



## Country Background Report Sweden

### 1. Background – everyday reality versus political framework?

More educational discourses:  
Didactics vs. curriculum, Bildung vs. Effective Schools, Outcomes vs. Processes

- Mix of cultures – demand for more inclusiveness
- More demand for accountability and loyalty towards authorities.
- 'New' students and parents
- Government wants to minimize the number of dropouts

### 2. Context

#### National and local contexts

Swedish school leadership of basic schools (year 6-16) has got many masters:

- The PISA – the influences of OECD and other transnational agencies is not formal, legally binding, but takes forms of 'soft governance.' Those are however very powerful forms of influence
- The national government has decentralized finances and administration from the state level to municipal level and from there to school level since the beginnings of the 1990s in a move named 'autonomy'.
- The municipal level is the next level of influences on schools and thus has a middle position between state and schools. Local authorities in charge on finances (frames, grants) and accountabilities.
- Each school has a principal in charge.
- De-recentralization: quality reports, social technologies, detailed objectives, objectives and framework grants

### 3. School Leadership concepts and practices

#### Conceptual framework

The principal has no or very little teaching responsibilities.

In most schools there are leadership teams with principal, deputy and department leaders and sometimes administrative leaders

- → Competing discourses: strong, visible overall leaders vs. negotiating, educational leaders.
- → More loyalty to authorities, site based management in collaboration with staff and within frames
- → Local day to day, strategic leadership, educational, administrative

#### Focus on teaching and learning

Changing educational discourse and social technologies (tests, reports etc)

- → From colleague to controller
- → Lead, inspire, monitor, empower most often through teachers teams and one-to-one communication
- → Collaboration with parents in delicate balance between teachers as class leaders and whole school leadership.

#### Restructuring and re-culturing school organisation

##### Distributed leadership, teacher teams, networks

Most schools are structured in a number of self steering teacher teams and class teams

- Leadership and management thus are mostly performed in networks and through numerous meetings. Tight and loose couplings, and sense making, stage and agenda setting (soft governance).

### Setting and negotiating the direction

Competing discourses: leader vs. Translator

- Connecting new expectations to old practices
- Encouraging teams to experiment.

### Systems Leadership and networks

Cooperation with other schools and other local agencies like Psychological agencies for students with special needs (both content wise and behavioural).

### Good practice

Even if Sweden has fallen back in relation to international test scores we still have a many examples of good practice and our schools are in general good schools.

We even have examples of good schools in what we could call challenging contexts.

## 4. Recruiting and educating school leaders

### Recruitment and retention

It is not a precondition for teachers, who apply for principalship to be formally educated in leadership.

Traditionally there used to be a track from teacher to shop steward to municipal representative for the teacher union to leadership. Municipalities, schools districts advertise and appoint. Skills asked for and needed: leadership, communicative, problem solving, curriculum overview competencies and loyalty to authorities.

### Attractiveness

A principal in Sweden earns between 3500 to 4000 Euro/month. Principals in general are respected in their position. And there are many applicants to each position.

### National structure for education

State involvement in the training of school leaders was introduced at the end of the 1960s in Sweden, with the provision of short-term courses in a number of pedagogical and administrative areas. During the first half of the 1970s, as a result

of the Commission on the Internal Work of Schools (SIA, 1994), the State emphasised the need for a foundation training programme for head-teachers. In 1976 the Riksdag enacted legislation introducing a two-year national training programme for all head teachers in the national school system. The aim was to make head teachers better equipped to direct and take charge of the development of schools in line with the national goals relating to pedagogical leadership. This is important to remember because that focus is still valid for head-teacher training in Sweden. The training was initially to be run for a ten-year experimental period, with a subsequent review. As a result of the review, the Riksdag decided in 1986 on a broader integrated programme of head teacher training, with the State and municipalities being given responsibility for different parts of the training. The intention of the Riksdag was to give head teachers a thorough understanding of the goals of the school and equip them with leadership skills that would stimulate the development of school activities.

Four steps of training were introduced:

- *A recruitment training programme* for persons who wanted to become principals. Training should give a broad view of different school leadership functions but retain a focus on the national goals for education. The Riksdag's intention in introducing this programme also had three other elements. Parliamentarians wanted more women as school leaders, more recruitment from other municipalities and more people with other educational backgrounds.
- *An introduction training programme* was introduced to help new principals during their first years in office. The main part of the education would focus on the practical and administrative tasks of the principal, but it was also made very clear that the principal should be introduced to pedagogical leadership.
- *A National Head teachers training programme* was to be followed by all principals after about two years in office. This programme lasts two years and comprises around 30 seminar days. The purpose of the training is to deepen the principals' knowledge and increase their understanding of the national school system, the national goals for the school and the role

of the school in society and the local community.

- A continuation school leader programme – university courses for school leaders.

The two first programmes were to be run by the municipalities. There is a great variation between different municipalities when it comes to how well the different school boards worked with these two types of programmes. The third programme – the national head teacher training programme – has functioned very well. The reason for this is that the State, through the National Agency for Education, organised the head teachers training and provided the resources needed to run the programme. The fourth type of programme, academic courses, has been offered at different universities.

Unfortunately, university courses have not been able to attract large number of principals for continued school leader education.

From 2009 we have a new principal programme on advanced level at six different universities. The program is from 15 of March 2010 compulsory for all new principals. It consists of three courses:

#### **Legislation on schools and the role of exercising the functions of an authority**

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills and abilities
- Assessment ability and approaches

#### **Management by goals and objectives**

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills and abilities
- Assessment ability and approaches

#### **School leadership**

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills and abilities
- Assessment ability and approaches

These areas of knowledge are crucial for the practical implementation of school leadership. They are closely linked to each other, and principals must be able to manage them simultaneously since they form parts of a complex interacting system.

The area of Legislation on schools and the role of exercising the functions of an authority cover the provisions laid down in laws and ordinances. Emphasis is also put on how the school's assignment is formulated in the national goals.

The knowledge area Management by goals and objectives covers measures for promoting quality which are required for the school to achieve the national goals of the education, and create the conditions for its development.

The knowledge area School leadership covers how the work should be managed based on the national tasks of the principal and the principles set out in the steering system for bringing about development in line with greater goal attainment.

On completion of the training programme, the principal shall have the knowledge and skills required to manage the work of fulfilling the goals of preschool, leisure time centre, the preschool class, school or adult education as well as fulfilling the tasks in accordance with the provisions specifically down for the principal in the legislation. This applies to both municipal and independent schools.

The programme is completed when participants have achieved the course requirements of 30 higher education credits with 10 higher education credits in each of the three modules.

#### **Coaching**

In a few municipalities/school districts there are pre-service education opportunities, some in cooperation with the universities but not on a national level.

In many municipalities principals are collaborating in networks with peers in order to produce overview and reflections on practice.

Some municipalities find funding for coaches for school leaders.

## 5. Challenges

Getting used to the 'new' school (discourse, accountability, governance)

- → Municipality reform produced fewer and larger municipalities/school districts and thus the closing of small schools or mergers of more schools or schools with other day care institutions with only one leader.
- → Innovations: Leaders are developing patterns of soft leadership through sense-making and collaborations.