they act independently or not. Schools usually pick out parts of the inner life when they make their quality assessments of themselves. Things like the norms of the students as well as of the teachers are caught, the reward system understood and the power distribution scrutinized, so that the schools can develop a better knowledge about there own qualities. To stimulate schools to use school based evaluation and quality assessment strategies on a regular basis, during many years attempts have been made to train the school leaders in Sweden to use these approaches as development tools. For a long time school based evaluation has been a substantial part of the regular training that school leaders face in the beginning of their career.

The description of different movements that exist in Swedish schools tells you which kind of development is going on. The tendencies that are described cannot be found in every school, but they find their ways into the system. Quality assessment is not yet seen as an inbuilt part of the school life in every Swedish school, except for the assessment of what students have learnt. Quality assessment of the work of teachers is still on its way into the schools. Assessment meetings between a teacher and his/her school leader are not uncommon anymore, but it is not a rule that every school leader assesses every teacher annually.

If the work of a teacher holds a very low quality, the school leader is the one who is responsible to find a solution. It is very rare that a teacher with a tenure post is discharged. If someone is sacked from a job as a teacher he or she usually has committed some kind of a crime. If a teacher is in shortage of competence the school leader together with people from the personal department of the municipality tries to find another position, where the bad functioning teacher can work with something else. The

teacher unions have since long on the national level discussed questions related to quality assessment. They have an ongoing discussion about what qualities there are in the teaching profession and how these could be watched. In the spring of 2006 a state commission has been formed with the task to present a proposal for a system of the authorisation of teachers in Sweden.

Although many municipalities try to keep the evaluation results inside its schools, the comparisons between schools have become more fact based than before. Some of the schools become more proud of themselves than before. Some of them are of course perceived as not as good as the others. Even if this hurts the teachers and school leaders of these schools, it seems as if these schools usually react on the bad results as a challenge. They are stimulated to improve themselves and they are eager to show other schools that the results were only something temporary. One of the reasons why schools react in this way may be found in the fact that these evaluations are covering topics where a lot of people at the school share the responsibility for the results. It is not one single person that is picked out and shown to others, it is a collective achievement that is evaluated. As the municipality is responsible for the financing of the schools, a bad evaluation result may be used as a tool to get more resources to a school that not succeeded so well.

Distribution of responsibilities for decision making among the various levels of government and individual schools

Swedish schools – pre-school, the compulsory school, the upper secondary school and adult education are financed partly by government grants and partly by the local govern bodies, the municipalities. Fees are only allowed in the pre-school system. All municipalities receive government grants which are based on the structure of the population, age distribution, the level of local taxes, the proportion of inhabitants with a foreign decent and some other socio-economic factors. The government grant is supposed to cover costs even in other public sectors than schooling. Every municipality decides how much money they will spend on schooling. Local additions are made to the government grant. Even at municipality level an appraisal is done about the need of resources in different schools. The composition of students and the socio-economic context of a school are important factors when resources are allocated. In the same municipality it might happen that certain schools in a poor district receive 30 % more money per student than a school in a wealthier neighbourhood. Each single school or school district receives their money on an annual basis. Allotted money shall cover all costs for staff, school buildings, teaching materials, school meals and so on.

Decisions concerning curricula are decided by the government. Syllabuses are laid out for different subjects and decisions concerning these matters are taken by The National Agency for Education. One important aim of these national steering documents is to bring out a good and equivalent education in all Swedish schools.

The task and responsibility of the teachers is to interpret the steering documents and to execute the education according to the aims. In some subjects of the compulsory school – Swedish, Mathematics and English – there are national tests in school year 5 and 9. In school year 5 the tests are optional but in school year 9 they are compulsory. It is the duty of teachers via tests or via other methods to control that their students have learnt what is described in actual syllabus. Marks are today given in school year 8 and 9 in the compulsory school and in all courses in the upper secondary school. The government has announced that marks in the future will occur from school year 6.

The local board of education is responsible for recruitment and appointment of school leaders. Pedagogical education and experience is required and personal qualifications combined with common suitability are highly valued. It is more and more common that school leaders are appointed for a certain period, for example 5 years, with a possibility to prolong their mandate. In such cases it is quite common that the school leader has some kind of a non-tenured appointment in the municipality. The employer – the board of education and the director of education - is responsible for the development of competencies among their school leaders. General activities to improve competencies, for example

introduction courses for newly appointed school leaders, are often supplemented with activities which are based on the need of each school leader. Every school leader has also a personal responsibility to be well informed about the professional development and research in the field of education.

Today principals employ teachers as well as other members of their staff. Education, teaching experiences, suitability and the school's specific need of a certain competence to fit in the teaching staff are aspects that a principal considerate. A principal also decides the salary of his/her staff both when they are recruited and later on. When there is a need to dismiss staff – from different reasons – it is the duty of the principal. In such processes representatives of trade unions are involved. In complicated cases principals often are supported by the personal department of the municipality.

The quickly increase of the amount of independent schools at the compulsory level (especially in urban areas) means that it is more and more common that parents choose a school for their child. Even within the municipality school system there is a possibility to choose among schools. But there is one restriction. All children are guaranteed a study place in the neighbourhood school. When there are study places available at a school a principal can allow students living outside the school management district to join the school.

Due to the decentralised Swedish school system the degrees of freedom are large for the actors to find solutions on almost all problems, although this high degree of freedom is not always experienced. The frames for the educational processes are wide and the teachers have large possibilities to design the pedagogical process together with their students. Together they can choose what they find to be effective teaching and learning methods. Teachers are responsible for the assessment of the knowledge level of the students.

The main role of the school leaders is to stimulate learning among both teachers and students. The school leaders expect the teachers to test different teaching and learning methods so that the learning results of the student can be improved. It is the responsibility of the school leader to organise evaluation at the school. School leaders have to supervise the assessment that the teachers do of the quality of knowledge among the students. School leaders are not expected to prescribe working methods which shall be used at the school. They are expected to inform others about the quality of the school, both about learning results and about what variation of teaching that exists there. School leaders are also expected to propose improvement activities among the teachers, such as what they need to read and use for reflections so that they can make the learning better among the students.

Schools report their results to the municipality level, which is responsible for the prioritisation of money between schools. The municipality reports results of its school to the state level that is responsible for the use of the statistics on the national level. The National Agency for Education presents the computed statistics in an open way on the web and is also responsible for national evaluations and for inspections of the municipalities and schools. In the inspections The National Agency for Education makes sure that the schools follow the curriculum and other guidelines that exist about school work. The reviews that are reported by The National Agency for Education emphasise on student results and on social relations in the schools, including frequencies of bullying. Schools that are criticised are expected to improve their work quickly. Usually this expectation is fulfilled. If a school does not answer to the demands to improve, The National Agency for Education has the right to close the school. This possibility is rarely used and only one school has actually been closed during the last decade.

The responsibility of the school leaders is a crucial basis of the Swedish school system. In many ways the school leaders carry the responsibility of the schools on their shoulders and therefore also are seen as the person that can make the school better. Sometimes this is a true picture of schools in Sweden, that it is possible for the school leaders together with their staff to make the inner work better. Sometimes the picture is false, as structural hindrance occur that makes the improvement impossible. There are for instance more than 20 000 persons working as teachers in the Swedish compulsory schools and upper secondary schools that are not educated as teachers, which means that the non educated teacher appear in many single schools. It is not possible for the single school leader to get these persons

trained as teachers, while they are working as replacement forces at the school. This is a task that has to be solved at the system level. The school leader can contribute to the solution on the quality problem by selecting the people that has the best possibilities to fill the role of the teacher, but the real improvement has to be done at the system level.

Research about these issues and issues about school leadership will be treated as a whole and are therefore presented in the end of next chapter.

Chapter 4. Enhancing learning and school leadership.

Policy concerns about teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of learning in Swedish schools has a solid international standing. Sweden has participated in numerous international comparative studies of student achievement since the beginning of the 1960's. In an overview of all these comparative studies The National Agency for Education (2004) shows that it is rare that the results reached in Sweden in reading, mathematics and Science are below the average among the participating countries. In most studies Sweden does not belong to the top group of countries, but to the group of countries that follows the top group. In one area – to use English as a second language – Swedish youth scores among the highest. In Sweden the discussion about the quality of learning and about learning results is an ongoing story. At the national level the discussion is not only fed by results from international comparisons. In 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2003 national evaluations have been conducted by The National Agency for Education. These national evaluations have been based on testing of nation wide samples of students in all subjects that are covered in the compulsory school. In the latest national evaluation in 2003 parts of the instruments used were the same as the one that were used in 1992. Only few subjects had raised the quality of learning, most subjects kept their standard, but for some subjects (among them mathematics and science) there were a decrease in the results. These results have caused intense debates about the quality of education in Sweden. Several initiatives have been taken to raise the quality of learning, especially in mathematics within the country. The most important initiative has been presented in a proposal to the government (SOU 2004:97). But it is also obvious that many of the improvement initiatives, especially in-service training of teachers, that have been taken earlier have not been fully successful.

Each year The National Agency for Education presents statistics about school results and some of these causes' discussions at the national level. There are about 10 % of each year group of 16 year olds in the country that end up their compulsory school years without good results enough to be accepted by the upper secondary schools. Within this group a large amount of recent immigrants can be found. The education of young immigrants and especially their learning of Swedish is the concern of many in the school system. The National Agency for Education intermittently has made quality reviews on certain topics. In the late 1990's one such theme was school leadership. In 2002 a review was made of the quality of teachers assessment work that showed that the quality were below the expected one. To raise the quality of the assessment work of teachers has since then been a theme for improvement in the schools.

School leaders have an important role when discussions about the quality of education are raised on a more common arena as well as when this discussion occurs at the school level. When the alarm goes on basis of international comparisons or of national evaluations, the school leader plays the role of initiator of discussions about the raised topics in the local school. "Do we create the same results at our school that have been found at the national level?" is a question that the school leader always has to raise in such a decentralised system as the Swedish school system is. "Does our school produce better or worse results than other schools do?", "Is the criticism of the quality of assessment work true for our school as well?" are other questions that the school leader brings into the internal work at the school on basis of what happens at the national scene. Many times the school leader initiates a local review of the work to get more information to use for the internal discussion and to make it possible for the school to decide about improvement steps to be taken. In Sweden many school leaders have been one of the key actors when schools have decided to improve the quality of assessment work among the teachers. They have planned in-service training events, arranged exchanges between schools so that teachers may see alternative ways of assessing the work of the students.

Although Sweden has a highly decentralised structure of its schools, where responsibility for the buildings, the learning materials, the appointment of teachers and school leaders, the food services,

transports, the health services, the socio-psychological support, the planning of time, the use of money – all are placed at the municipality and school level, the responsibility for the selection of content of school work still remains at the national level. The syllabuses for the different subjects that are taught at school are developed by The National Agency for Education. For the compulsory school the government decides on the curriculum of the different subjects. For the upper secondary school The National Agency for Education makes these decisions. The school leaders in Sweden do not have any role in the curriculum development at the national level. At the school level the school leader is one of the main actors in the quality review work in which you need to find indicators of success of the work made at the school. When the school works through its quality review that is annually requested by the municipality (as the municipality has to deliver a yearly quality review report to The National Agency for Education) the school leader has good use of some of the information that has been delivered to The National Agency for Education and is computed together with information from other schools.

Some facts about The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) and its contribution to the school landscape in Sweden is needed to make this picture clear also for an international audience. The National Agency for Education has two main tasks. One is to control what is happening in pre-school, compulsory school, upper secondary school and in adult education in the country from a legal point of view. Another task is to make evaluations of the educational system. Inspections of the municipalities and the schools are made with an interval of six years and different evaluations are made at the national level. These tasks are expected to be fulfilled in such ways that democratic processes are facilitated. During recent years a couple of interesting solutions of these tasks have been introduced on the Swedish scene.

One is the internet based information system SIRIS, where information about the 4 908 compulsory schools and the 795 upper secondary schools that exist in the country can be found. On the pages of www.skolverket.se it is possible for everyone to look into the SIRIS system. Inside you meet presentations of results from national knowledge tests, summations of markings of the students, the annual quality report, national quality reviews and some basic information about the specific school like size, costs, composition of students by sex, foreign background and educational level of the parents. The information is aggregated and presented at school level. For each school it is possible for the user of the system to find the above mentioned information and it is also possible for anyone to make comparisons between different groups of schools. If you for instance want to find out in what way your local school relates to other schools that work under the same conditions, you will be able to do so. The results and other information that are stored from the different schools also makes it possible for the user to make comparisons over time, as the information from recent years is kept available.

On another area of the web pages www.skolverket.se, under the heading of SALSA, another presentation of school results are made. On basis of well established research, that has shown that the mixture of students with different socio-economic background and different national background together with the gender composition of the students explains a large proportion of the statistical variance, the results of the schools are recalculated using analysis of regression. The calculated residual effect is used as a measurement of the relative achievement of the school, as an approximation of the value added that the school produces. Of course this measurement does not reflect the quality of the single school, but the result makes it more possible for the school to understand the value of its own achievement. No ranking is made between schools, but the yearly presentations of the information have given some newspapers an opportunity to make that kind of comparisons. Schools and school leaders use the open presentations of school results for internal discussions of the quality of the work at the school. The material is also used in the dialogue between the school and the municipality about the distribution of different resources to get improvement of schools. The National Agency for Education has also presented different materials that schools can use when they review their quality. One such material (BRUK) builds on the many demands that schools have been asked by central politicians to execute and can be used by the school in the local evaluation processes. BRUK is now operated and updated by The National Agency for School Improvement.

Curriculum implementation

It is the responsibility of the teachers to base their teaching on the curriculum of the subject that is taught. The teacher has to explain the content of the curriculum for the students as the teacher by law is requested to plan the educational process together with the students. The responsibility to organise the use of time for learning and teaching has by tradition been laid on the school leader. Today a fair amount of Swedish compulsory schools as well as upper secondary schools have teams of teachers under the supervision by the school leader to plan the use of the time. In many of the schools the teachers work in such ways with the students so that they really plan their own working time. The teacher is also responsible for the assessment of the learning of the students. In the compulsory schools these assessments are used as a basis for the development dialogue that the teacher has every half year with the parents and the student. In Sweden grading of the students, as mentioned before, are introduced late in the compulsory school, at grade 8, when the students are becoming fifteen years old. During the development dialogue and during group meetings with the parents the teachers explain the content of the curricula for the parents. The school leaders supervise the work of the teachers and remind them about the use of the curriculum. The teachers have to report to the school leaders about the markings that they have done for the students and they also report to the school leader about results that the students reach on national tests. The school leader uses this kind of information during the development discussions that they have with the teachers and in conversations held with teams of teachers.

Teachers and teaching

There are no prescribed ways to observe or supervise the work of the teachers. Each school is free to find out their routines. The agreed routines of work prerequisite, that the school leader initiate a dialogue with the teachers to plan the development of their future work and thereby also discuss the individual development of each teacher. This is usually done during a development dialogue (*utvecklings-samtal* in Swedish). These routines demand that the school leader inform himself about the quality of the work of the teacher. This occurs in several different ways. School leaders listen to students, parents and other sources to find out about the quality of the work that the teacher does. In many schools there are also annual surveys of the satisfaction among students concerning teaching, the school environment, the quality of the food and other things. The results that the students reach on national tests and what marks they get when they have been taught by the teacher are also relevant. Sometimes, but that happens only rarely, the school leader observes the teaching directly. The school leader has also the responsibility for an annual or biannual dialogue about the individual salary of each teacher. The basis for this discussion is "salary criteria" that usually are decided on at the level of the municipality and that have been accepted by the representatives of the teacher unions. As there are 290 municipalities in Sweden there are many variations in which ways the criteria are described and used in the salary discussions.

Swedish schools have a strong tradition, exercised over many years, of improving themselves. The geographic shape of the country and the dispersed population has brought teachers together since the midst of the 19th century to engage them in educational discussions and learning sessions. During the last half of the 19th century there grew a tradition among teachers to meet for two days per year, usually during a Saturday and a Sunday, to participate in in-service training arranged by themselves through the leading forces in their own associations. During the 1930's this tradition was changed so that teachers in individual schools came together for what was called *pedagogical days*, during three ordinary work days, when students were free from school. During these three days the teachers were exposed to news that was usually lectured to them by experts that gave their views on teacher work or on education. The selection of actors during these pedagogical days was usually made by the school leader or by the state inspector of the schools.

When the Swedish school system in the early sixties transformed into a comprehensive school system, five *study days* for the teachers were institutionalized. During these five study days that aimed at the

improvement of the schools, all teachers within a school management area (where two or three schools were led by a small team of school leaders) met to discuss such things as how to handle local problems, educational developments of a general nature or to learn about new developments in the work of teachers. From the early 1960's until the late 1980's teachers in all Swedish schools participated in the five annual study days. Central authorities planned what was going to happen at the school level and messages were sent to the teachers during these gatherings. School leaders got directives from the authorities on what ought to happen. Several school reforms have been implemented in the Swedish school system through the use of the study days. During the 1980's Swedish schools gradually went over to decide over their own budget. More and more of the in-service training at the school level was arranged according to local needs. Schools were also encouraged to use more of the resources that universities and regional colleges could offer to stimulate the teachers to improve the school work.

In 1991 a last step was taken in the reforms that were made of the Swedish school system as the state gave over the full economic responsibility of the schools to the 290 municipalities. As a consequence of this changed responsibility the salaries of the teachers were raised and some of the working conditions for teachers were improved during the run of the 1990's. Among other things teachers should receive a personal working place in the school building and the volume of time that could be used for the development of teacher competence were increased from 5 to 13 annual days. A teacher has the right as well as the duty to develop his/her competence. The need of a single teacher to improve a specific and individual competence area must be balanced with the need to cover and improve competence areas in the school as a whole. Today schools use this time resource for collective actions among the teachers as well as time for individual development.

The evaluation of the work that has been conducted in the schools, that is yearly reported in a quality review of the school to the municipality, is used as a basis for discussions about improvement needs. As was said above, Swedish school leaders hold dialogue with teachers every second or each year to decide on individual salaries. During these talks the individual competence development of the teacher is also discussed. Some part of the time for competence development is used for inputs from researchers or from people working in other schools where interesting developments have occurred. Parts of the time resource may also be used for studies in different subjects that the teachers see as important for their own development. Teachers also use the time to participate in national or international gatherings of teachers where pedagogical innovations are presented and discussed. In some schools, parts of the thirteen days are spent on collaboration with other schools engaged in cross evaluations and in cooperation about educational development projects. School leaders are a main actor in the planning and execution of the competence development at the school. In the end the school leader in the Swedish school is responsible for the effects of the competence development in relation to the expected results for the students.

Relevant research studies

In Sweden research about school variations has been conducted since the late 1960's. In some of the early studies, a difference between compulsory schools in the highly centralised system that was present at that time was proved and explained (Ekholm, 1971). Student achievement and their social development varied between schools, not only because of different socio-economic backgrounds of the students, but also because of differences between the atmospheres of the local schools. Especially the content of the local norm system showed to explain differences between schools and so did the distribution of power and responsibilities in the schools. The early study made in 1969 of variations in school atmosphere was repeated in 1979 and 1994 in the same schools, which have made it possible to see how changes had appeared in the studied schools, while the school system has gone through extensive structural shifts (Ekholm and Kull, 1996). Most conditions in the studied schools were astonishing stable. The use of time for teaching and learning, norms about social learning, knowledge test frequencies, and the degree of student influence on the learning did not for instance show any notable changes. Although the studied compulsory schools used much more time for teacher in-service train-

ing, teachers had started to work in teams, local evaluations had been made several times, the core of the work in the schools had not changed very much.

During the early 1990's the results that showed that the inner life of the schools to a certain degree can explain variations between schools were repeated in a study of 102 compulsory schools, that now existed in a much more decentralised school system (Ekholm and Kåräng, 1993). The local norm system among students and teachers, the power distribution and the ways in which responsibilities were carried explained variations between schools' outcomes. Grosin (2003) reports a study of seven schools that were interested to adjust their inner life to the findings of research about effective schools. The schools were studied over a three year period. The teachers and school leaders developed their knowledge about the ways schools can be made more effective during the three years, but the student achievement did not rise during the period and no positive development was traced in the social development of the students, except for in one of the studied schools.

In Sweden there is some empirical research that shows the influence of school leaders on the development of schools. Person et al (2003) studied what characterized effective leadership in three schools, one upper secondary school and two compulsory schools. They found that the most important quality of the more effective school leader was their ability to make alliances with important actors inside and outside the school. Hallerström's (2006) study of norms among principals about their work as leaders of school development supports this finding. Hallerström shows that the principals listen carefully to their teachers, adjust their arguments to the ways in which their teachers are thinking and builds coalitions with the teachers to be able to reach the aims that politicians have formulated for the schools. Höög, Johansson and Olofsson (2005) who have studied successful school leaders in Swedish schools also conclude that one important quality of good school leadership is to interpret the actual situation at the school and especially understand the organisational culture if one wants to improve the processes of the school. Berg (1990) pointed out that in some schools there seem to be a silent contract between teachers and school leaders about their relationship that states that if a school leader stays out of teaching, teachers will respect what the school leader does about funding, politicians and other issues that is seen as the school leader's territory. When principals really will have a chance to influence the development of the school they need to spend time, show courage and resolution to be able to influence the work of the teachers Nihlfors (1998) has shown in her study of school development. They also need to develop a mutual understanding and respect together with the teachers to be able to be successful. Ekholm et al (2000) that made a broad overview on research about school leaders found that principals have an important task to lead the collegial cooperation in the school. It is a question of keeping a norm alive in the school that says that improvement work is an on-going process. Successful school leaders lead through engagement, not via authority. Teachers follow school leaders because they share the visions of the leader, not because they fear what will happen to them if they do not follow the leader.

In a large scale study made in the mid of the 1990's, Scherp (1998) found that school leaders of upper secondary schools that had been working at the same school during at least five years and that were characterized as challengers towards their staffs' conceptions of learning and teaching, to a larger amount succeeded to get their schools to use more of activity based learning methods. School leaders that tried to serve the teachers did not reach the same results. McNamara (1999) found in a study where three school leaders work was followed during a three year period, that visits in classrooms and evaluation discussions between school leaders and teachers did not develop the school work in any notable way. Svedberg (2000) however points out in his in depth study of school leaders that principal is an important part in the socio-cultural construction process that is an on-going story in Swedish schools, as the school system has gone through extensive changes. Nihlfors (2003) in her study of director of educations in Swedish municipalities, has pointed out that the new situation has made the leadership in the municipality less evident than before, as the relationship between the state and the municipality in many areas has become blurred. Svedberg (2000) finds that when the system has changed, the basic division of responsibility has changed so that principals have taken much larger responsibility than in earlier designs of the system and new definitions of roles have been necessary. As the role of the principal is directly related to the roles of teachers, which during the last decades

also have gone through large shifts, a lot of discussions have been needed. Teachers are expected to work more often in teams, spend more time on in-service training and take a larger responsibility for results and for the development of their professional actions than before. To be able to act together in a way that is in harmony with the new expectations teachers and school leaders have had to spend time on discussions that have landed in new constructions of their understanding of the task that they conduct. School leaders have important missions to fill in these areas Svedberg (2000) concludes.

In a recent study Scherp and Scherp (2006) illuminates the relationship between the work of the school leader and the way in which the school acts as an organisation. Eleven schools that aimed at working in such ways that they could be characterized as learning organisations were followed during five years. School leaders in the schools that were most successful in these strivings used more of their time giving feed back to the teachers about their work. The school leaders at the schools that appeared to have more of a learning attitude in relation to the school work also challenged the thoughts of the staff more frequently. By asking questions like “How do we know that?”, “Could we test another way of doing it?” and “What do we know about how people in other schools do?” the school leaders contributed to a learning atmosphere. School leaders in more learning oriented schools stimulated the teachers to organise time during which learning directed discussions could take place. In learning oriented schools working teams among teachers were accepted and the school leaders at these schools communicated with the staff to a great deal via the team leaders.

Policy initiatives

In 2001 one state committee presented its thoughts and conclusions about the work of school leaders (Söderqvist, 2001). The work of school leaders was illuminated and discussed in relation to schools as learning organisations. Based on international and national research findings and on an analysis of what basic values that ought to be practiced at schools, three main principles were proposed to be used by school leaders. The work of the school leaders ought to be democratic so that school leaders engage in deliberative dialogues with their teachers and with the students, where the leaders listen to the meanings of others but also stand up for their own views before they take decisions. The school leaders ought to work in such a way that the school will be rich on communication, so it is easy to exchange information between different parties within the school, but also for the open communication between the school and its surrounding. The idea that was presented by the state committee was that it is meetings between humans that make development based on reflections possible. The leadership at the school therefore also ought to be characterized as a learning one, where the school leader needs to emphasise that it is not only the students that are expected to learn through the work done at schools, but also teachers and school leaders.

The conclusions of this state committee were well received by schools and school leaders. The thoughts that were presented were widely discussed, especially among school leaders. In many of the 290 municipalities the three main principles behind school leadership were discussed at the schools, where school leaders used the principles to stimulate discussions within the teams of the teachers about what expectations you may have on school leaders. The largest impact did the discussion have on the improved programme for school leader education.

Jonasson (SOU 2004:116) investigated the structure of leadership in Swedish schools. He stated that the way leadership is performed in school has great impact on the results and on the achievement to reach the goals. He states that school leaders have to adjust to the actual context of the school and that there is not only one ideal model of leadership to be used in schools. Teams of teachers make good possibilities for a well functioning management structure combined with shared responsibilities of development processes and results. Administration support is not well functioning in schools compared to other organisations of the municipality and in organisations in other sectors of the society that have the same size as schools have. School leaders and leaders of organisations in other areas have much to learn from each other he states. Jonasson propose that the state should arrange a limited com-

pulsory education for school leaders, where focus should be laid on laws, curricula and other steering documents of importance to schools.

Aside from the three main principles that were put forward by the state committee in 2001 school leaders in the Swedish municipalities have been stimulated to discuss the way in which they encourage their staff to work also with their own learning on basis on two other committee reports that have been presented to the government. In one of them (SOU 2004:104) a review is made where the content of school work and the ways in which learning takes place in schools are related to the high ambitions that the Swedish society has to contribute to sustainable development. The committee foresees a larger change of the content of the curriculum for the schools, as the current content of school work only partly can be said to gain future actions of the students in line with the principles that lead to sustainable development. The committee also discuss the way in which learning usually takes place at school and finds that more effort need to be made to encourage schools to use more active learning strategies among the students. To be able to develop a content of the school work and to use more of active learning work among the students that are in line with the principles for sustainable development, school leaders and teachers need to act more like learners themselves. In close connection to the proposal for future development of schools to contribute to sustainable development another proposal (Ekholm, 2005) has been given to the government. This proposal is based on a review of the patterns that exist to widen and disseminate the knowledge that teachers and school leaders use in their professional activities. The review concentrates on the system for research and other systematic ways to produce knowledge about the field of education in Sweden and of the ways in which school leaders and teachers conquer the knowledge that are produced about learning and teaching. Among the many proposals that are put forward about more systematic production of new knowledge and about better ways to disseminate this kind of knowledge, the review reminds the school leaders of the need to use local evaluations made at each school as contributions to more shared knowledge constructions. Schools are challenged to join each other to contribute to the systematic creation of new knowledge about learning and teaching. Schools are asked to cooperate more frequently with teacher education institutes to be able to accelerate the production of knowledge within important fields that can be of help for teachers and school leaders. As the proposals put forward in this report not only have been addressed to the government, but also to municipalities and schools, the discussions have been widely spread among school leaders all over the country.

Chapter 5. The attractiveness of school leaders' role.

Supply of school leaders

One indicator of the degree of attractiveness of the job of school leaders is how many applicants there aspire to get a free position. During the 1970's there were few applicants for each position, sometimes not more than one or two applicants. During the last decades this pattern has changed so that today there are usually ten or more applicants for each position that are available. Among so many applicants there are usually good possibilities to find new school leaders of good quality.

Each municipality is responsible for the organisation of the local schools in which the school leader positions are a detail. In most Swedish municipalities there is a director of education office that works with the overall planning of the schools in the municipality. The director of education reports directly to the political board that controls the economy of the local schools in the municipality and produce proposals for the organisational structure of the schools of the municipality. In these proposals the amount of school leader jobs is one component. The director of education is also responsible for the recruitment procedures when a position as a school leader is available. The recruitment decision is formally taken by the political board of the municipality that is responsible for educational matters. In larger municipalities it happens that the director of education has delegation to take the final decision.

A normal procedure that is followed in most Swedish municipalities might be that a position as school leader becomes available, because the person that has had the position goes into retirement or moves to another job. The school leader position is announced in the press, especially in the journals that are owned by the school leader unions and on web pages that are directed towards school people. In the advertisement the work that the school leader is expected to do is described and an announcement at what school that the position is placed is made. Applications are sent to the director of education's office and a first selection is made on basis of the merits of the applicants. A small group of applicants are invited to interviews with the director of education, with representatives of the political board that are the employer of the new school leader, with representatives of the teachers of the school where the position is located and sometimes (especially if the position is located at a upper secondary school) with representatives of the students of the school. References from earlier positions are of great importance. On basis of the interviews a final selection of the new school leader is made and negotiations with the trade-unions about the salary and about working conditions are held before a decision is taken to employ the school leader.

Although there are possibilities for municipalities to employ school leaders with another background than as a teacher, it is a rare event that someone with the other experiences is chosen. In 2005 around three percent of the school leaders had another background than being a teacher. Some of these were school psychologist, military officers and former managers of companies. All in all there are about 9 500 school leaders in the system – working with preschool, compulsory school, gymnasium, adult education and independent schools and about 1 000 of these work in preschools. 59 % of the school leaders are female. In the late 1970's the females were only 16 % of the school leader group in the country, so a rapid change in the gender composition of the school leaders has occurred. As research has shown (Ekholm and Lindvall, 1997) the municipalities during the 1980's and 1990's have step by step appointed far more females as school leaders than they did before. During that period the municipalities also changed the pattern for selecting new school leaders, so that more new school leaders come from another school than the one where they will work as leaders. In some municipalities there is a principle saying that you should not become a school leader in the same school where you have been working as a teacher. Before 1980 more than 75 % of the new appointed school leaders were selected among the teachers of the school where they were going to work as school leader. In the mid 1990's there was less than one out of five that came from the school where they filled the position as school leader. New school leaders are at average 45 years old when they find their first position. In

Sweden each year around 700 to 800 persons get their first appointment as school leader. This frequency has been stable for the last decade.

There is no research or committee work that shows the reasons why some of the qualified candidates for school leader positions do not apply for the job. There might be some reasons to be found among some qualified teachers to hesitate to apply for a school leader position. A qualified teacher working either in the compulsory school or in the upper secondary school receive a salary as a teacher of about 4 300 \$ per month in 2005. To start as a deputy school leader a teacher might earn somewhere between 4 300 to 4 800 \$ per month. The difference in income between the two positions is not wide enough to motivate a teacher to mantle the much larger responsibility that a school leader has.

Employment and working conditions

School leaders are usually appointed without a time limit. School leader work is perceived as conducted by a specific profession. School leaders are not seen as a kind of teacher in Sweden. For the directors of education it is more common that a time limit is used for the appointment. Usually a six year period is used as a basis for the appointment, but in many cases this period is prolonged for another three to six years. During the last years it has become more common that this kind of limitation also has been introduced in the contracts for school leaders that work in a school. This kind of time limited appointments are often combined with a job-guarantee in the municipality. The reason for this new trend seems to be that the employer (usually the municipality) and the employee agree on the view that a school leader job is a most demanding task. School leaders usually work hard. They often meet critical comments from teachers because they have to prioritize among very many ambitious proposals and ideas. They have to appear in media to represent and sometimes defend their school. They are the most important advocate of the students and at the same time they have to guarantee that every single student feel safe and secure in their daily life in school. They also have to face different demands from parents. All these tasks create strain among many school leaders and their energy might ebb out. In many municipalities plans of retreat for school leaders have been introduced, where the nature of the work tasks motivates that the school leader offers alternative jobs within the municipality.

School leaders are continuously evaluated by the director of education of the municipality or by the school board if they work at a free standing school. School leaders in Sweden receive an individualized salary, which requires that the director of education collects information about the quality of the work that the school leader does. Director of educations try to find indicators by looking at the main results of the learning among the students, listen to teachers and parents and look at the reception of the students by other schools or by the local working life. To what degree these procedures are systematized varies between the different municipalities and between the school boards that evaluate the school leaders. In some municipalities procedures have been borrowed from business life or from other public financed sectors like health services. In other municipalities one create routines in cooperation between the director of education and the school leaders. Whatever model one follows in the municipality the director of education and the school leaders have a mutual agreement that they follow.

Now and then discussions are held between the director of education and single school leaders if the school leader will continue in the position that she or he keeps. The work that the school leader does might be of too low quality, the reactions among the parents, teachers or students might be so strong against some initiatives that the school leader has taken or not taken that the work is disturbed to a too large extent or the school leader might have failed to live up to the intentions of the school law and the values behind the central guidelines for the school. There are several alarm systems in the Swedish context that detect low quality among school leaders. There is for instance a law that regulate working environment and labour market in common, that put specific demands on the leaders' way to act. The practise of these laws is usually controlled by the representatives of the teacher unions that remind the school leaders about the existence of the law and if the school leader does not succeed to follow them,

criticise the school leader publicly. The director of education usually closely follows the way in which the school leader uses the budget of the school. When money is spent in ways that does not lead to expected results the director of education reacts. When parents protest against the way in which the school behaves towards the students or when their children protest against the way in which the school is managed, there may also be reasons for the director of education to intervene. The school and indirectly the school leader might in the Swedish system also receive criticism from The National Agency for Education as a result of inspections. Swedish schools are transparent systems where flaws cannot be hidden for longer times.

If a school leader is identified to have too low quality in her or his work the most common procedure is that an improvement programme will be designed. The director of education together with the school leader agrees on the programme, sometimes together with representatives of the school leaders union. In such a programme you usually find several support mechanisms. The school leader might for instance be linked together with a mentor, receive help from an organisational developer; participate in a training programme or in a net work for school leaders. These support mechanisms are usually practiced during a longer period. It might be years of support actions given to the school leader. If evaluations of the work of the school leader show that he or she still does not reach such a quality level that are acceptable, the school leader might be taken away from the position he or she holds.

No tariff system exists in Sweden for the salaries of school leaders. Individual salaries are practiced. Outside the salary that the school leader earns they might get other reinforcements. There are several prizes given to school leaders who are seen as excellent. For instance the largest news paper of the country – Dagens Nyheter – awards the School Leader of the Year. One of the trade unions for school leaders gives out an annual prize for excellent school leadership. Successful school leaders are often asked to represent the country in international co-operations as a kind of stimulation and award and are often invited to attend professional conferences and seminars.

The transformation of the salary system for school leaders from a centrally designed tariff system into a system of individual salaries that started in the late 1980's have led to a larger variation between salaries of school leaders. Compared to other groups of managers in the Swedish society, the average level of payment is somewhat higher than managers working for the state and municipalities, but much lower compared to managers working for private firms with comparable areas of responsibilities. During the last five year period the development of the salaries for the school leaders, follows the common salary development in Sweden for comparable groups. While the common inflation in Sweden during the last five years has been around 5 % the average salary of the school leaders has grown 21 %. The average income per year in schools driven by municipalities is for a principal in a compulsory school 60 000 \$ and in upper secondary school 68 000 \$ (2006).

In 1996 and 2001 the association of the Swedish municipalities, the teacher unions and the school leader unions agreed on the conditions for work and payment within the Swedish schools for a future five year period. In these documents the expectations on the school leaders are formulated. Individuals can use them as an orientation about the job demands before they choose to apply for a school leader position.

No studies have been made about the way school leaders look upon their job in this perspective.

To maintain school leaders

The number of principals is about 5 700 people and the number of all school leaders, including both principals and deputy principals, is about 8 500 people.

When you look at the movement of the people that hold these positions there are a rather stable pattern of changes. Looking at who held a post as principal in the beginning of the school year during the last five years and then who held the same post at the end of the next school year you find following.

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Percentage of school leaders posts that existed in Sweden one year that have got a new person on the job one year later | 17 | 16 | 16 | 14 | 13 |

Around one out of seven school leader positions shift keeper each year. Some of the people that leave their positions do so because they have reached an age when they retire. About one third of the school leader positions where replacements because of this reason. About one third of the positions become available because school leaders find another school leader job in the same municipality or in another setting. The last third of the replacements develop when some of the newly recruited school leaders leave the job as they themselves or their employer have realised that they cannot fulfil the demands on an efficient school leader. There seems to exist a critical period in the life of a new school leader that occurs after two to three year in the new job, when you make up your mind if you really are going to go for this kind of job any further. The reasons why some newly appointed school leaders choose to leave the job are complex. The school leader job might be too demanding, the individual might find out that he or she does not fit well for the tasks that a school leader has to do or the prize of being a school leader and thereby leave old social networks that you have had as a teacher might be too high.

In Sweden the statistical average retirement age for the whole population is 58,5 years. In this figure all kinds of reason for retirement are taken into account, not only retirement because of age. School leaders do not differ from the common pattern. If the school leader have passed the first two three years at the job, many stays until they reach the retirement ages, that usually occurs when you have become between 62 to 67 years. During the last ten years the common economical conditions for retirement have declined. The growing amount of aging people in the society has led to a shrinking pension, which seems to lead to that more and more people try to stay as long as possible at work to keep the income up as long as possible. School leaders are no exception from this pattern.

It is very rare that there exists any specific strategy within schools to create other paths leading to school leader jobs than open competition. In some larger upper secondary schools, there might be routines to recruit the person for the top management position of that school among the deputy managers. Being a deputy school leader in such a large and complex organisation becomes in itself a high value merit.

Initiatives taken

In the beginning of the 1980's the state took initiatives to interest Swedish municipalities to vitalize the recruitment of school leaders. Statistics were presented about the selection patterns, where the politicians of the municipalities and the director of educations much more often than expected chose to find new school leaders who were men and that came from the same school as the new position were placed at. Debates followed. The state also initiated development work in some of the municipalities where teachers that were interested to become school leaders worked in recruitment circles. To get state grants to finance these circles the municipality had to prove that at least half of the participants were female. When you participated in these recruitment circles the participants studied literature about school leader work and met around ten times to discuss the literature. They also spend some working days acting as a shadow to one of the school leaders in the municipality to get some impressions of the work seen from the school leader perspective.

In 1987 the Swedish parliament accepted a bill that among other things said that municipalities were expected to arrange recruitment circles for teachers and others that were interested of school leader work. Smaller municipalities were asked to cooperate with each other or with larger municipalities to make the groups of the recruitment circles large enough to serve as a stimulating network. The Na-

tional Board of Education produced support materials for the use in the municipalities during these study circles. Since the end of the 1980's many such recruitment circles have been held all around Sweden, which means that many teachers have had a good chance to taste the work of school leaders and decide if they will go for such a job or not. Through the recruitment circles many municipalities have created a kind of recruitment pool for school leaders, where the municipality knows which teachers that are interested to go for school leadership. When shorter assignments have been available with a content that lies in line with school leader work, the director of education has had the possibility to give it to a person from this pool to have them to test their ability to function at a school leader job.

Many years have passed since the parliament asked the municipalities to use recruitment circles to attract people to apply for school leader positions. Some municipalities continuously arrange such circles and other activities to interest teachers for school leader work. In other municipalities very little have been done. At the moment discussions are held in different constellations to revitalize the idea. Looking back there are no studies made about the costs of the use of recruitment circles. Municipalities that have organized this kind of circles consider that it has been a good investment in their educational system. More people in the organisation have a fair knowledge what it means to work as school leader. The costs involved are replacements for teachers participating in the circles, especially for the period when they act as a school leader shadow. Many more people apply for school leader positions today compared with what happened during the 1980's. And many more women apply today for school leader positions than before.

Since the early 1980's Swedish universities and university colleges have arranged academic courses designed to fit becoming and existing school leaders. Nowadays there exist in most universities and university colleges such courses through which many teachers prepare themselves for a school leader career. The content of the courses might for instance deal with such topics as school development, organisation theory, school law, evaluation of education.

Chapter 6. Training and professional development of school leaders.

Educational programme for school leaders

During the seventies and the eighties school leaders in Sweden participated in a compulsory educational programme, that ran for two years, especially designed for them. The programme was originally designed so that all school leaders of a municipality participated in the programme together with the director of education of the municipality and the chairman of the local board of education of the municipality. The programme comprised of twenty-five course days, several home periods and two working weeks during which the school leaders joined other parts of the organised activities for young people in the municipality, like day care services or youth clubs. There were also two other weeks in the programme where all the school leaders left their schools and participated in the daily work in a work place that was typical in the municipality like a car factory, a mine, a farm or a shop to understand the conditions under which the parents lived. During the home periods the school leaders made studies of the inner life of their schools and tested different ways of improving the quality. They were visited by educators, which held critical dialogues with each participant. During the home periods the participants also met other school leaders during seminars.

Course periods usually were extended during four days each and located to some hotel in the region. The course activities were dominated by discussions between the participants and by contributions made by the educators. During the two years that the school leaders participated in the educational programme, the state supported the schools with a specific grant, that usually was used to appoint a substitute for the school leader to cover all the periods when he or she were out of school. The content of the course periods, home periods, seminars and literature was concentrated on knowledge about the expectations on schools from national political arenas, different school regulations, school economy, organisational theory, public relations of schools, theories about school development, social psychology, evaluation and other topics of concern for school leaders.

The education programme made for school leaders have changed several times since the first edition was presented. Since 1991 the training programme is, due to the decentralisation, no longer compulsory. It's an offer from the state to the municipalities to let their school leaders attain the programme.

Some municipalities today offer teachers to participate in a "recruitment study circle", where the participants examine the work of school leaders to be able to make up their minds if they want to choose to work as a school leader. Some municipalities even arrange an introductory phase of education for newly appointed school leaders, so that she or he gets acquainted with the budget system of the municipality and with other local demands that are put on the school and the school leader.

Preparation of school leaders

When school leaders in Sweden participate in the education programme it has been seen that it is important to develop a learning situation where they feel secure and where they can trust their educators. The main task of the school leader is to represent the ideas that lie behind the demands that are directed towards the school. The school leader needs to be able to assert the central guidelines at the local school in relation to all groups that act there, like teachers, students and parents. The school leader fulfils these tasks by organising the school and by leading the teachers in their strivings. He or she also clarifies what learning outcomes there are for the students. The purpose of participating in the school leader education is to deepen the understanding of school leadership together with colleagues. School leaders are supported to engage in networks both as school leaders and with their schools together with other schools so that they learn from each other, but also so that they get sight of problems that others have and that you might share. You meet different ways to approach the problems that the profession faces. Early in the school leader education the same strategy is used as the teachers of

Swedish schools are expected to use with their students – to identify individual needs for each school leader and to identify different steps in an individual learning plan.

School leaders need to be well oriented in all the texts that express expectations on the school. With the help of the school leader education they learn to interpret these texts. Together with colleagues they find out how they will be able to put demands on teachers to follow the guidelines and to communicate the expectations with the students. The new school leaders many times suffer in their role at the school, as their new career step may have meant that they left old peer relations with some of the teachers. Their new job may include putting demands on people that you some time ago were a good mate to, but whom you today need to look upon in a new light. To be able to take this leader role the school leader need to have learnt about one's own motives and deeper thoughts. School leaders are supported to develop these qualities among themselves within their professional group.

An updated National Training Programme for School leaders

In the end of the nineties the school leader education programme was discussed in relation to a reform of teacher education. The placement of the programme was discussed again and as the programme had a linkage to universities voices was raised that the programme could be fully included in the normal supply of the universities. The committee that made a proposal for a reformation of the Swedish teacher education proposed that the school leader education still should be kept as a specific programme, but the group added some ambitions to the programme. The most important one was that the school leader education should help the teacher education programmes to include leader perspectives in teacher education. The National Agency for Education should stay as the main responsible body for the aims and for the money of the programme. The government assigned The National Agency for Education to develop a set of new aims for the school leader programme, which the agency presented in 2001. From 2002 the agency broadened the organisational basis for the educational programme so that it today works in eight regions to cover the country. Seven universities were assigned by The National Agency for Education to provide the training programme. In the eight regions (Stockholm) the agency became the provider of the programme.

Since 2003 The National Agency for School Improvement has the main responsibility for the national training programme for school leaders and provides the universities with money for their fulfilling of the task to arrange the training programme. The National Agency for School Improvement also has the responsibility for assessment of the training programme.

In this updated training programme newly appointed principals and those in posts with management responsibilities in areas covered by the national curricula (Lpfö 98, Lpo 94 and Lpf 94)⁴ will receive training. Even principals in approved independent schools are offered the training programme.

Swedish schools receive strong expectations to work as good models for how a local democracy may function. In Sweden it is written into the law that students have the right to influence their own education. Teachers have to lead the learning in such a way that the voice of the students are heard and respected. Through the school leader education school leaders are supported to find different ways to stimulate their teachers to live up to this difficult demand. The education of school leaders in Sweden is based on three important principles:

- *Democratic leadership* where emphasis is laid on the school leaders to engage in deliberative dialogues with their teachers and with the students, where the leaders listen to the meanings of others but also stand up for their own views.

⁴ Curriculum for the Preschool (Lpfö 98), Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Preschool Class and the Leisure-time centre (Lpo 94) and Curriculum for the Non-compulsory School System (Lpf 94).

- *Learning leadership* where the school leader needs to emphasise that it is not only the students that are expected to learn through the work done at schools, but also teachers and school leaders.
- *Communication rich leadership* where the school leader is responsible for the exchange between different parties within the school, but also for the open communication between the school and its surrounding. It is the meetings between humans that make development based on reflections possible.

School leaders are stimulated to understand how they can support the teachers in their school and survey teacher and student work and what learning outcomes it results in. To do so school leaders need to have a good grip on concepts that cover not only evaluation but also learning as well as such concepts that are made to help people to understand the infrastructure of the school better. The infrastructure of the school can be described as the internal system at the school for communication between people, the achievement norms and norms for relations, the power structure and the division of responsibility among teachers and students, the reward system, the system for assessment of student achievement as well as the assessment of the quality among the teachers, the use of time and space at the school, the groupings of students and teachers and to what extent the school communicates with the others.

It is not enough to carry out the leadership for learning in a school by making good surveys and to evaluate the school work. One main effort in the educational programme therefore is to develop the competence among the school leaders to improve the work at school and the way in which the work is organised. School improvement theories are brought in as well as present relevant research to help school leaders to test them at their schools and to see if the theories really work. The school leaders experiment to initiate improvements on basis of critical reviews of the quality of the school. They choose different strategies to implement the improvement. Thereby they test to use different roles among the staff to get the school to move like asking some teachers to act as inventors of new solutions, some others to act as early users and some others as friendly critics of the improvement process. Different kinds of conferences and in-service activities are tested among the teachers to broaden the mind of the school leaders when facing improvement problems.

School leaders in the Swedish schools are also responsible for the quality of the student care services. They therefore meet different ideas in their education on how it is possible to organise the student care work in the school and how they can approach different specialities in other parts of the Swedish municipality to be able to solve problems that turn up at their school. During their education the school leaders are highly active in participative decision making about new steps to take. The democratic work during the education of the school leaders is not only a necessity to make the educational programme meaningful for the participants, it is also a way to help the school leaders to experience different models for how they can improve their school to use internal democracy so that the students can gain from their lives at the school. At the same time as the school leader is expected to take a lead in the internal democracy he or she has to take a lot of decisions in a school that have a high degree of autonomy and is responsible for its results. Therefore time is spent on reflecting on the feelings that rise when someone need to take inconvenient decisions. School leaders are also oriented about the many ways that you can act to be able to take democratic decisions in an organisation like a school.

The participants join between thirty to thirty-five course-days, some of which are portioned in three or four day periods, spread out over two or three years. They make studies in their own schools and test different management ideas there too. They also meet other participants in seminars and tutorial sessions between the course periods and are expected to read some literature. Those school leaders that want to register their participation as university studies and thereby get examined by university staff. A comparatively small number of school leaders – between five and ten percent - have so far chosen to register for academic studies during their participation in the school leader education.

A weakness of the present model of the national Swedish school leader education is that it is voluntary for the municipalities to send their school leaders to this kind of qualified training-programme. A consequence of this is that only about 50 % of the current Swedish school leaders have attended this edu-

cation. The quite high turnover rate in the group of school leaders is one explanation to the comparatively low participation. Another explanation is that the training programme hasn't got the necessary conditions for meeting the demands from the group of newly recruited school leaders. The National Training Programme has since 2005 increased the participation in the programme with 10% on a request from the The National Agency for School Improvement that the efficiency of the educational programme should be raised due to the large demand.

Research on school leader education.

Starting in the late 1970's, several evaluations were conducted of the early version of the Swedish School Leader Education Program (Ekholm, 1992). Hultman (1981) and Ekholm (1981a) conducted surveys of the program participants in order to explore the perceived effects of the development experiences. Ekholm (1981c, 1983) also analyzed letters that participants had written to themselves when they began the program and to which they wrote answers to when they had finished the two-year period of training and development. In the first letter the participants wrote their expectancies of learning during the flow of the educational programme, but also their expectancies of what would happen to their school and their job during the two year period. Through the analysis of the first letter compared to the second one conclusion were drawn about the quality of the educational programme in relation to its aims. The school leader education staff used interviews and surveys to examine the extent to which the program had influenced the participants as persons, their professional role as school leaders, and the management style used by principals in their local school. Participant observations of the courses were conducted by Ekholm, Stegö and Olsson (1982) and by Hultman (1986). Three international "connoisseurs" of leadership training programs conducted an "instant" evaluation of the program in which they spent several weeks examining different parts of the educational strategy in use (Pettigrew, Schmuck & Vormeland, 1982). Judgments concerning changes in the management style of participating leaders were solicited from people who worked with them (Hultman, 1986).

Two studies focused on specific components of the educational program. Fransson (1982) analyzed the content of the "project-work" of a sample of school leaders during their two years in the program. Ekholm (1981b) surveyed the perceptions of the participants concerning their experiences in the non-education internships. A brief summary of the many studies of the school leader education programme that existed in Sweden during the 1970's and the 1980's is that the education had obvious effects on the school leaders as persons. There were many of them that witnessed that they had developed a higher professional self esteem during the participation in the educational programme. They also had left their work as teacher and accepted their role as a school leader at the school. But they still struggled with the role as a school leader and in most evaluation studies little support was given that they should have made changes of the school leader role during their time in the educational programme. The educational programme had the ambition that school leaders would develop their school so that these were more like the expectations that political decisions had expressed during this time period. Very little evidence in the evaluation studies showed that the schools developed as a consequence of the participation of the school leader in the educational programme.

While the studies referred to above shed light on certain strengths and weaknesses of the educational programme, the nature of the evaluation designs limited the efficacy of the results. A more ambitious and comprehensive evaluation effort was therefore undertaken during the 1980s to assess the impact of the school leader educational programme. In this effort, information was systematically gathered from a wider variety of sources and over a longer period of time than was the case in the evaluations cited above. In 1980 documents were analysed and interviews with school leaders, teachers, and other staff at the school, parents, students, and people related to the school in the municipality were held about the quality of the school in thirty five compulsory schools all around the country. In each of the schools the principals participated in the school leader education during 1980 – 1982. The schools were revisited in 1982 and 1985 to repeat the school based review that was made in 1980 to make changes visible and thereby to trace the effects of the educational programme. Ekholm, Fransson and Lander (1987, also in Ekholm, 1987) reported that certain changes had occurred during the five years

(for instance that it became more common that teachers worked in teams), but also that some patterns of the work in the schools were stable (for instance the daily work of the students). The training program had contributed to the creation of new norms and skills among the school leaders that they brought with them to their schools, mainly about the role of the school leader. Furthermore, the transformation of the schools, both in terms of school leadership and of the teachers' planning and work seemed rooted in the educational programmes for school leaders. On the other hand, some skills (e.g. of self-evaluation) developed by the participants in the training program did not appear to have been implemented in practice. This was most evident when the values inherent in new practices conflicted with traditional values of the school culture. In the compulsory schools that were studied, "cultural factors" may explain why so many schools rejected reforms such as increased variation in the teacher-student working pattern and more frequent use of self-evaluations. In the culture of Swedish schools there was a low degree of acceptance of local leadership. Together with the way in which teachers as a professional group perceived themselves, this may have explained the resistant behaviour that was observed.

The longitudinal study that originally was designed to study the effects of the school leader education has been repeated a fourth time. All thirty five schools were revisited in 2000 respectively 2001 and a new school based review was made (Blossing and Ekholm, 2005). The long term perspective (a follow up study 20 years later) that has been used is helpful in identifying institutionalised phenomena in the schools. In several of the schools certain features exist in 2001 that did not exist in the schools in the early eighties. The school leaders' way of basing their leadership on collective grounds in interplay with the teachers or with representatives of the teachers is one such phenomenon. Collective work among teachers, where teamwork between teachers concerning planning is a normal occurrence in 2001 is another. School based evaluation with a mixed focus on student achievements and teacher work is an institutionalised pattern that was found in several schools at the end of the twenty year period that did not exist at the beginning of the period. While some schools had not succeeded in fostering student democracy in others a high degree of student democracy has become the institutional norm

Several explanations can be found for these institutionalised working patterns in the schools. The more collective base for the leadership that several of the schools had developed seems to have been caused by various factors. One goes back to the impact of the School Leader Education programme that certain school leaders have participated in at different times during the twenty years covered. The programme has had strong components that emphasise the need for a school leader to find legitimacy for the leadership in the school where she or he works. As the programme to a large degree all the time has been based on collegial discussions between school leaders, norms are set between school leaders that influence their actions at their home school. School leaders tend to search for solutions in the everyday at their schools grounding their initiatives in dialogue with the teachers. At the same time there has been a trend in the organised work among teachers as professionals to search out cooperation with their school leaders to be able to develop the inner work of the schools.

The later versions of the school leader education programme have not been evaluated with the same intensity as the early versions were. When evaluations have been made the notions from the earlier studies have been verified. Falk and Sandström (1995) found in their study of almost 600 principals that they struggled with their role as school leaders. They perceived the expectations sent from the municipality and the state as separate. The state expected priorities on achievement results of the students and on evaluation work. The municipality expected engagement in economy and in questions about staff. The way in which school leaders acted did not answer to close to these expectations. Instead the school leaders adjusted to the expectations of their staff. Daun (2004) found when he interviewed both directors of education, school leaders and teachers at the schools of participating school leaders, that the training among other things had made the leaders better to communicate the mission of the school and that they had better tools to work with evaluations connected to the developmental process in the school. Aurell (2005) studied the reflection patterns among school leaders while they participated in the school leader education. He found distinct patterns that school leaders used including problem solving, creative thinking and emotional engagements that were influenced by the educational programme.

Proposal about a new programme for school leader education

During the spring of 2006 the National Agency for School Improvement in Sweden proposed the government that the school leaders should participate in a new educational programme. In the proposal the agency argues for some steps to be organised by the state to support the recruitment of school leaders and to improve the educational programme for school leaders. The existing programme is redesigned to make it possible for all school leaders to participate in the training programme. Today some school leaders in Sweden have been working for a long time before they get the support that they can receive from the training programme.

The proposal suggests that the state will offer support to municipalities that have difficulties to work in systematic ways with different routines that raise the quality of the recruitment processes. The National agency for School Improvement will offer support to initiate recruitment study circles together with municipalities that have had difficulties to do so and the agency will offer supportive structures to smaller municipalities to create good prerequisites to find people who are interested to work as school leaders. A somewhat changed educational programme for newly appointed school leaders is proposed to be used. During one year new school leaders will study their own role as school leaders, seen from a legal point of view. This part of the new educational programme will be compulsory for the new school leaders. The education will be given by educators from universities but also from The National Agency for Education, that are responsible for the legal supervision of schools in Sweden. The participants need to pass an examination to receive a certificate that will legitimize them as school leaders. The state will be responsible for all costs for the education except for the working time of the school leaders. After the compulsory part an offer will be given to new school leaders to participate in a two year long educational programme with focus on management, leadership and school development. Again, the state represented by the National Agency for School Improvement will supply educators, the time of the school leaders will be the responsibility of the school owners.

School leaders that have participated in the basic parts of the school leader educational programme will participate in continuous in-service training. The aims of this part of the support programme for school leaders will be concentrated on development areas that have been given priority at national level or in the local municipality where the school leader is working. The National Agency for School Improvement will initiate cooperation between municipalities and between the state and municipalities. The agency will also offer in-service training events, link municipalities and school leaders with researchers and other development sources. The state will offer some economical support, but most of these activities will be financed by the school owners.

Development of academic courses

Along the introduction and development of the national educational programme for school leaders that exist in Sweden academic subjects have been developed within the universities to serve the demand from school leaders to be able to go deeper into the different disciplines that are of interest for the profession. The first academically based courses where the knowledge basis of school leaders was used were arranged in 1980 in one of the regional university colleges. Since then all main universities in Sweden and several of the regional university colleges offer academic courses with school leaders as target groups. Research of the different fields that are useful for school leaders exist today in several of the Swedish universities. The landscape of knowledge of school leadership, thereby have totally changed over the years, from being tiny to become more rich and useful for the profession. In its proposal to the government to rearrange the educational programmes for principals the National Agency for school improvement sees this kind of contribution from the universities as one part of the long term activities aiming at the improvement of school leaders in Sweden. The agency says that courses on school management, school leadership, school development etc, designed for school leaders will be offered by universities. These courses might lead to a master degree and stimulate to further doctoral studies and research.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS

A strong component in the Swedish education system is the use of the goal and result-based steering model. Politicians, employers, teachers and school leaders share the view that this model is more effective than previous ones. It gives good opportunities to schools to organise teaching and learning activities in ways that correspond to various needs. There is large freedom to distribute economic resources where the output is most efficient. A former weakness – low demands and lack of competencies on evaluation and follow-up of school results – has during last years been highly focused and an obvious improvement of these matters is noticed and continuous evaluation is today considered to be a strength. The model is practised in an open way where results of schools are published and the quality of education is discussed by broad segments of the society. The long term participation in international comparative evaluations of educational systems, the series of national evaluations that are made in the country and the routine use of national testing in several school subjects contribute to the continuous flow that this discussion follows. The use of different sources of evaluations maximizes the identification of low qualities of the system. Finding weaknesses in schools and in the educational system prepares for improvement initiatives. The practice of the goal and result based steering model however here shows its weakness. Within the educational system systematic approaches to attack identified problems have been rare. Where large efforts have been spent to create systematic solutions for evaluations and result control, less efforts have been spent on setting up improvement activities. When for instance a school is identified as a weak environment for learning it is very rare that a school borrows a school leader from a more successful one to participate in the development process. The National Agency for School Improvement has a very important role when it's up to supporting municipalities and schools in their development work.

A major strength of the Swedish educational system is that schools have good material equipment. Learning materials have high quality. Computers are frequent. School buildings are at large of good quality. Libraries are either linked to the schools or the school has one of its own. Teachers in many schools have specific working areas which keep them in school during working hours. The way in which education has been thought for a long time in Sweden has led to schools with a rich competence mixture which is another strength of the system. Teachers and school leaders' work together with own nurses, medical doctors, social workers, school psychologists and special education people when they approach problems that the school might have when it meets students. They also work together with janitors and cleaners that take care of the school environment and with catering staff that prepares the hot meals that daily are served to all students of the school. The presence of all these professional groups, make school leaders most aware of the wholeness of the task to develop students. On the other hand the rich mixture of competencies in the schools makes the work of school leaders broader. The school leaders need to orient themselves in other areas than in the fields of teaching and learning to be able to act as a leader in the school.

Another trend is working in a positive direction for school leaders, as well as for students and staff. The former rather large school districts, sometimes with more than 1000 students and a staff of more than 100 people, are now transformed into smaller units, often half the size of the former school. This has led to less anonymity. There are better conditions for adults and children to know each other. The school leader is the utmost protector of children's right in a school and therefore it is of great importance that he or she can be available for the students. Smaller units make it easier to fulfil the important aims concerning participation and co-responsibility from students and staff. In most Swedish schools social distance between people in the school are small. Uncertainty between people with different professional status is seldom present which facilitates communication. School leaders can usually base their work on reliable information as the flow of communication is not hindered by social barriers. Through their training during the school leader education programme many school leaders are prepared to listen to the many voices that appear in their schools. The deliberative dialogues that appear at several occasions in the schools between students and teachers and between school leaders and teachers are another strong part of the system since the last decade.

The prerequisites of school leader work vary a lot between different parts of Sweden. The school leader together with the staff is responsible for what is going on in their school as a whole. They base their work on a local budget that is determined by the economical basis of the municipality. One of the weaknesses of the system is that school budgets are decided only for a period of one year. This complicates the work of school leaders that usually are interested of a more long term based planning. Money that has not been used during the year is often “confiscated” by the finance department of the municipality. If a school one year has used more money than the budget says, it has to balance the deficit next year. School leaders in Sweden decide the salary of teachers and other staff. This instrument strengthens the possibilities of the school leaders to be able to improve the work done at the school. It is important for the legitimacy of the system that the school leader has actual and reliable knowledge about the results and about the contributions of each member of the staff. As the information that the school leader uses to build such knowledge in Sweden comes from internal rich communications this legitimacy nowadays is conquered by most of the school leaders.

As school leader you are in many aspects depending on the municipality in which you work. The economic conditions vary a lot between different municipalities in Sweden. Some are richer and some are poorer which reflects the possibilities to drive and support their schools. School leaders working in different municipalities therefore might for example have quite different possibilities to attend in-service education events. This is another weakness of the Swedish school system. In less rich municipalities, often characterized by lower socio-economic status of the population where the tradition to study is weak, challenges for schools are bigger than in municipalities with a better economy. In the debate proposals have been raised that school leaders working under extreme social and economical conditions ought to have some kind of state guarantee so that investments could be done in developing their competence.

During the last years leadership has been reinforced and more administrative staff has been appointed in many municipalities. New positions like controllers, developers and evaluators have appeared. The reason has been to give time to school leaders to handle and focus on their main tasks, developing their schools and to improve the results of the students. To succeed with this task time to meet with staff and students is crucial. To reduce sometimes rather trivial administrative tasks and thereby create time for school leaders to communicate with the staff and students and also have time to notice matters and trends outside school may also improve quality inside schools.

Another strength of the Swedish model is the large interest among many school leaders to involve in different kinds of learning networks. “Critical friends” is an example of such a network initiated by a handful school leader that work together and seek new knowledge to improve the quality of their schools. Continuous development of competence is both a right and a duty for Swedish school leaders. In municipalities where great efforts are done in this field it is a strength but on the contrary, in municipalities where these matters are not given priority, it is definitely a weakness.

School leaders in Sweden are alike most other professional groups in the country to a high degree organised in a trade union. The membership in this kind of association, provide the school leaders with professional information. Through the debates in the journal of the union they take part in the ethical and normative debate within their profession which is a help when they manage their schools. School leaders in Sweden do not only appear as members in their own union, they usually also participate in other organisations outside schools. The rich social capital that the Swedish society builds on is carried among others by school leaders. They appear as elected representatives of many associations that exist that deal with sport, children’s rights, charity etc. As such representatives’ school leaders create broad nets of contacts that can be used when they manage their schools.

A recent trend in the relationship between the school and the working life weakens the construction of the school system. Since long Swedish compulsory schools and upper secondary schools are expected to work in close contact with industry, business and other working arenas in society. For instance students in the later parts of the compulsory school have spent a couple of weeks on practical work experience periods during semesters. During the last decade more and more work places show no or little

interest to receive students for such experiential periods. The high working pace, the reduction of less complicated working tasks and the many regulations about safety at the work place have been mentioned as reasons for the lower interest. Although many school leaders have good relations with people working in other areas of society, they cannot master this trend. Slowly the Swedish compulsory school and upper secondary school remove from working life and risk to lower the motivation among the students to learn for their future work.

The conservative government elected in September 2006 has to decide about the proposal from the National Agency for School Improvement referred to in chapter 6 about a new programme for the education of principals. The aim of this education is to guarantee that all Swedish principals have a good knowledge and insight in all documents that steer the Swedish school system. International exchange and cooperation is promoted. Many Swedish schools have partner schools in other countries, mainly in Europe. The experiences of other ways to live and also to arrange schools contribute to create other images of schooling. Some of the ideas that are practiced in another part of the world may be transferred into the Swedish context and make our schools better.

School leaders in Sweden working in public schools belong to a professional network in their municipality. They are coached and supervised by a director of education, a person who has the task to support and develop school leaders in their professional role. In many municipalities the school leaders have regular meetings for instance every second week during a half day when they discuss school leader initiated questions. These meetings are in many municipalities used for consultancies with colleagues about difficult problems that have appeared at the school and also to test new ideas how you can manage the work at the school. It is also a place where norms are set in the professional group. Through these regular meetings the principals strengthen their identity as school leaders, support each other and feel the support of the director of education. In many municipalities the employer of the principals also give them signals that they have the support of the employer as guarantees are given to them if they need to step down from the principal position as there will be another job in the municipality. Modern work of principals in Sweden is most demanding and sometimes a school leader need to shift from the intense workflow and concentrate on other areas. In many municipalities school leaders are used for long term strategic work or for evaluations when they have conducted an intensive period at a school. It gives the school leaders a feeling of safety to know that these options are available when the energy might ebb away.

A well-functioning school organisation in a municipality presupposes that the roles between politicians and professionals are well described and defined. Sometimes it happens that politicians pass the invisible boarder between the political arena and the professional sphere. They enter the field of professionals for instance with demands on the content of education, and on which working-methods teachers shall use etc. The professionals are deeply depending on their local politicians and fortunately these kinds of incidents are not very common.

Unfortunately there is a weak tradition in Swedish schools among both teachers and school leaders to follow what appears in the field of educational and school management research. This goes back to the institutions that educate teachers. Historically many teachers working in these university colleagues are good practitioners but have no experience of conducting own research. One of the biggest challenges in the Swedish school system is to create a better understanding among politicians, school leaders and teachers that a prerequisite to get a reliable and positive step forward in the strivings to improve the quality of Swedish schools, is to spend much more money on educational research. The employers have to understand that a full time working school leader or a teacher have very little energy left for doctoral studies or to conduct research in their spare time. This kind of studies needs to be looked upon in the same way as for instances in the sector of health care, where research is considered as an important investment to improve quality in the organisation and as a natural part of the professional work.

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Appendix 1.

Costs for child care and schools in Sweden 2005.

Child care.

| | Total Millions of € | € per child |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Preschool | 3 700 | 10 372 |
| Family day care | 32 | 8 422 |
| Leisure time centre | 1 114 | 3 330 |
| Total | 4 846 | |

Education for Children and youth

| | Total Millions of € | € per student |
|---|---------------------|---------------|
| Pre school class | 41 | 4 582 |
| Compulsory school | 7 870 | 7 600 |
| Upper secondary school | 3 156 | 9 256 |
| Schools for disabled learners | 43 | 28 853 |
| Upper secondary schools for disabled learners | 18 | 26 034 |
| Total | 11 128 | |

Source; SKL (2006)

Appendix 2.

Numbers and costs for the school leader education programme in Sweden.

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of participating school leaders | 1 717 | 1 691 | 1 902 |
| % of women | 63 | 58 | 65 |
| State costs/participant in € | 3 200 | 3 150 | 2 760 |

The increase of participants and the decrease of costs/participants between 2004 and 2005 depends on a request from the The National Agency for School Improvement that the efficiency of the educational programme should be raised due to the large demand.

The table shows only the state costs for the educational programme. A general estimation shows that the municipality pays almost the same amount of money as the state does per participant.