



# SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: PREREQUISITES, PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

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## Abstract

This thesis' main theme is successful principal leadership in secondary schools within the Swedish education system. Successful principal leadership is examined from three perspectives: What are the processes of a successful principal? Do the leadership processes relate to successful academic and social outcomes of schools? What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership? The Frame Factor Model and the three concepts of prerequisites, processes and outcomes constitute an overarching framework. The prerequisites are categorized as internal prerequisites (the particular characteristics of individual principals) and external prerequisites operating within the Swedish educational environment. The successful principal processes are viewed as pedagogical leadership processes, on one hand as providing prerequisites for teaching and learning and, on the other hand as leading the core processes of teaching and learning. The definitions build on the empirical data, on the Swedish national curriculum and demands for pedagogical leadership, and on international findings on what successful principals do. The outcomes of successful principal leadership are here defined as the academic and the social outcomes of schools. The research undertaken is part of the research project 'Structure, Culture, Leadership - Prerequisites for Successful Schools?' The empirical data for this thesis are gathered in twenty-six Swedish secondary schools whereof five are regarded successful schools based on both academic and social outcomes. The findings, reported on in four articles, derive from interviews and questionnaires to principals and teachers. The principals in the main identify prerequisites of importance that are within their own realm of influence, such as themselves, teachers and school district level. They consider a limited area of responsibility and support from district level specialists as providing possibilities for their success. The principals accept the national governance of schools and principals via the national curriculum. The principals in the five successful schools however take a higher degree of responsibility for setting direction towards national goals, for processes inside schools and for school outcomes than do principals in less successful schools. They as pedagogical leaders attend to a higher degree both to providing prerequisites for teaching and learning and to leading the core processes of teaching and learning than do principals in less successful schools. In schools with a successful implementation of social goals, which shows as successful social outcomes, the principals, according to teachers, overall take responsibility for their national objectives and obligations to a higher degree than principals in schools with a less successful implementation of social goals. The implementation of social goals is of importance not only from an outcome perspective but also from a process perspective. It requires collaborative interpretation which can promote principal-staff professional relations and ultimately student learning. The identified overall differences between principals' leadership processes and processes in the twenty-six schools raise questions around consequences for equivalence in education.

Keywords: success, principal, successful school, frame factor model, prerequisite, process, outcome, pedagogical leadership, equivalence

# FOREWORD

As a trainer of school principals at Umeå University's Centre for Principal Development I was fortunate to participate in the research project 'Structure, Culture, Leadership - Prerequisites for successful schools?' Through this research project I was able to explore successful principal leadership by school principals. This has indeed proven pleasurable and rewarding. My experience and knowledge-based understandings of principal leadership and the prerequisites for it, have been confirmed, questioned, increased and deepened.

Many people have purposely contributed to my research. The doctoral courses led by experienced senior researchers have provided philosophical, theoretical and methodological perspectives. To have been part of the research group of the 'Structure, Culture, Leadership Project' has been like spending time in a store filled with research sweets; from the design of the research project, through the fieldwork (undertaken with experienced senior researchers and another doctoral student - thank you Leif and Anna-Maria), to general and specific discussions around a great variety of research-related issues. Principals and teachers in secondary schools, as well as other informants, provided us with valuable data. I appreciate the support and especially the critique delivered by my two supervisors Olof Johansson and Ingrid Nilsson. As well, I am grateful for the support and advice from all research group members (a special thanks to Helene and Jonas - you know why!), from the constructive friends in the doctoral student seminar group, as well as the support provided by staff at the Departments of Education and Political Science. I acknowledge the work of Frances Boylston in revising the English text.

Many former and present colleagues have contributed to my research: colleagues at the Centre for Principal Development, principals that I have had the opportunity to work with in the National Head Teacher Program, colleagues in Luleå kommun and at the closed-down Luleå office of the National Agency for Education - thank you to all of you!

Thank you to close family members: to Bengt in Råneå, Maria in Geneva, Erik and Hanna in Stockholm and my mother Berta in Pajala - all patiently have accepted my physical absence. As if they have had a choice! Thank you as well to others who have been neglected but still say hello when we meet.

Råneå and Umeå, April, 2009

Monika Törnsén

# CONTENT

A. INTRODUCTION.....	9
Aim .....	11
Outlining the thesis .....	11
B. SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SWEDISH EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	13
Prerequisites for successful principal leadership .....	16
Principal leadership processes .....	22
School outcomes and principal leadership .....	26
C. CONDUCTING THE STUDY .....	31
The project .....	31
Study population.....	31
Ethical considerations.....	34
Research instruments.....	34
Data gathering.....	35
The thesis.....	36
D. SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES .....	41
I Success as Equivalence - The Swedish Case .....	41
II Keys to Successful School Leadership - High Support to Capable and Versatile Principals.....	42
III Principal Leadership, National Responsibilities and Successful School Outcomes.....	44
IV Strategies, Accountability and Democratic Values: A Successful Principal in a Swedish School.....	45

E. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH	47
Prerequisites for successful principal leadership.....	47
Principal leadership processes .....	50
School outcomes and principal leadership .....	52
Concluding discussion.....	54
Further research .....	56
F. SWEDISH SUMMARY .....	59
REFERENCES.....	67
APPENDICES .....	73
Appendix 1: Principal and teacher interviews .....	73
Appendix 2. Teachers' questionnaire.....	74
FOUR ARTICLES ON SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP .....	75

# A. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines success in relation to leadership of principals in Swedish secondary schools<sup>1</sup>. Undoubtedly school matters to society and to the future destiny of students (Mortimore et al. 1988) and thus it is crucial that schools, their leaders and teachers are successful in helping students succeed. Principals as heads and pedagogical leaders are responsible for the goals, processes and outcomes of schools (Lpo94 1994) and in carrying out their responsibilities they are expected not just to fulfil their duties but to be successful in so doing.

The thesis is a part of the five-year nationwide research project entitled ‘Structure, Culture, Leadership - prerequisites for successful schools?’ The project is situated at the Centre for Principal Development at Umeå University and is a co-operation between three universities<sup>3</sup>. It is an interdisciplinary project that involves four senior researchers and six doctoral students from the disciplines of education, sociology and political science. Each participant has an individual research interest within the framework of the project. Financial support was provided by the Swedish Research Council.

The concept of success is long been used in relation to sports and show business. Schools, teachers and principals have implicitly been expected to succeed. However, in relation to education and educational leadership the explicit use of the word ‘success’ and attempts to specifically measure and examine success is a fairly new phenomenon. Such interest is currently widespread, for example, successful principal leadership is examined in an international project named the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) (Day & Leithwood 2007; Leithwood & Riehl 2003) and by Swedish researchers (Grosin 2003; Persson et al. 2005). Findings on success from the SCL project have been reported in two dissertations (Björkman 2008; Ärlestig 2008), in several published articles, in articles that are submitted and are awaiting publication, in a book (Höög & Johansson 2009, forthcoming) as well as in this thesis.

The studies presented in this thesis were conducted in the Swedish educational milieu at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The focus is successful principal leadership in a Swedish setting. It arises from a societal context in

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<sup>1</sup> The secondary school level represents the three last years of the Swedish compulsory school system. The students are between 13 and 15 years of age.

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth the project is abbreviated SCL.

<sup>3</sup> The project is led by Professor Olof Johansson with co-directors: Associate Professor Jonas Höög, Umeå University, Professor Leif Lindberg, Växjö University and Associate Professor Anders Olofsson, Mid Sweden University, campus Härnösand.

which value for money expended for education and the responsibilities put on principals, schools, school districts and municipalities<sup>4</sup> in the Swedish decentralized environment is accompanied by expectations for successful outcomes. The competitiveness of Sweden as part of a global society is publicly discussed as a result of international league tables being published, for example, the PISA and TIMSS results<sup>5</sup>. National inspections and evaluations, municipal and school level quality reviews, and on-line access to the academic outcomes of schools all provide transparency and make comparisons between schools possible. Marketization of schools and the competition involved brings explicit attention to practices and achievements that are seen as evidence of successfulness. For example, one marker of school success is that it attracts students and parents. Another sign of success is the school keeping within the limits of its budget, a responsibility that has always been implicitly expected of the principal but currently is explicitly demanded. The demands currently placed on schools reflect a phenomenon that is internationally termed 'accountability'. Since in Sweden it is the school principals that are responsible for local schools, it naturally follows that principals are expected to be competent and successful leaders.

Within the SCL project and in this thesis school success is measured by the academic, social and civic<sup>6</sup> outcomes of the school. However in Article I of this thesis, success is defined, from the perspective of students and in relation to national calls for equivalence in education, as success at 'entry', 'stay' and 'exit'. Success at 'entry' refers to equal access to schooling. Success at 'stay' refers to equal learning opportunities inside schools. Success at 'exit' refers to equal academic and social outcomes (Törnsén 2008). Schools, their principals and teachers are responsible for student success both at stay and exit. A principals' success is therefore related not only to successful academic and social school outcomes but also to leadership and school processes. Swedish principals are in their roles as democratic and pedagogical leaders, together with their teachers, expected to create learning opportunities inside schools conducive to student learning and successful academic and social outcomes (Lpo94 1994).

Leadership is here defined as a function of the leader, the followers and the situation (Hughes et al. 2002; Pierce & Newstrom 2008). In consequence, the thesis is about the principal as the leader, including the principal-teacher

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<sup>4</sup> Sweden consists of 290 municipalities of various sizes, whereof 12 take part in the SCL project. The smaller municipalities have one school district. The larger municipalities are divided into several school districts, but the municipality is the responsible authority for the school district.

<sup>5</sup> PISA: The OECD Program for International Student Assessment  
[http://www.pisa.oecd.org/pages/0,2987,en\\_32252351\\_32235731\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.pisa.oecd.org/pages/0,2987,en_32252351_32235731_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)  
 TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. The International Association for the evaluation of educational achievement. [www.iea.nl/](http://www.iea.nl/)

<sup>6</sup> Henceforth the term social is used for social and civic objectives and outcomes.

relation, and the situation surrounding this principal-teacher relationship in Sweden at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Aim

The objective of the thesis is to explore ‘successful principal leadership’ in Swedish secondary school settings. Two research questions are posed: What are the processes of a successful principal (1)? What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership (2)? The findings are analyzed from the perspective of principal leadership processes in relation to school success (defined as positive academic and social outcomes); hence this constitutes the third research question: Do the leadership processes relate to successful academic and social outcomes of schools (3)?

The thesis consists of four articles plus this section that ties the articles together. The overview below shows which research question is examined in each of the four articles.

Prerequisites (2)	Processes (1)	Outcomes (3)
	Article I	Academic
Article II		Academic and social
	Article III	Academic and social
	Article IV	Academic and social

The question on prerequisites for success (2) is examined in Article II. The question on successful leadership processes (1) is analyzed from various perspectives in Articles I, III and IV. The third question of this thesis (that is, do the leadership processes relate to successful academic and social outcomes of schools?) has served as a unifying question in all articles whenever comparisons of findings are made in relation to school outcomes. In Article I only the academic outcomes of the schools were available. In this section finally, the research questions and all findings are brought together, are analyzed and discussed, and conclusions are drawn.

## Outlining the thesis

Section A has served as a brief introduction to the overall theme of the thesis and the SCL project. The aim of the thesis is thereafter described including the research questions and their relation to each of the four articles. Section B contains definitions and theoretical points of departure in three areas: prerequisites for success, successful principal processes, and the relation between

principal leadership processes and school outcomes. Section C describes the SCL project in more detail and then describes the research process that resulted in this thesis. In Section D the four articles are summarized. The conclusions, a discussion and ideas for further research follow in Section E. Section F provides a Swedish summary of the thesis. Thereafter the references and the appendices with the interview questions and the teacher questionnaire items follow. Finally, the four articles are presented in full.

## B. SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SWEDISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

This thesis deals with successful principal leadership. To undertake research on successful principal leadership is to examine something that is indeed complex. To encircle the object of study written about in four articles - successful principal leadership -the Frame Factor Model is used. The model reflects the holistic view taken on successful principal leadership that in this thesis is examined from several aspects: prerequisites for success, successful leadership processes, and leadership processes in relation to successful academic and social school outcomes.

The emergence of the Frame Factor Model dates back to 1967 and to studies made in order to explain differences within the Swedish comprehensive school (Dahllöf 1999). As well, issues concerning equality in education were of interest at the time (Lundgren 1999). In 1997, thirty years after the emergence of the model, Dahllöf (1999) described the model or theory as ‘a way of thinking’ inspired by Gustafsson and Selander (1994). Furthermore, Dahllöf (1999) claimed that the basic model continuous to be valid, but that the frames and processes vary depending on the situation and the specific problem. Hence, some forty years after the thinking was introduced, the Frame Factor Model is employed in a study on successful principal leadership in secondary schools within the Swedish decentralized education system at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

When introduced, frame-factor theoretical thinking drew attention to the national governance of education (Broady 1999). It reflected national ambitions and societal interests (Abrahamsson et al. 1999). By and large, the theory was connected to politics, reforms and planning within the educational sector and came to play an important part in Swedish educational research (Lundgren 1979, 1999). It was in the 1970s that frame-factor theoretical thinking developed to the more comprehensive ‘curriculum theory’ (Broady & Lindblad 1999), dealing with decisions around what is worth knowing and how to organize learning (Lundgren 1979).

The Frame Factor Model includes three components - frames, processes, and results and the connection between these. The frames or frame factors are at the core of the model. The frames identified in the early days of frame-factor theoretical thinking were distinct. For example, time was identified as a frame-

factor affecting student results. However, the frame situation has changed since the model was created and the definition of frame-factors has broadened over time (Gustafsson 1999). Dahllöf in 1971 distinguished between general environmental factors and fixed frames.

*such general environmental factors as national, regional and cultural characteristics of the population, school organization at large and factors that act as fixed frames for the teaching<sup>7</sup>... (Dahllöf 1971, p. 75).*

Frame-factors were by Lundgren defined as constitutional, organizational and physical (1979). For example, the constitutional frames include the Education Act (SFS 1985:1100), the organizational frames include financial measures, and physical frames include buildings and teaching material. In addition, in 1997, Dahllöf (1999) described the characteristics of individuals, for example, the knowledge of an individual, as having the character of a frame.

The frames of a school make up its prerequisites (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). Principal leadership takes place within these frames. In consequence, the frames also make up the prerequisites for principal leadership.

The processes constitute a second component of the Frame Factor Model. In fact, the basic model was developed based on classroom studies and the black box of processes inside classrooms was opened up (Dahllöf 1999). The introduction of the model resulted from a shift from traditional input-output research to a focus on the intermediate processes and the question of why certain results are attained. The results, at the time of Dahllöf's studies, referred to student results in mathematics, English and Swedish. Results constitute the third component of the Frame Factor Model.

Altogether the Frame Factor Model 'modeled the relations between prerequisites, processes and results from the point of what is possible and not possible within given frames' (Lundgren 2007, p. 25). This basic idea of the frame-process model describes frames as providing opportunities for a process, not causing the process.

*...frames provide a space for a process. The frames either provide or do not provide opportunities for a process, but are not causes to the process (Lundgren 1999, p. 36).*

The Frame Factor Model has been influential in several ways in this study on successful principal leadership. In the title of the thesis and in the three research questions the concepts of prerequisites, processes and outcomes are essential elements. These concepts emanate from the Frame Factor Model and

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<sup>7</sup> Translations are made by the author of the thesis.

its three components - 'frames', 'processes' and 'results'. In the following section the three concepts are discussed with the objective of shedding light on their usage.

This thesis takes an interest in the prerequisites for principals' success in a wide sense. Both external and internal prerequisites are identified as having the character of a frame (Dahllöf 1999). The prerequisites are categorized as internal prerequisites (the particular characteristics of individual principals) and external prerequisites<sup>8</sup> operating within the Swedish educational environment.

The external prerequisites operating within the Swedish educational environment serve as a theoretical background, described by the researcher, to the inquiries made in Articles I, III and IV. Not all prerequisites that have the character of a frame are however possible to define from the outside or to encircle. Gustafsson (1999, p. 55) identifies subjectively 'experienced frames' which affect processes and outcomes. She suggests examining 'what is a frame for whom?' instead of defining frames from the outside. Article II examines twenty-four principals' subjectively experienced internal and external prerequisites for their success. The research question in Article II, 'What are the prerequisites for principals' success?', emanates from the underlying basic idea of the frame-process model that frames provide, or do not provide<sup>9</sup>, opportunities for success.

This thesis furthermore examines principals' successful leadership processes (Articles I, III and IV). The processes, in the articles named leadership processes, strategies and practices, refer to national expectations on principals and schools as formulated in steering documents, to what principals do as leaders, and to processes in schools. The processes thereby reflect what is embedded in the act of leadership as a function of the leader, the followers, and the situation surrounding the leader-follower relationship (Pierce & Newstrom 2008).

The data on successful leadership processes build on interviews with teachers and principals, on data from teachers' questionnaires and, on-site observations during 2.5 days in each school documented in observation protocols. To have more process-data available via longer observations of principals followed by conversations about the observations made, would provide deeper insights into aspects of successful leadership processes that are difficult to capture via interviews and questionnaires (see e.g. Hallerström 2006; Moqvist 2005).

The terms results and outcomes can be used interchangeably. The use of the term outcomes in this thesis is due to the term being frequently used in relation to student learning outcomes<sup>10</sup>. The outcomes of successful principals'

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<sup>8</sup> In Articles I, II and III the terms internal and external (frame) factors are used.

<sup>9</sup> In Articles I and II the terms 'promote and/or inhibit' possibilities for success are used.

<sup>10</sup> Personal conversation with Professor P.V. Bredeson, Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

leadership are, in line with the SCL project, defined as successful academic and social outcomes.

To sum up, this thesis reflects an interest in prerequisites for successful principal leadership, in the principals' leadership processes, and the relation of those processes to school outcomes. The Frame-Factor Model provides a theoretical link between prerequisites for success, successful processes and their relation to successful school outcomes. The model serves to sort out the problem and analyze the findings into the different components (Dahllöf 1999). The three concepts undergird the layout of this section. In the next section successful principal leadership is in consequence presented under three headings: prerequisites for leadership, principal processes, and principal leadership and the relation to successful school outcomes.

## Prerequisites for successful principal leadership

The prerequisites are in this thesis categorized as internal prerequisites (the particular characteristics of individual principals) and external prerequisites operating within the Swedish educational environment. Given the large number and variety of prerequisites that affect principal leadership, it is difficult, if not impossible, to cover exhaustively all the prerequisites, rather one has to be selective.

From the perspective of the principal the external prerequisites can be said to form two categories. First, principals are expected to adhere to national and municipal governance and leadership. The prerequisites for principals' leadership related to these levels therefore constitute one category. Second, principals are expected themselves to provide leadership to staff in their schools based on the national and municipal governance and leadership. The prerequisites related to leadership in the local school constitute a second category. Finally, the internal prerequisites, i.e., the particular characteristics of individual principals, form a third category. The uncountable components of each category separately and put together, provide, or do not provide, opportunities for successful leadership processes. Without a doubt, the three categories separately and put together entail challenges and dilemmas for principals.

*School principals are uniquely positioned as formal leaders of diverse and complex educational systems to mediate the often times opposing forces of globalization and localism with their communities (Höög et al. 2006, p. 263).*

Principals are expected to adhere to national and municipal governance and leadership. Clearly, an attempt to describe all these external factors is doomed

to fail given the amount and diversity of previous and current changes in society in general and education in specific (Daun 2003). Nevertheless, we should be cognizant that overall educational prerequisites are indeed products of political, economic, and social structures of society (Lundgren 1981). Lundgren (1999, p. 39) describes that

*The dilemma of political governing is the background against which the change towards decentralization can be understood. Parallel, in course of time, new motives for change appear more clearly, motives founded on societal changes.*

The external prerequisites chosen for this thesis relate to the changes in the political governance of education in the 1990s, which altered the prerequisites for schools, teachers and principals (Lundgren 1994). The frame-process model relates to several forms of governance that apply to schools and to the principals' position. These include the following: legal governance; financial governance, which is the responsibility of municipalities; ideological governance expressed in the national curriculum and in other documents that are directed to teachers and principals as professionals; and governance through control via evaluations and inspections (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000).

Decentralization was both a way to renew the political governance and a way to manage a comprehensive education system. The decentralization led to a division of responsibility between the national and the municipal levels, as well as between politicians and professionals, such as teachers and principals. Teachers and principals are hired by municipalities (Proposition 1989/90:41) that are also responsible for evaluations (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). Principal leadership is affected by the decentralization, but also by privatization of schools and competition between schools, all parts of the neo-liberal restructuring movement (Linde 2006).

Political governance of schools mainly via goals and results replaced a governance exercised mainly via resources and rules (Lundgren 1999). Through political governance the Parliament and the government formulate goals for education. Decentralization and the goal- and result-oriented system entail a demand for professional responsibility along with demands for professional knowledge and know-how at all levels of the system (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). Actors at every level are expected to interpret the motive and intentions behind national goals, to formulate their own goals, to take responsibility for implementing national goals, and to make follow-ups and evaluations. Municipalities are to set priorities for the national goals in their school plans, just as every school is anticipated to do so in its local workplan (Proposition 1990/91:18). The system requires that there is a clear definition of who is responsible (Linde 2006). The explicit expectations for the principal in the

1994 curriculum are a consequence of the decentralized and goal- and result-oriented system, a system under continuous change.

The role of the principal from the perspective of political governance as briefly described above entails responsibilities, challenges and dilemmas. An alleged struggle between the fundamental democratic values and the neoliberal views of how schools should be governed is discussed (Ball 2003; Johannesson et al. 2002; Moos & Møller 2003; Moos et al. 2004). Linde (2006) claims that the traditional Swedish democratic curriculum code has nothing in common with the neoliberal ideas of how schools should be governed. The neoliberal ideas are said to entail a shift from education as public good or a common social value towards education as private good and an individual value (Englund 1996; Linde 2006). A threat to democracy and democratic leadership is identified by researchers. The threat emanates from the introduction of measurement of performance and management-by-results, which is said to create a tension between demands for accountability and development of trust in schools (Ball 2003; Moos & Møller 2003).

The prerequisites for principal leadership were one object of discussion in the planning and decision of the reform realized in the 1990s. The idea at the national level was that the principals' area of responsibility should be limited so that principals can familiarize themselves with the daily work in schools (Proposition 1990/91:18). However, national evaluations and inspection reports show that the area of responsibility varies between municipalities and school districts (Skolverket 1999). According to research, principals are affected by school size and the level of school but also by the type of school district (Ekholm et al. 2000). Leithwood et al (2008) discuss the effects of district level leadership based on quantitative data sampled from 180 schools within 45 districts and 9 states in the U.S. In the US context, district level leadership is identified as having indirect effect on principals, and 'they help to create district conditions that are viewed by school leaders as enhancing and supporting their work' (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008, p. 521). The district level characteristics contribute to and are positively associated with higher levels of collective school leaders' efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008; Wahlstrom 2008).

To what extent is it possible for principals to be able to meet the various and sometimes competing demands of the national requirements versus the given prerequisites? Linde (2006) and Lindensjö and Lundgren (2000) differentiate between the formal organization where the national goals and objectives are formulated (formulation arena), and the informal organization that handles the complexities involved (realization arena). From a principal's perspective, the national arena of formulation provides both legal and ideological frames for principal leadership in compulsory schools (Lpo94 1994; SFS 1985:1100). In addition, due to the decentralized system, municipal formulation arenas provide

frames of various kinds that encircle principal leadership, such as financial, ideological and pedagogical frames.

Despite an increasing number of people within the formulation arena, a gap is identified between the arenas of formulation and realization which function independently of each other. The relation between the arenas of formulation and realization is explained as a mediated and transformed relationship. This reflects how political governance and reforms are interpreted and communicated to the public by media (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). At the arena of transformation actors interpret, for example, the goals and objectives in the national curriculum (Linde 2006). From a principal's perspective, the National Head Teacher Program is a link between the arenas (Skolverket 2002). Practicing principals are provided the program intended to ensure that the national ideological, legal, pedagogical and practical expectations are known by principals (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000).

Principals are expected to provide leadership to staff members and schools based on national and municipal prerequisites and demands. The principal is affected by prerequisites related to the local school, parallel to being responsible for creating prerequisites conducive to student learning.

Students' socioeconomic backgrounds affect both principals and schools (Ekholm et al. 2000). The socioeconomic backgrounds of the schools involved in the SCL project, in terms of the educational background of parents, the number of boys versus girls, and the number of students with a foreign background, are comparable, a factor that makes comparisons between schools in the project (and in this thesis comparisons of principals' leadership) more valid.

The principal has the formal power to exercise leadership. Leadership exercised by team leaders and teachers, whether formal or informal, is not the focus here. Even if leadership is exercised by others, one fact remains: the principal's position is held by an individual given specific tasks, power and authority (Lpo94 1994; SFS 1985:1100). As head and leader of the school the principal is responsible for goal-setting, processes and outcomes in the local school. However, the democratic values, the expectations for staff and student influence, and the call for dialogue is still there. The shared goal of governing allows for responsibilities and power to be distributed to others in informal and formal ways (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). A shared responsibility between principals and teachers characterizes how a democratic leader carries out the responsibilities in practice (Törnsén 2009c). Nevertheless, the principal has the overall responsibility and the decisional power as the formal head of schools (Lpo94 1994).

The implementation and realization of policy is complicated whether top-down or bottom-up initiatives are to be implemented and institutionalized

(Hill 2005). The 'field-implementation' realized by 'street-level bureaucrats' (in this thesis the principal often along with teachers) is seen by researchers as crucial for success or failure, according to Lindensjö and Lundgren (2000, p. 176). When the goal- and result-oriented system was new neither teachers nor principals were used to interpreting goals. Principals are expected to lead the interpretation, as they are responsible for local schools, and to see that the national, municipal and district level expectations are known by teachers. This calls for interplay between principals and teachers, i.e., a cooperative school culture.

To be successfully enacted the expected changes have to be identified by principals and teachers as relevant in relation to local school problems. However, if faced with unattainable goals schools and principals may make 'strategic goal retreats' and replace these with other more attainable goals (Wildavsky 1979, p. 68). These retreats can be understood as political failures, or alternatively they can be seen as a case whereby schools realize what tasks they can or cannot cope with. This may serve to make visible the separate political and pedagogical conditions (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). At times, the individuals in the situation pretend to carry through the intended goals while in reality the changes are fairly independent of the stated goals. This fake reality (Linde 2006) or 'performativity' (Ball 2003, p. 219) does not result in the intended improvement. Independent of why, the varying degree of realization of national goals may result in consequences for national equivalence in education.

Berg (1999b) separates governance of schools from governance in schools. The former refers to the formal responsibilities of schools as organizations, i.e., governing as intention, goals, the mission, the mandate, and commitment. The latter refers to governing inside schools, informal influence on values, traditions and other signifiers of organizational cultures. The culture has an impact on the realization of principals' intentions since the arena of realization is decided on by local power structures (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). A successful principal, according to research, takes responsibility both for school structure and culture (Day & Leithwood 2007; Fullan 2000; Höög et al. 2007). The principal has to create a formal organization, i.e., formal structures that support what they want to achieve, in other words, provide opportunities for success (Day & Leithwood 2007; Hoy & Miskel 2005; Ärlestig 2008). The informal structure, by most referred to as culture, is in this thesis named teacher and school culture (Berg 1999b; Hoy & Miskel 2005). The concept is defined in accordance with Berg (1999b) who identifies on one hand a limited teacher and school culture, where principals are expected to still act as the first among equals. In these schools the principal takes on the role as administrator but does not interfere in teaching issues. This division of labor is called 'the invisible contract' (Berg 1999b, p. 131). On the other hand, in the extended teacher and school culture the

principal takes responsibility as pedagogical leader for teaching and learning processes. Thereby the principal is involved in traditional tasks of teachers in accordance with current role expectation. For principals to change the structures and cultures can be demanding, since this means providing leadership to staff members and teachers, in teams and as individuals, who may represent different traditions and cultures (Berg 1999a, 1999b; Hargreaves 1994; Persson et al. 2005).

The particular characteristics of individual teachers, such as skills, traits, role, style and attitude to task, change and people, provide or do not provide opportunities for principals' success (Ekvall & Arvonen 1994; Hughes et al. 2002; Yukl 2006). From a national, municipal and district level perspective, staff members as individuals and in teams are to follow the principal as the head and leader of the school. From the perspective of the national curriculum a democratic, horizontal and collaborative relation between the leader and staff members is expected. To sum up, although the principal is affected by various prerequisites related to the local school, the principal is still responsible for creating prerequisites conducive to student learning.

The characteristics of the principal exert an influence on both the degree to which a principal adheres to national, municipal and district level expectations, and the degree to which the principal provides leadership to staff members in the local school. Consequently, and in line with Dahllöf (1999), the characteristics of individual principals have the character of a frame that provides, or does not provide, opportunities for success.

The external national, municipal and district level demands and responsibilities imply trust in principals' ability to meet the expectations. The 'characteristics of the individual' (Dahllöf 1999, pp. 16,19) are here summarized as principals' traits, skills, style and role (Bass 1990; Hughes et al. 2002; Northouse 2007). The traits approach to leadership focuses on innate qualities and characteristics of individuals, while the skills approach emphasizes abilities that individuals can learn and develop (Northouse 2007). Yukl (2006) identifies three dimensions of leadership style, namely the task-oriented behaviors, the relations-oriented behaviors, and the change-oriented behaviors. Finally, the role of the principal is in this thesis defined as the role of the principal in a Swedish secondary school (see 'Principals' leadership processes').

The internal prerequisites reflect the characteristics of the principal as an actor within the national, municipal, district level and local school prerequisites. The national governance of teachers and principals as professionals gives them greater freedom to choose how to meet the goal expectations but also carries greater demands (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). Several dilemmas occur. The national, municipal, and district level structures, which involve tasks and decisions made by others, have to be adopted and adapted to local circumstances (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000; Spillane 2000). Berg (1999b)

identifies the extent of readiness of principals and teachers as actors to be responsive to such governance. The principal has to accept the authority and the leadership from national, municipal, and district levels' political and administrative leaders, parallel to exercising leadership in the local school and making use of the pedagogical and methodological freedom provided by the system. Principals and teachers are expected to identify the possibilities that the system provides (Gustafsson 1999). The realization of objectives and obligations depends on how the external prerequisites are apprehended by actors and made use of in the pedagogical processes (Gustafsson 1994). The role perception of actors or bearers of traditions matters (Linné 1999, p. 67). The intentions of the actors are part of the 'characteristics of the individuals' (Dahllöf 1999; Lindblad et al. 1999). Lundquist (1987) identifies the understanding, knowledge and will of an individual as influencing the implementation process.

Needless to say, there has been and always will be prerequisites that affect a principal's likelihood for success in Sweden as elsewhere. In this thesis the external prerequisites operating within the Swedish educational environment as well as the internal prerequisites (the particular characteristics of individual principals) serve as a theoretical background, described by the researcher, to the inquiries made in Articles I, III and IV. In Article II the findings from a study on internal and external prerequisites for principals' success, as viewed by twenty-four principals within the current Swedish decentralized education system, are presented.

## Principal leadership processes

The expectations on principals whether top-down or bottom-up, when realized, all manifest themselves in leadership processes. In Article I, III and IV the leadership processes have been examined from various theoretical perspectives. In Article I differences in principals' leadership processes, processes in schools and the consequences for equivalence in education are discussed. In Article III the leadership processes of twenty-four secondary school principals in relation to national objectives and obligations are analyzed. Article IV uses as one benchmark for the analysis of the leadership strategies of a successful principal in a Swedish secondary school the obligation that fundamental democratic values are to permeate all school activity. The aim of this section is to present a common base to an overall analysis of the findings in Article I, III and IV. For that, two definitions of pedagogical leadership have been created - one labeled '*providing prerequisites for teaching and learning*', and the other labeled '*leading teaching and learning*'. The definitions arise from the analysis of the empirical findings and are developed by means of first, the national curriculum in general and, more specifically the principals' objectives and obligations and the roles of

the Swedish principal as described in the curriculum (Lpo94 1994), and second, by means of international findings related to successful leadership practices, and leadership roles related to these findings (Day & Leithwood 2007).

Democratic leadership can serve as the umbrella perspective of Swedish principal leadership. It is grounded in the democratic values and social goals of schools, internationally discussed as demands for social justice (Day 2007; Johansson & Begley 2009, forthcoming; Johansson & Zachrisson 2009, forthcoming; Lpo94 1994; Møller et al. 2007). Democratic leadership, as well as the democratic values of schools formulated after World War II (SOU 1948:27 1948) are prevalent in the current national steering documents. A democratic principal is expected to be a role model who leads in accordance with democratic principles which involve influence, equality and responsibility. Democratic leadership implies both boundary-setting and dialogue. In setting boundaries the principal as a democratic leader exercises the power and responsibility given to them to set those boundaries necessary to protect the best interests of all students. As a democratic leader the principal also must engage in dialogue with teachers so that their task awareness and learning are enhanced in order to improve student learning and successful academic and social outcomes (Johansson & Begley 2009, forthcoming; Johansson & Zachrisson 2009, forthcoming).

The Swedish principal, to be successful, must take on the role as pedagogical leader (Lpo94 1994). The role however lacks a precise definition (Kåräng 1997; Ärlestig 2008) although introduced by the 1946 school commission (SOU 1948:27 1948) and repeatedly emphasized in policy documents since then. The expectations can be summarized as taking responsibility for the overall educational work and for initiating development inside schools. This summary reflects a definition by Scherp et al (2007) in which pedagogical leadership is not seen as a specific task but more as the process of leadership and development that includes almost everything a principal does.

The Swedish national curriculum describes what principals are expected to take responsibility for (Lpo94 1994). Goals and guidelines specify principals' and schools' objectives and obligations which all imply various leadership and school processes. The paragraph entitled 'Responsibility of the School Head' calls for principals to be pedagogical leaders, heads of their staff, and providers of staff professional development. The principal is responsible for assuring that the school meets the national objectives, for making evaluations, and ultimately, is responsible for the school's outcomes. The objectives and obligations include democratic values, social and academic objectives. Thus, it is evident that the principal's role involves issues related both to the organization of teaching and to the understanding of academic and social objectives. This requires principals to interact with their staff, and to be involved in the teaching and learning

processes. Furthermore, they are expected to cooperate outside the school with parents, other schools, and the wider community (Lpo94 1994, pp. 17-18).

The research findings on successful principals' practices identified within the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) constitute another benchmark utilized to develop the definitions. The international findings fall into five categories of practices or principals' processes. Setting directions includes visioning, fostering the acceptance of group goals and having high performance expectations on staff and students. Understanding and developing people means providing individualized support and intellectual stimulation besides serving as a role model. Redesigning the organization emphasizes both creating collaborative cultures and supportive structures. Managing the teaching and learning program involves planning and supervising instruction, providing instructional support, and monitoring the school's progress. Finally, coalition building includes establishing relations with district staff and community groups (Day & Leithwood 2007). These practices reflect the expectations on principals in the Swedish national curriculum. For example, setting direction matches principals' responsibility for assuring that the school meets the national objectives; coalition building relates to principals being expected to cooperate outside the school with parents, other schools, and the wider community; and, developing people reflects the roles of principals as heads of staff, as pedagogical leaders, and as providers of staff professional development (Lpo94 1994).

The practices identified within the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) are included in transformational and instructional leadership, two international leadership models that appeared in the 1980s and have since then been subjected to empirical studies. The transformational leadership model may be shared and come from both the principal and teachers and represents a more bottom-up approach to school improvement. It has seven components: individualized support, shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewards, high expectations and modelling (Day & Leithwood 2007).

The components of instructional leadership are related to the teaching and learning program. Instructional leadership is identified as a leadership that attends to coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Hallinger 2003). In the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) four subsets of instructional leadership are identified: staffing the schools' program with teachers well matched to the school's priorities, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity and the school's progress, and buffering staff from distraction (Day & Leithwood 2007). Five dimensions of instructional leadership are identified by Robinson (2007a, 2007b) based on an international research review: establishing goals and expectations; strategic resourcing (aligned to pedagogical purposes); planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum;

promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and finally ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

In conclusion, Hallinger (2003) suggests transformational and instructional leadership be integrated, an approach that the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) has taken. Findings within the project on what successful principals do, consequently reflects practices related both to instructional and transformational leadership.

The transformational and instructional leadership models complement each other and, according to the author of this thesis, help discriminate between, on one hand, principals' processes directly related to teaching and learning, and, on the other hand, processes related to creating an infrastructure for teaching and learning. The division is used to create two categories of pedagogical leadership, one labeled '*providing prerequisites for teaching and learning*', and the other labeled '*leading teaching and learning*', both aiming at successful school processes and outcomes. The two definitions complement each other and both are indispensable.

Through providing prerequisites that are conducive to successful teaching and learning processes and outcomes the principal is indirectly involved in the core processes of schooling. As an example, when a successful principal makes structural and cultural changes in the school as an organization (Day & Leithwood 2007; Fullan 2001; Höög et al. 2007) this can be regarded an indirect involvement intended to support the teaching and learning processes. The principal thereby provides prerequisites conducive both to teachers' work with teaching and learning and to student learning and outcomes. The national objectives and obligations in the curriculum and specifically in the paragraph entitled 'Responsibility of the School Head' are as a whole intended to provide prerequisites for teaching and learning processes. It thus follows that the objectives and obligations examined in Article III on principals' adherence to national expectations, can, put together, be seen as reflecting the broad definition to '*provide prerequisites for teaching and learning*'.

Through leading teaching and learning the principal is directly involved in the core processes of schooling, which reflects instructional leadership. As an example, classroom visits, feedback to teachers, and the analysis of student academic and social outcomes in relation to the interactions between teachers and students in the teaching and learning processes, constitute more direct forms of leadership in relation to teaching and learning (Årlestig 2008). Hence, the findings in article III concerning principals' adherence to academic, social and civic objectives and further to principal-staff related objectives and obligations, can, put together, be seen as reflecting the definition focused on '*leading teaching and learning*'. Through leading the core processes – teaching and learning - the principal can support, challenge, and develop teachers at the core of their work by means of democratic leadership as dialogue and boundary-

setting (Johansson & Begley 2009, forthcoming; Johansson & Zachrisson 2009, forthcoming).

The main task of principals is to lead and develop the pedagogical activities. In fact, they are expected to lead the change in teachers' pedagogical practice (Lpo94 1994; Skolverket 1999). Grosin (2003) describes leadership in successful schools as taking responsibility for the quality of teaching through making classroom visits, through relating the teaching practices to student outcomes, and discussing this with teachers. However, in Sweden, the core processes of teaching and learning are by tradition a teacher domain. The traditional school cultures, building on teacher autonomy, are receptive to principals being supportive, but they do not allow for principals to govern and be demanding (Ekholm et al. 2000). The teaching and classrooms are teacher arenas, in which principals do not interfere, a situation called the 'invisible contract' (Berg 1999b, p. 131). Ekholm et al (2000) state, based on empirical studies in 1969, 1979 and 1994, that principals in the compulsory school system, according to teachers, do not undertake pedagogical initiatives or encourage or emphasize educational work to great degree. A national quality review reports that principals do not support teachers' pedagogical work and professional development through involving in classroom activities (Skolverket 1999). Based on empirical studies Hallerström (2006) identifies one norm of principals as being that the principal is to lead but do not govern the pedagogical practice. Further, Hallerström (2006) draws the conclusion that national objectives are not used in relation to staff as a means for school development. Ekholm et al (2000) identify the need for principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to improve the educational work.

What do we know about successful principal leadership processes in relation to school outcomes? The next section elaborates on school outcomes and on principal leadership in relation to school outcomes.

## School outcomes and principal leadership

The traditional view on a successful Swedish school is one that produces good academic outcomes, which is in accordance with international understandings of a successful school. The grade scores in school year nine, the end results from the compulsory school, provide comparable data on student outcomes in Swedish secondary schools.

Democratic values and social objectives are part of what students are supposed to learn in Swedish schools besides the academic objectives. The aim of Swedish schools to foster democratic citizens and to develop the personality of students was introduced by the 1946 school commission (SOU 1948:27 1948). The establishment of a compulsory school system in the 1960s was aimed at providing equal opportunities for all students. It involved

individualization as a means to make use of the individual students' abilities, which was also seen as a prerequisite for the all-embracing social fostering (Lundgren 1979).

What does the national level in Sweden value most as the outcomes of our schools? The curriculum and other national documents emphasize both social and academic objectives (Lpo94 1994). In the late 1990s particularly the fundamental democratic values and social goals were emphasized. The democratic values and social goals are however not measured and therefore cannot be compared. A tendency towards a national shift of emphasis towards the academic outcomes can be traced in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Swedish National Agency for Education provides an online system<sup>11</sup>, where academic measures such as grades are accessible. Comparisons can thus be made between schools. National inspections, national tests, and a new grading system are other signs of the current tendency to emphasize academic outcomes. But, in the national inspections norms and values as well as academic achievements are scrutinized.

The SCL project decided not only to use grades as criteria for successful secondary schools, but also to examine social goals. The twenty-four secondary schools involved were all measured (Ahlström & Höög 2009, forthcoming; Höög 2009, forthcoming). A school that produces successful academic outcomes and successful social outcomes is consequently defined as a successful school in the project.

The purpose here is to identify a relation between principals' contributions and school outcomes. We know that school matters, even if socioeconomic conditions affect student outcomes (Mortimore et al. 1988). In consequence, teachers and principals can independently of the socioeconomic conditions, affect student outcomes positively.

Leadership matters because people want it to matter, Leithwood and Wahlstrom claim (2008). This belief in leadership founds the Swedish national curriculum, according to which principals are responsible not only for the school setting direction towards national goals and for processes, but also for school outcomes. Undoubtedly, the most important outcome for principals to strive for is good student outcomes.

The interplay between students and teachers has the greatest impact on student outcomes. Day et al (2007) claim that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning, and leadership usually means the most in challenging schools (Leithwood et al. 2004). Furthermore, principals have an indirect effect on student learning (Ekholm et al. 2000). They affect student outcomes through influencing the state of things inside school (Ekholm et al. 2000). Mulford et al (2007), in an Australian

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<sup>11</sup> <http://sir.is.skolverket.se>

study, report school leadership as indirectly related, through school capacity, to student outcomes and especially to social goals.

The above findings all verify principals' affect on intermediate variables, such as teachers work, and the influence these have on school outcomes. Through influencing and interacting with teachers the principal is able to affect their work (Day et al. 2007; Ekholm et al. 2000). The question is what kind of influence and interaction with teachers that contributes the most to school outcomes: whether to provide prerequisites for teaching and learning or to lead teaching and learning matters the most; whether leadership practices that create stability and strengthen the infrastructure are more influential on student outcomes than instructional leadership and a focus on teaching and learning, a 'close to the classroom leadership' (Day & Leithwood 2007, p. 7; Hallinger 2003).

Both are of importance. Depending on the status of the school, the level of responsibility taken by teachers, and what is needed, the principal involves in either direct or indirect leadership in relation to the teaching and learning program. Elmore (2008) sees principals as involved directly in the core processes of schools in the early stages of school improvement. As improvement advances, and teachers take responsibility for the improvement of their own practice, the principal can attend less to the direct involvement and instead attend to more indirect involvement.

To support teachers through involvement in the teaching and learning is desired. Elmore claims that 'necessary conditions for school leaders' success in the future will be their capacity to improve the quality of instructional practice' (Elmore 2008, p. 42). Instructional leadership makes a significant difference in student outcomes through the focus on teachers and the quality of instruction and thereby pays attention to the core of schooling, according to Robinson (2007a, 2007b).

However, the involvement in the teaching and learning processes entails not only possibilities but also risks. According to Hallinger (2003, p. 330) instructional leadership has been criticized for placing the principal 'as the centre of expertise, power and authority'. In a Swedish context, to change a tradition denoted the 'invisible contract' (Berg 1999b, p. 131), a principal has to deal with issues of support versus control. For principals to make classroom visits can be understood as control due to times of accountability, and individual salaries being part of what a principal deals with. To create trust so that the involvement is apprehended as support is necessary.

To conclude, Section B has presented the theoretical framing of the thesis guided by the Frame-Factor Model and the three research questions on prerequisites for success, successful principal processes, and principal leadership and the relation to successful school outcomes. The presentation made is

intended to provide a background to the overall analysis of the findings presented in the four articles, and to the conclusions and the discussion (see Section E).

## C. CONDUCTING THE STUDY

In this section descriptions of the SCL project and of this thesis are presented.

### The project

The joint effort of the research group of ten as described below includes the selection of sites, the production of research instruments, ethical considerations, and data gathering.

### Study population

Twenty-four secondary schools in twelve Swedish municipalities were selected for the research project. The municipalities represent different geographical location, size and political majority.

The project makes research on prerequisites for successful schools. In the project, the definition of a successful school includes meeting both academic and social objectives since Swedish schools besides academic objectives also have social objectives to fulfill (Lpo94 1994). One important task for the team of researchers therefore was to find out to what degree the twenty-four schools meet academic and social objectives. First, the academic outcomes of the twenty-four schools were measured. Second, the social outcomes were measured. Third, the two were combined and a ranking of the twenty-four schools was made based both academic and social outcomes.

The academic outcomes of the twenty-four schools were measured in two steps. First, the selection of schools was based on academic grades. In Sweden, student academic grades in the 9<sup>th</sup> and final year of the compulsory school are viewed in official data offered by the National Agency for Education.<sup>12</sup> The students' grades are turned into merit points. To pass all subjects yields 160 points, the national mean for public schools at the time of our school choice in 2004 was 205.7 and maximally 320 points can be acquired.

Two secondary schools with comparable student demographic socioeconomic backgrounds in terms of parents' education, the proportion of boys and girls and the rate of immigrant pupils were selected in each municipality based on academic grades in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2004.<sup>13</sup> One selected

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<sup>12</sup> <http://SIRIS.skolverket.se>

<sup>13</sup> Two schools from the initial selection decided due to principals' different personal reasons not to participate in the study. They were replaced by schools with a comparable student population.

school in each municipality was above the national mean and was ranked between the 75<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> percentile of the grades of all Swedish public schools. It was categorized as being successful. The other school was below the national mean, was ranked between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> percentile, and was categorized less successful. The ambition to meet other requirements of the project, such as geographical location, size and political majority necessitated the described percentile range. Despite a range from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile the factual difference in merit points between the schools is quite small. From a merit point of view many Swedish secondary schools are namely found between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile and are thereby close to the national mean. The chosen schools consequently reflect the grades of a majority of Swedish secondary schools, which was a strategic decision made by the project. The project aims at identifying differences regarding structure, culture and leadership in schools with small differences from a merit point of view. This being so, the findings can be of significance to a majority of Swedish secondary schools.

To avoid an academic ranking of the twenty-four schools based on students' outcomes in 2004 only, a second and broader analysis was conducted in 2006. Two measures of school outcomes were utilized since both are as important according to steering documents. To use both measures provides a more comprehensive comparison of school academic outcomes. First, the leaving certificates for 2004, 2005 and 2006 were taken into consideration. Second, data on the number of students who had obtained a pass in all subjects those years were used. The two measures were transformed into a Z-scale<sup>14</sup> and the twenty-four schools were ranked. The twelve schools with the highest academic outcomes were considered academically successful.

Second, a project decision was made to measure the social outcomes in the twenty-four schools. There are namely no comparable official data available in Sweden. Two project members developed a questionnaire based on Swedish steering documents and, more specifically, on items from the national Agency for Educations' instrument (BRUK) for quality assessment.<sup>15</sup> The items concern democratic values, communication, respect for human differences, responsibility, critical evaluation and creativity. The questionnaire was tested in four schools with 157 students (Ahlström & Höög 2009, forthcoming; Höög 2009, forthcoming).

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<sup>14</sup> Normalization of the values on the scales can be done using the formula:  $Z = (x - m) / s$ , where  $z$  is the normalized value,  $x$  the calculated value on the original scale for a school,  $m$  the mean and  $s$  the standard deviation on the same scale.

<sup>15</sup> The questionnaire is based on an evaluation tool (BRUK, an abbreviation short for assessment, results, evaluation, and quality) provided for by the National Agency for Education. <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2173> accessed 2009 0110

To find out how successful the twenty-four secondary schools were in regard to the social objectives every school had to be measured separately. Thus to assess the success of the school in meeting social objectives 2128 students (out of 2681) in year 9 (age 15) in each of the twenty-four secondary schools answered the questionnaire. The students' questionnaires were analyzed and an instrument, the Social and Civic Objectives Scale (henceforth abbreviated SCOS), was developed to make it possible to rank school achievement as regards social objectives. The schools with the highest values on the SCOS were considered socially successful schools. The development of the instrument and the line of argument are described in detail by Ahlström and Höög (2009, forthcoming; Höög 2009, forthcoming).

Third, the final and combined ranking of the twenty-four schools was based both on the broader analysis of official data on student academic outcomes and on the empirical data on social outcomes. To be able to compare the twenty-four school in relation to both academic and social achievements, the two scales were transformed into a Z-scale.<sup>16</sup> The ranking of schools resulted in the matrix below (Höög 2009, forthcoming).

		<b>Successful in reaching academic objectives</b>	
		more (A)	less (a)
<b>Successful in reaching social objectives</b>	more (S)	<b>A/S</b> five schools	<b>a/S</b> eight schools
	less (s)	<b>A/s</b> seven schools	<b>a/s</b> four schools

*Figure 1. Four types of schools in relation to how well they meet academic and social objectives*

First, there are five *A/S* schools that are more successful in relation to both academic and social objectives. Second, there are seven *A/s* schools that are more successful in relation to academic objectives but less successful in relation to social objectives. In an international context both *A/S* and *A/s* schools would be considered successful academic schools. According to Swedish national curricula the social objectives are equally important, and therefore in Sweden only the *A/S* schools can be seen as completely successful while the *A/s* schools can be seen as partially successful (Lpo94 1994). Third, there are eight *a/S* schools that are more successful when it comes to social objectives, but less successful in relation to academic objectives. Finally, there are four *a/s* schools

<sup>16</sup> Normalization of the values on the scales can be done using the formula:  $Z = (x - m) / s$ , where  $z$  is the normalized value,  $x$  the calculated value on the original scale for a school,  $m$  the mean and  $s$  the standard deviation on the same scale.

that are less successful schools in relation to academic performance, as well as social objectives. In an international context both *a/S* and *a/s* schools would be considered not successful schools. In Sweden *a/s* schools are judged less successful and *a/S* schools are successful only in relation to social objectives, and can therefore be seen as partially successful.

Validity becomes an issue both regarding the use of grades and regarding the use of the findings based the questionnaire on social objectives. Lack of equivalence in grading has been identified in Sweden. The critique concerns the validity of the grading (Riksrevisionen, 2004). However, to compare Swedish secondary schools, the comparable available data are the grades in the 9<sup>th</sup> year. In the project, the second and broader measurement of academic outcomes was conducted to make the ranking based on academic outcomes more valid.

Validity issues regarding the social objectives' questionnaire have been discussed by the project group. A need to revise the items in the questionnaire, to reconsider the use of 'don't know' items, and to uncover different dimensions of social objectives through factor analyses and other techniques is acknowledged (Ahlström & Höög 2009, forthcoming). Still, the instrument is considered valuable. This innovative feature of the project helps broaden the definition of a 'successful school' by combining academic and social objectives and helps assess school differences.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical rules and guidelines for research provided by the Swedish Research Council<sup>17</sup> were followed. Four demands were met: information about the research project transmitted to the informants; consent from informants to participate was gathered; confidentiality concerning informants was assured; and finally, that data about the informants is to be used for research only.

After the municipalities had been chosen, the head of each political school board was contacted as was the superintendent. All agreed to participate, and thereafter the principals in the twenty-four schools were contacted. Information about the project was sent to the principals, who forwarded written information about the research study in general and ethical issues in particular to those concerned, that is to staff members, students and parents. The informants were informed that it was voluntary to participate.

### **Research instruments**

The decision to study twenty-four schools in twelve municipalities, and the fact that ten researchers were to make the studies necessitated some decisions to be made. One decision was to collect data via interviews and questionnaires, and

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.codex.vr.se/codex\\_eng/codex/index.html](http://www.codex.vr.se/codex_eng/codex/index.html)

to collect official data about the chosen schools and municipalities. The resources did not allow for long-term observations to be made.

Each participant entered the project with their own specific topic of interest. All were invited to construct their own research questions. The project members discussed each interview question and questionnaire item. The aim was to facilitate interviewees to give nuanced answers and thereby possibly increase the qualitative variations (Kvale 1997). In sum, the research questions were scrutinized, tested and validated by the research group.

The research group thereafter produced the research instruments together based on the final questions. The interview manual and the questionnaire contained questions on background data such as gender, age, educational background, and professional experience of the respondents. Further, the interview manual and the questionnaire covered a wide array of issues. Besides questions on successful principal leadership and the prerequisites for it, questions for example on communication, school goals, staff development, cooperation, quality enhancement, governing, efficiency, readiness capacities, and leadership styles were included. Moreover, observation protocols were decided on in the project group. The observation protocols were to be used by the research teams during the 2.5 day long visits to each school to document on-site observations of leadership, structure and culture. In addition, statistical data about each school were included in the observation protocols, for example the number of students and the number of staff.

The research instruments were used at the first data gathering in six schools in three municipalities. Afterwards an evaluation was made accompanied by a shortening of the questionnaires.

### **Data gathering**

The empirical data were gathered by the three research teams who visited four municipalities and eight schools each. The teams, consisting of one or two senior researchers and two doctoral students in each team, spent 2.5 days in each school between September 2005 and February 2006. The data collection in all twenty-four schools and twelve school districts included interviews, questionnaires, on-site-observation, and official data. All interviews took place in the schools and a recording apparatus was utilized. The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers to the informants and were for the most part collected before the research group left the school or school district. Observations concerning structure, culture and leadership were made at each school and an observation protocol was filled out for each school. The respondents in schools, districts and municipalities were:

- principals and deputy principals: individual interviews and questionnaires

- teachers: individual interviews with five teachers<sup>18</sup> in each school and questionnaires to all teachers who taught students in year nine
- students: individual and group interviews with up to ten fifteen-year-olds in Year 9. All fifteen year-olds that were present filled in the questionnaire on social objectives
- superintendents and area heads: individual interviews and questionnaires
- chairperson of the municipal school board (political): individual interviews and questionnaires
- members of the municipal school board (political): questionnaire

The partly structured interviews were fairly extensive. The teachers were selected by the principal or deputy principal, given our overall aim to identify factors of success. Out of the 120 teachers selected 119 teacher interviews were conducted as were interviews with all principals and deputy principals, altogether 36. Separate questionnaires were filled out by all groups of informants. All but two deputy principals filled in the questionnaire, one due to sick-leave, the other due to being new in the position and having part-time employment. The questionnaire was answered by 393 teachers and the response rate was 63.2 %. While a higher response rate would obviously have been desirable, there are several factors that may explain the drop-out rate. First, the questionnaire was anonymous due to ethical considerations, which resulted in the impossibility of making specific, individual requests for unturned-in questionnaires. Second, the questionnaire was extensive and teachers had to answer, at least in part, the questionnaire on their free time between lessons. Third, the questionnaire was on the whole answered only by teachers who were present on the 2.5 days when the study was conducted. Some part-time teachers and teachers on sick-leave did not answer the questionnaire. Given these factors, the response rate is considered to be satisfactory. Most (90 %) of the teachers who answered the questionnaire had a workload of 80 % or more and only 5 % had been in the school less than a year.

All interviews with principals and teachers were transcribed. The questionnaires were entered on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## The thesis

This is a retrospective description of a long process. In the beginning of the project many necessary discussions and many long hours were involved over such issues as the ethical considerations, the choice of municipalities and

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<sup>18</sup> The five interviewed teachers taught the following subjects: Swedish and a foreign language, mathematics and science, social studies, practical and artistic subjects, and remedial teaching.

schools, the creation of questionnaire items and interview manuals, and various practical issues. Simultaneously the readings and discussions in the doctoral courses were going on.

This thesis examines success in relation to principal leadership in Swedish secondary schools. Several decisions had to be made initially. One concerned the data gathering. To gather, analyze and bring together both quantitative and qualitative data provides possibilities (Bryman 1997). Thus, I decided to use interview questions<sup>19</sup> and questionnaire items<sup>20</sup> to gather data, the options offered within the project. Knowledge about the interviewees' opinions about success in relation to principal leadership was obtained through interviews with teachers and principals. To gain knowledge calls for the interplay between the interviewee and the interviewer to develop and for the interviewer to be attentive to what is said (Kvale 1997). Furthermore, for each of the nine interviewers to be able to pose my questions and also relevant follow-up questions to meet my purpose with each question, the above described research group discussions about each research question proved productive. All project members were to a high degree acquainted with each other's questions. The usage of questionnaire items provided possibilities for me to identify answer patterns that emerged from a group of respondents answering the same research questions with given response alternatives (Esaiasson et al. 2004). The data, whether in words or in numbers, contributed with valuable aspects of successful principal leadership (Åsberg 2001). Moreover, the four studies have complemented each other.

The object of study in this thesis is the principal. Principal leadership is both a practiced and an experienced phenomenon in a school (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis 2008). Therefore not only principals but also teachers were my main informants. The gathering of data from teachers - not only from principals - is quite important, since principals may tend to overestimate their own accomplishment (Mulford et al. 2007). Teachers are more likely to have the most authentic information about their principals' leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008). It is important to note that what is measured is not actual principal behaviour but teachers' perceptions of how their principals behave (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis 2008). The intentions, perspectives and strategies of the principal as an actor are not observable as such but rather are seen through interpretations (Lindblad et al. 1999), interpretations for which I am responsible. In addition, background data about principals and teachers were drawn from interviews, questionnaires and on-site observation protocols. General data about the schools were drawn from statistical sources and on-site observation protocols.

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<sup>19</sup> Interview questions to teachers and principals, see appendix 1.

<sup>20</sup> Questionnaire items to the teachers, see appendix 2.

I am looking for success. Am I therefore looking for ‘best practice’? Yes in the sense that policies, theories and research findings have informed my understanding of what a successful principal does, but not in the sense of *one* recipe for success. The national objectives and obligations need to be interpreted and realized so they benefit student learning. In line with the idea behind decentralization principals have the power and responsibility to adapt the expectations to local school needs. This means that *how* these are realized is up to principals to decide. Therefore this thesis is informed both by policy and research points of departure and by empirical data of what principals are said to do and how they are said to do it. Consequently, in this thesis the analysis, and the conclusions drawn, emanate from an interplay between inductive and deductive starting-points as discussed by Hyldgaard (2008).

My area of interest, principal leadership, has been studied from various aspects by other project members. Many of the individually formulated questions overlap, providing opportunities to validate the findings. The project group has been accessible and open to mirroring my interpretations against the interpretations of the others. I agree with Silverman who argues that

*where there is more than one researcher, debate about what you are seeing and hearing is never just about collecting data - it is data analysis (Silverman 2003, p. 356).*

In addition, I have had the opportunity to present findings at conferences in Sweden and abroad, which has broadened my horizons and provided me with valuable comments, suggestions and critique. I have further had the opportunity to discuss my research with recognized professors within the field of educational administration, both in general and concerning specific details.

The research presented in my four articles was conducted in twenty-six secondary schools. The first study is presented in Article I: *Success as equivalence - The Swedish case* (Törnsén 2008). The data collection was made in two secondary schools in one municipality in the spring of 2005 prior to the selection of the twenty-four project schools. The choice of the two schools was based on them producing good academic outcomes. The main reason not to await the selection of project schools was to effectively use the time available for my doctoral studies. The study gave me an opportunity to formulate and test my research questions. One aim with the study was to found an empirical starting-point for further studies on success. Interviews were therefore conducted with principals and two teachers in both schools and the questions posed were: What is a successful school to you? What is a successful principal to you? What does a successful principal do? Follow-up questions were posed based on the answers given. The analysis of the empirical data and the comparisons made between schools resulted in an empirically based categorization of success. Moreover, the findings led to certain decisions.

First, I decided, based on the disparate findings in the two schools henceforth to relate findings to school outcomes in all studies within the project (made possible due to the aforementioned categorization) (Ahlström & Höög 2009, forthcoming; Höög 2009, forthcoming). In consequence the outcome of principals' work is in this thesis defined as school outcomes. The third research question, 'Do the leadership processes relate to successful academic and social outcomes of schools?' arises here. One argument for this research question is the policy criteria of a successful principal as responsible for school outcomes (Lpo94 1994). Second, the decision was to include a question: 'What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership?' This decision was again based on the identified differences between the two schools and principals within seemingly comparable external prerequisites. Third, it was decided to use the national curriculum as a point of reference based on the differences identified between the two principals and schools.

The second study is reported on in Article II: *Keys to successful leadership – High support to capable and versatile principals* (Törnsén 2009a). The main research question posed is: What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership? For the study twenty-four principals in the twenty-four secondary projectschools were interviewed on the prerequisites that provide or do not provide opportunities for their success. Since the focus of this thesis is on what a successful principal does and achieves in terms of successful school outcomes it seemed relevant to ask principals about their opinion about prerequisites for their success. To measure what I wanted to measure, only the questions on prerequisites for success are analyzed. Article II provides empirical data on both internal prerequisites (the particular characteristics of individual principals) and external prerequisites operating within the Swedish educational environment that provide, or do not provide, prerequisites for success. However, the subjectively experienced possibilities and limitations are not necessarily the only, nor the most significant, limitations, but rather are the ones that the interviewees thought of at the time of the interviews. A comparison is made of principals' statements on prerequisites for successful principal leadership in the four types of schools (*A/S, A/s, a/S, and a/s schools*). The analysis and the presentation of the prerequisites for principals' success are theoretically categorized as external and internal. Through the external factors the societal and structural prerequisites are taken into consideration. Through the internal factors the actors and their characteristics are considered. By taking both into account this researcher acknowledges the complexities involved in successful principal leadership in schools.

The third study developed into Article III: *Principal leadership, national responsibilities and successful school outcomes* (Törnsén 2009b). The criteria for success were selected by me as a researcher. The national curriculum and more specifically the "Responsibility of the School Head" and the objectives and

obligations of school principals presented there were seen as criteria of success and, as such, were turned into questionnaire items. 393 teachers in the twenty-four schools estimated their principals' degree of taking responsibility for national objectives and obligations, through filling in one section in the teachers' questionnaire. The data was processed through usage of 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS). For Article III sixteen items in the teachers' questionnaire were analyzed.<sup>21</sup> The main question in this article is 'Does a relationship exist between the degree to which principals take responsibility for the sixteen national objectives and obligations and the schools producing good academic and social outcomes?' A comparison is therefore made between teachers' estimate of principals' leadership in relation to the academic and social outcomes of the four groups of schools (*A/S, A/s, a/S, and a/s schools*). A qualitative analysis of the quantitative data followed. (The procedures are described in more detail in Article III.)

The fourth study is presented in Article IV: *Strategies, accountability and democratic values: A successful principal in a Swedish school* (Törnsén 2009c). My research group made the studies in this particular municipality, school district and school. The five days in the municipality and the 2.5 days in this school (2.5 days in the other school) were spent conducting interviews, distributing questionnaires, writing observation protocols together, walking around in the school building, participating in conferences, making classroom visits, having coffee and informal talks in the teachers' lounge, and talking to students and parents on a parents' evening gathering – all of which provided me with a lot of data! The starting-point for the article was first the success of this school in terms of successful academic and social outcomes. Second, the principal was described successful. Third, the findings in Article II on the importance of district level prerequisites and support led to an examination of the role of these district leaders based on interview data. The analysis of the data provided evidence of the district level providing prerequisites for principals' success. Therefore I decided to elucidate the strategies of this successful principal in areas verified by teachers, supported by observation data, but also in part mirrored against district level prerequisites. The two-hour long interviews with five teachers, the deputy principal and the principal were the main source of data.

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<sup>21</sup> Questionnaire items to the teachers, see appendix 2.

## D. SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLES

This section contains a summary of the four articles. In the final part of the thesis the articles are presented in full.

### I Success as Equivalence - The Swedish Case

This first article introduces a three-dimensional view on success defined as access to schooling, as learning opportunities inside schools, and as successful academic and social outcomes. A framework for success in schools in terms of success at entry, stay and exit is developed, related to calls for national equivalence in education. The three dimensions namely represent what Swedish students according to the Education Act are entitled to ‘irrespective of gender, geographic residence and social and financial circumstances.’

The empirical data utilized in this article were collected through interviews with principals and teachers in two Swedish secondary schools in one school district. The students in these two schools have similar access to schooling, and both schools at the time of the study had good academic outcomes.

The aim of the article is to conceptualize and analyze perceptions of success held by principals and teachers in the two secondary schools. The study implicitly concerns success at stay, i.e., learning opportunities inside schools for students in terms of principals’ and schools’ processes. The two schools are compared as regards similarities and differences in perceptions of success.

The situational aspects of principal leadership are initially recognized through the deliberate choice of two schools that have similar national and district level demands and prerequisites. The analysis of the responses is influenced by frame-factor theoretical thinking in considering the relation between frames, processes, and results. External frame factors emanating from the decentralized and partly deregulated governing system in general and specifically the concept of equivalence in education and principals’ national objectives and obligations constitute the analytical framework, parallel to providing the overall contextual setting of the study. The responses concerning success and principal leadership are further analyzed in relation to current research on successful leadership practices.

The findings on how success is perceived show strong consensus within schools but a remarkable difference between the two schools. A similarity is that both schools and principals are regarded successful by the respondents. The main difference concerns descriptions of successful principal leadership

processes and successful processes inside schools concerning teaching and learning, both examples of success at stay. The teaching and learning processes in school B reflect national policy expectations to a high degree. The principal in school B takes responsibility for national objectives and obligations and her practices match research findings on successful principal leadership practices. In school A, however, both teaching and learning processes and principal leadership practices are weakly aligned with current policy expectations and research on success. Still, principal leadership no doubt matters in both schools. The main impression is that a common culture does not imply that national policy expectations and research based successful leadership practices are in place.

To conclude, success is perceived very differently and leadership and school processes in the two schools are carried out differently despite similar external demands and prerequisites. The two principals' dispositions in the accounting for the nature of successful practices differed. Implications for the national level and for the district level as responsible for schools and principals are discussed through critical questions being raised: How differently can schools be led, and principals still be considered successful? How different can processes inside schools be, and still be considered successful? Can all processes be considered successful as long as good academic outcomes are produced? The academic outcomes indicate that both schools in this study are successful schools. The questions touch upon consequences for equivalence in education and the possible implications for students.

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## II Keys to Successful School Leadership - High Support to Capable and Versatile Principals

What are the prerequisites for principals' success within secondary school settings in the Swedish decentralized educational system? According to a frame-factor theoretical way of thinking both internal and external frame factors influence principals' leadership processes either by promoting or inhibiting these. This article examines twenty-four secondary school principals' perceptions of prerequisites for principals' success. It reports on factors that promote and/or inhibit principals' success according to the interviewed principals. A comparison is made of the factors described by principals' in the four different types of schools (*A/S*, *A/s*, *a/S*, and *a/s* schools). A special interest is taken in the factors described by the principals in the five successful schools (*A/S* school), due to the findings reported in Article III, where these principals

are in comparison estimated as more successful in fulfilling national responsibilities than principals in the three other types of schools.

The findings indicate that capable and versatile principals can promote their own success. As known from earlier research, these respondents find a principal who is passionate, motivated, and knowledgeable as regards tasks, people, and change, as promoting her/his own success. Nineteen of the respondents are former teachers, while five are not. Both pros and cons of being a former teacher are identified when attempts are made to change school cultures that involve resistance. Consequences are described as culture awareness versus culture blindness, and trust, legitimacy, credibility versus the lack of it. Teachers' dispositions to task, people, and change can promote but also undermine the success of principals for example through resistance to change. The national level is a recognized sender of goals and objectives for principals and schools to attend to and is recognized as a provider of support through the National Head Teacher Program. Whether the ongoing national inspections will be experienced as support is something for which this study does not provide evidence. In conclusion, these principals expect a successful principal to handle various challenges whether these depend on the principal or on external factors. However, the external factors in terms of working conditions provided by the districts are of importance. A too wide area of responsibility, lack of time, and lack of support can inhibit success. To sum up, the twenty-four principals with 211 years of experience have high expectations on themselves, their personal and professional characteristics. Furthermore, they identify the working conditions provided by the district level as factors determining their success. No apparent difference is identified between the opinions on prerequisites for success held by principals in the four types of schools (*A/S, A/s, a/S, and a/s* schools).

Despite the complexities involved, two conclusions are drawn. First, for districts to have successful principals it is first important to recruit the 'right' persons, the capable and versatile principal, through implementing a high quality hiring process. Second, districts have to provide a great degree of support and a limited area of responsibility to the capable and versatile principals.

At the time of the interviews many of the twenty-four principals struggled with experienced imbalance between demands and prerequisites for success. Parallel researchers foresee a threat to democratic values and leadership by adopting neo-liberal models of leadership and practices. The article closes by discussing possible consequences for the quality of leadership and schools.

To be published: *The Educational Forum* (In press).

### III Principal Leadership, National Responsibilities and Successful School Outcomes

As mandated by the Swedish national curriculum, the criteria for a school to be successful are that it produces good academic outcomes and that it produces good social outcomes. The purpose of this article is to draw a link between school success in terms of those two outcomes and the degree to which the school principal, according to the teachers' perceptions, understands and adheres to the goals and responsibilities that are set out in the Swedish national curriculum. Thus, principals' success is in this article related to national demands as well as to successful academic and social school outcomes.

The article focuses on one paragraph in the text of the national curriculum, namely, the paragraph entitled 'Responsibility of the School Head' that sets out the objectives and obligations of school principals. In response to a questionnaire, 393 teachers in the twenty-four secondary schools (*A/S*, *A/s*, *a/S*, and *a/s* schools) assessed to what extent their school principals fulfil sixteen of the responsibilities as set out in the stated national objectives and obligations. The responsibilities can be expected to show to some degree as principal processes. The teachers are likely to have information of the degree to which their principal takes responsibility for the objectives and obligations. Further, the teachers, in one way or another, should be involved in realizing the objectives and obligations in practice, by themselves or together with the principal. The data was processed through usage of 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS). Thereafter a qualitative analysis of the quantitative data followed.

The findings show, not surprisingly, that the twenty-four principals adopt some of the sixteen responsibilities to a higher degree than others. For example, they take responsibility as heads of teaching staff to a high degree, but to a lower degree act as pedagogical leaders and as providers of staff professional development. Further they attend to social objectives to a high degree, but engage less in teaching and learning of academic objectives. Despite the lower degree of engagement in academic objectives, these principals are estimated to take responsibility for school outcomes to a high degree, according to the teachers, which is a somewhat contradictory finding.

When comparing the principals in the four types of schools interesting findings become apparent. The conclusion drawn from the study is that, according to their teachers, the principals in the five successful schools (*A/S* i.e. strong academic/strong social) carried out the nationally-mandated responsibilities and goals to a greater degree than principals in less successful schools (*A/s*, *a/S*, and *a/s* schools). A possible link between *A/S* school principals' leadership processes inside schools and school outcomes is identified. A startling difference appears between principals in academically strong schools.

Principals in *A/S* schools (strong academic/strong social) are seen by teachers as generally meeting national objectives to a greater degree than principals in *A/s* schools (strong academic/weak social). This indicates differences in leadership processes in *A/S* and *A/s* schools. Furthermore, two patterns of concurrence are identified. In schools judged by students as successful in relation to social goals (*A/S* and *a/S* schools) the principals are judged by teachers as taking responsibility at a higher degree for national objectives and obligations. The successful implementation of social goals indicates a successful interaction between the principal and an extended teacher and school culture. In schools however judged by students as less successful in relation to social goals (*A/s* and *a/s* schools) the principals are judged by teachers as taking responsibility to a lower degree for national objectives and obligations. This less successful implementation of social goals indicates a less successful interaction between the principal and a limited teacher and school culture.

The findings are discussed within the context of national policy implementation in the Swedish decentralized educational system. The role and responsibility of the national policy makers, the district level leaders, and the individual principals is elaborated on. The differences between principal leadership processes in the four types of schools are discussed as possibly creating consequences for equivalence in education.

Resubmitted to *International Studies in Educational Administration* (March, 2009).

## IV Strategies, Accountability and Democratic Values: A Successful Principal in a Swedish School

This article examines the leadership strategies used by a successful principal in Anderson Secondary school, which is one of the five successful *A/S* schools. The subject of the study is a principal who had already been identified as a successful principal in the study presented in Article III. The secondary school that she leads shows important and measurable success in raising student achievement levels and also demonstrates both good academic and good social outcomes. Interviews are conducted with the principal, the deputy principal, district leaders, and with teachers. The district leaders provide a coherent description of the district level expectations on principals and of the prerequisites for principals' success provided by the district.

The identified strategies of the successful principal are analyzed in relation to a core set of basic leadership practices identified within the 'International Successful School Principal Project'. The five categories of basic leadership practices are: building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, managing the teaching and

learning program, and coalition building. The practices have value in almost all educational contexts but are, in this article, adapted to Swedish circumstances. First, the strategies are analyzed from the perspective of Swedish principals being held accountable for both financial matters and for teachers' and students' performances. Second, the strategies are analyzed from the obligation of Swedish principals to instil democratic values and provide democratic leadership. The main and final question posed in this article is: Do the leadership strategies, including those dealing with accountability, of the successful principal reflect the value of democracy being the basis of education and leadership?

The findings show that this principal uses a mosaic of strategies in the exercise of her leadership. Both strategies used by the principal in situations outside Anderson Secondary and strategies used inside Anderson Secondary are identified. Her strategies reflect the basic core practices identified internationally as successful leadership practices. The study turned out to be a story of success despite frequent and continuous pressures. In fact, the study showed that the principal's attitude towards and actions taken in relation to external and internal demands and problems were instrumental in promoting continuous improvement. Not only did the principal accept responsibility and accountability for finances, she accepted responsibility and accountability for student and teacher performances. The overall guiding characteristic of this successful principal's leadership, according to the respondents in this study, was a democratic leadership manifested through collaboration, dialogue and boundary-setting. The successful principal, according to this study, adopts a strategy in which she exercises democratic authority without being authoritarian.

To be published: *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration* (Summer, 2009) Vol. 7(4), p.1-8.

## E. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Prior to drawing conclusions a question arises: What conclusions concerning principals' leadership in other secondary schools can be drawn from these findings, based on empirical studies in twenty-six secondary schools? As a reminder, within the SCL project one selected school in each municipality was academically above the national mean and the other was below. In that aspect these schools represent the majority of Swedish secondary schools. The findings can therefore be of value for principals in other schools. Since the municipalities represent different geographical location, size and political majority the identified municipal/district level prerequisites for principals' success can offer some insights to municipalities in general.

### **Prerequisites for successful principal leadership**

In this thesis the prerequisites are discussed as being both internal and external. The internal prerequisites refer to characteristics of individuals; the external prerequisites refer mainly to current Swedish educational circumstances. What is it that provides or does not provide possibilities for principal leadership to be successful?

External prerequisites related to national and municipal (district) levels constitute one category. The overall situation is recognized by these principals as demanding and complex. The principals seemingly accept the national ideological governance of schools and principals via the national curriculum and other steering documents. This shows through references to the documents, their emphasis on the importance of being knowledgeable in the area, and finally they describe the National Head Teacher Program as of importance. The rhetorical compliance with national objectives and obligations does not to high degree show in practice in all the twenty-four schools. For example, the specific expectations on principals, the 'Responsibility of the School Head' (Lpo94 1994, pp. 17-18), can be expected to have an impact on principals' and school processes. However, and not surprising, some of the objectives and obligations have been implemented and perhaps institutionalized principal processes to a higher degree, while others to a lower degree (Törnsén 2009b). The ideological impact is obviously stronger than the objective realization (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). (Further see the discussions under 'Principal leadership processes' and 'School outcomes and principal leadership'.)

Besides the national documents, these principals, it can be noted, did not mention factors that are outside their realm of influence, such as public-independent school competition, the students' socioeconomic backgrounds, and national inspections, as providing or not providing possibilities for success. In consequence, the national governance through control via evaluations and inspections is not mentioned as a factor that provides possibilities for success. Furthermore, these principals do not bring forward other neo-liberal components as providing possibilities for success. As said earlier, these subjectively experienced possibilities and limitations are not necessarily the only, nor the most significant, limitations, but rather are the ones that the interviewees thought of at the time of the interviews. However, without doubt, these principals attend to for example the writing of quality reviews and the analysis of school outcomes. To that, twelve of the twenty-four schools had been inspected at the time of our studies. The intentions from the national formulation arena may not be understood, and the gap between the formulation arena and the arena of realization (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000) be a 'knowledge gap' and/or an 'interpretation gap'. On the other hand the intentions from the national formulation arena may be understood and realized as demands, however not regarded as support and in consequence not as providing possibilities for principals' success. The tendency in Sweden is an ongoing transition from an emphasis on governing by goals to an emphasis on governing by results through control.

The principals in the main identify prerequisites of importance that are within their own realm of influence, such as themselves, teachers and municipal/district level. The municipal prerequisites can serve to promote principals' success (Törnsén 2009a). A sufficiently large enough area of responsibilities and access to support staff in their school and on municipal level fosters success by providing time which, if spent with teachers, students, parents and others, is a prerequisite for success. In other words, the organizational frames are of importance. These have a relation to the financial governance of schools which is a municipal responsibility. At Anderson Secondary, a successful school, the successful principal experiences district level prerequisites both as supports and demands (Törnsén 2009c). The municipal and district level demands and expectations are aligned with national demands and expectations, and are accompanied by expectations for implementation in Anderson Secondary. The link established between the political leaders, the superintendent and district level leaders, and principals has resulted in a collaborative culture. The principal receives adequate resources, gets professional development for principals and teachers, and in addition has access to support staff. For example, she had the mandated authority and the financial means to recruit a deputy principal when her workload increased due to the school's increased enrolment. At the same time she has municipal and/or

district level assignments and meetings to attend to, which represent the reverse of the medal, since her absence from the school leads to criticism from some teachers.

The role of the district and district level leaders is not as clear, judged by the descriptions in the two cases in Article I (Törnsén 2008). Principal A communicates the importance of meeting district level expectations, while the national expectations are not recognized. Principal B bases her leadership on national objectives and obligations, while the district is hardly mentioned. The principals do not communicate and Principal A does not provide data of the district level leaders in their district having demands accompanied by support to implement national objectives and obligations, as is the case in the district where Anderson Secondary is situated.

The issue on municipal prerequisites is not new, and the findings in this study point in the same direction as other studies. District level prerequisites matter. The data from a U.S. study suggest that the effects of district leadership 'help to create district conditions that are viewed by school leaders as enhancing and supporting their work' (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008, p. 521). In Swedish reviews of principal leadership in the decentralized environment, insufficient or inadequate prerequisites are pointed out by national evaluators (Skolverket 1999). In inspection reports, critiques have been directed towards municipalities at times to provide prerequisites for principal leadership (Skolverket 2007). A current OECD report identifies the need for principals to have time, capacity, and support, in addition to having defined and delimited core responsibilities (Pont et al. 2008). To complicate it even further, principals and schools would probably benefit by individualized support and demands. *A/S* schools and principals do not have the same needs as the three other types of schools and their principals (Törnsén 2009b).

Principals' internal prerequisites for success constitute another perspective. These principals expect themselves to manage the overall situation, even if a few have somewhat given up. This deals with how principals perceive or experience the given prerequisites, whether national expectations, district level demands and support, or characteristics of people and the overall situation inside their schools. In Anderson Secondary, a successful school, the challenges and dilemmas are treated as possibilities, not as an obstacle that turns into an excuse not to act (Törnsén 2009c).

What goes on inside schools matters as well as what teachers bring to the school. The teachers personality and motivation, and principals as well as their teachers being task-, change and people-oriented promotes principals' success, while informal leaders and resistance to change do not (Törnsén 2009a). Furthermore, the relation between principals and teachers, reciprocal trust and cooperation with staff is seen as important by several of the twenty-four

principals. But, the three leaderships analyzed in Articles I and IV offer differing perspectives on trust and cooperation with teachers.

Principal A and B in Article I are seen as successful by the teachers (Törnsén 2008), as is the principal in Anderson Secondary (Törnsén 2009c). Reciprocal trust exists and principals cooperate with staff. The reciprocal trust and cooperation is by Principal A based primarily on personal, not professional relations since it is not guided by the national task, and attends to pedagogical leadership and teaching and learning to low degree. On the contrary, Principal B's school and Anderson Secondary both demonstrate trust and cooperation based on professional relations and roles and responsibilities guided by the national curriculum.

A principal's educational background and working experience is discussed as determining success. Whether having been a teacher before becoming a principal promotes success or not is uncertain. However, it does seem that a teaching experience may provide possibilities in relation to teachers in critical decision-making situations and in relation to legitimacy and trust. Consequences of having versus not having a teaching background can be described in terms of culture awareness versus culture blindness, and trust, legitimacy, credibility versus lack of it (Törnsén 2009a). The ongoing renewal of the Education Act and the emphasized calls for principal accountability for school outcomes opens up for speculations around whether changes to the Education Act will be made concerning qualifications for being a principal. In one Swedish research review it is argued that having another background than from teaching can provide possibilities to make change (Ekholm et al. 2000). In any case, the issue is an interesting research question.

The principals identify additional qualities residing in themselves as of importance. The principals as a group say that they promote success by their internal states, for example, by being passionate, motivated, and knowledgeable as regards their task, how to handle people, how to make change - all factors known from earlier research. To be knowledgeable about the national task of schools and principals is mentioned as important for success (Törnsén 2009a). The national ideological and legal governing of schools, their teachers and principals through the curriculum and other documents are important prerequisites according to the interviewed principals, as is the National Head Teacher Program. Does this show as principals' and school processes?

### **Principal leadership processes**

What conclusions can be drawn from the data in reference to national expectations for pedagogical leadership? The conclusions are here drawn in relation to the two indispensable and complementary definitions of pedagogical leadership described in Section B. First, pedagogical leadership is defined as *'providing prerequisites for teaching and learning'*, a leadership involved in the

core processes of schooling through creating an infrastructure conducive both to teachers' work with teaching and learning and to student learning and outcomes. Second, pedagogical leadership is defined as *'leading teaching and learning'*, a leadership directly involved in the core processes of schooling through for example classroom visits, feedback to teachers, and the analysis of student academic and social outcomes in relation to the interactions between teachers and students in the teaching and learning processes. These are means by which the principal can support, challenge and develop teachers at the core of their work.

The five principals in successful *A/S* schools provide prerequisites for teaching and learning to a greater degree than principals in the other types of schools since they are judged overall to attend to national objectives and obligations more than the others. Pedagogical leadership as a distinct and separate task, directly involved in the core processes of schooling, was not to a high degree seen by the group of twenty-four principals to be a major responsibility. The five *A/S* school principals, however, attend to the role as leaders of teaching and learning to a higher degree than all the others (Törnsén 2009b). This implies that processes inside *A/S* schools are aligned with national expectations to a high degree. In consequence, the national ideas in the 1994 curriculum have been implemented to a higher degree in *A/S* schools than in for example *A/s* schools which still produce good academic outcomes but, according to students, are less successful when it comes to social outcomes. This different degree of pedagogical leadership and consequences of the varying degrees of implementation reflect principals' different positions regarding structure and culture in *A/S* versus *A/s* schools.

How do these principals, who are part of the governing system, understand national expectations? Rhetorical agreement was seen between principals but the degree of realization varies. The reasons are many, but essentially we can say that principals in successful schools are more successful in this area. Why do not all principals adopt national expectations? Some of the principals may have considered that the objectives and obligations do not meet local school needs (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000; Rönnerberg 2007). Others may have seen the expectations as unattainable and therefore have replaced them with other more attainable goals (Wildavsky 1979). Still, for others may be resisting school culture.

The question is how different can processes inside schools be, and continue to be considered successful? Despite the small variation in the selection of schools, differences are shown regarding principals' processes in relation to school outcomes (*A/S*, *A/s*, *a/S* and *a/s* schools). One could argue that this is what can be expected since principals have the right to adjust national expectations to local needs. Furthermore, equivalence in education implies not only to equality but also to freedom to decide how to realize objectives and

obligations (Törnsén 2008). From the perspective of equivalence at stay, that is, successful learning opportunities inside schools, the variations are of interest. District level follow-ups and evaluations of processes and outcomes could possibly provide useful data.

The two definitions of pedagogical leadership, as *'providing prerequisites for teaching and learning'* and as *'leading teaching and learning'*, can be productive. The categorization provides a bird's-eye view on principals' pedagogical leadership. The broader definition can however be interpreted as including everything a principal does. To be considered as pedagogical leadership, the prerequisites should make possible and be conducive to the improvement of teaching and learning processes and to the outcomes of teaching and learning. The more narrow definition directs the principal to the core processes of schooling - teaching and learning, which traditionally has been, and in some of the schools in this study still is the teachers' domain, which may be a problem. The principals' affect on student outcomes is indirect, thus for principals to influence student outcomes they must work with teachers, who have a direct affect on student outcomes. Since teachers affect student learning through teaching and learning processes, principals need to involve themselves in these processes. For principals to define and carry out pedagogical leadership both as *'providing prerequisites for teaching and learning'* and as *'leading teaching and learning'*, thus become means by which the principal can influence the state of things inside schools and classrooms.

The role as pedagogical leader will be realized as it is understood by the principal. In other words, the 'role perception' of principals matters. If they think it is part of their work as principals and pedagogical leaders to affect what is going on in relation to teaching and learning, they are more likely to enter into the traditional teacher domain. If they do not, then the 'invisible contract' (Berg 1999b, p. 131) may still be implicitly signed in some schools. The different approaches to teacher and school culture may reflect separate 'prerequisite perceptions'. For example, the teacher and school culture may be used as an explanation or even an excuse not to act by some principals, while successful principals work actively with the structure and culture of a school. The findings overall indicate that pedagogical leadership is an area of development and further research.

How do the principals' processes relate to successful school outcomes? Since principals are held accountable for school outcomes it is relevant to analyze and discuss findings on principal and school processes in relation to what the schools achieve in terms of academic and social outcomes.

### **School outcomes and principal leadership**

This attempt to link leadership to student outcomes is a challenge. There are many possible prerequisites available that possibly can affect student outcomes.

In consequence, the findings of these studies cannot account for the actual affect of principals' leadership on school outcomes. Nevertheless, as a researcher it is still necessary to examine despite the difficulties involved concerning the relation between such factors as principal processes and school outcomes.

What processes account for successful outcomes? What do outcomes reveal about processes? Specific findings constitute the bases of the conclusions drawn. First, the comparisons in Article III identify differences between principals' adherence to national objectives and obligations in successful and less successful schools. Second, the assessments made by students on how well the social objectives are met, which together with the academic achievements constitute the ranking of schools into four groups (Figure 1).

The principals in the successful schools (*A/S*) overall take more responsibility for their national objectives and obligations than do principals in less successful schools. In practice, the teachers in the *A/S* schools experience leadership to a higher extent in relation to national goals, processes and outcomes (Törnsén 2009b).

Patterns of concurrence are identified related to the implementation (or not) of social goals. In schools judged by students as successful in relation to social goals (*A/S* and *a/S* schools) the principals are judged by teachers as taking responsibility to a higher degree for national objectives and obligations. In practice, the students in the *A/S* and *a/S* schools experience teaching and learning processes related to social objectives to a higher extent than students in *A/s* and *a/s* schools. Thus, the *A/S* schools have not only achieved good academic outcomes but also successfully realized social objectives in by tradition academic-oriented secondary schools. The implementation calls for interpretation, dialogues and collaboration inside schools, between principals and teachers (Linde 2006; Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). The implementation of the social goals provide possibilities to expand by tradition academic secondary school culture to an extended culture accomplished through and characterized by principal-teacher collaboration. The fact that principals are judged to take responsibility to a high degree for national goals, processes and school outcomes indicates an indirect affect by principals on school outcomes. The findings are similar to Australian reports on school leadership as indirectly related, through school capacity, to student outcomes and especially to social goals (Mulford et al. 2007).

In schools judged by students as less successful in relation to social goals (*A/s* and *a/s* schools) the principals are judged by teachers as taking responsibility to a lower degree for national objectives and obligations. In comparison, the principals in academically strong but socially weaker *A/s* schools are judged to take responsibility to a lower degree for national goals, processes and school outcomes than foremost the successful *A/S* school principals. This indicates *A/s* schools have less interaction around the social goals in specific, and a principal

less engaged in national goals, processes and outcomes in general. The findings imply a gap between the arena of formulation and the arena of realization, and perhaps lack of interpretation on the transformation arena (Linde 2006; Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000). In consequence, good academic outcomes neither suggest the school attending to the content and processes of social goals nor imply principal leadership aligned with national expectations.

In Article I both schools have good academic outcomes. When compared, however, the two schools show obvious differences as regards leadership, structure and culture. The social objectives are in school A talked about as feeling comfortable and happy and as peace and order, by tradition viewed as signs of a good school. In school B behaviours towards each other as well as student influence and citizenship is discussed. The question is how the students would judge the two schools in regard to the realization of social goals. The difficulty of measuring and comparing social outcomes raises questions about municipal evaluations and follow-ups on the matter. Has the responsible municipality recognized the differences between school A and B concerning principal leadership and school processes or have the good academic outcomes blocked the view (Törnsén 2008)?

The social objectives matter because these are part of what students are supposed to learn in Swedish schools besides the academic objectives. The findings indicate the importance of attending to social goals not only to promote student learning, but also to contribute to principal-staff relations in secondary schools, relations which can have a positive impact on the work with academic objectives as well. The implementation of social goals requires collaborative interpretation. The realization of social objectives has implications for processes inside schools. In consequence, school success and the ultimate outcome of principal leadership defined as both academic and social outcomes is of interest not only from an outcome perspective but also from a process perspective.

## Concluding discussion

A successful school is in the SCL project defined as a school that produces good academic and social outcomes. The first article in this thesis broadened the definition of success. By taking a student perspective on success a framework for success was developed based on calls for equivalence in education in terms of success at entry, stay and exit. In closing this thesis I will return to the framework.

It matters which secondary school a student attends. The findings in this thesis raise questions on equivalence at stay, considering the identified differences in leadership and school processes. The different principal and school processes entail consequences for student learning and outcomes. The

findings further raise questions on equivalence at stay and exit, considering that social goals are not measured and compared in Sweden. The findings here point at consequences both in relation to learning opportunities inside schools and in relation to school outcomes. Furthermore, the findings raise questions on equivalence at stay and exit, considering that academic outcomes are not automatically predictors of learning opportunities inside schools taking place in relation to social goals. Academic grades cannot consequently be seen as the sole criteria of a successful school.

Principals and teachers are responsible for student learning (at stay) and student outcomes (at exit). Through working with teachers principals can affect student outcomes. To enhance student learning principals on one hand can attend to providing prerequisites conducive to teaching and learning. On the other hand principals can involve in leading teaching and learning through conducting classroom visits and providing feedback to teachers regarding teaching and learning processes. Both approaches are in this thesis seen as pedagogical leadership.

A principal cannot single-handedly succeed. Several other circumstances are crucial to principals' success. The role and responsibility of the municipality and/or school district is central according to principals (Törnsén 2009a). The municipality or school district recruits principals and provides prerequisites for principal leadership. It is as important for a principal to choose the 'right' municipality (district), as it is for municipalities (districts) to choose the 'right' principal.

The current decentralized and goal- and result-oriented education system has operated in Sweden since the 1990s. The changes at the time were numerous and changes are continuously being initiated. Dahllöf (1999, p. 11) stated that 'it is difficult at the start to anticipate the net effect of many simultaneously inaugurated changes'. The Swedish school is at present seen as being in crises by national political leaders. Lindensjö and Lundgren (2000, p. 143) remind us of the fact that the school was recognized as being in crises before, in the 1970s and in the 1990s. As a consequence of the apprehended crises, tests, grades and strict demands became part of the solution as is the situation today in Sweden. Besides tests and grades, comparisons via TIMSS and PISA, inspection results, and other tools in the current accountability framework are seen as solutions to the identified crises. The national level further initiates changes in other areas. A new Education Act, a new curriculum, a new teacher education, and a new head teacher program are in preparation. It will be as difficult now to 'anticipate the net effect of many simultaneously inaugurated changes' (Dahllöf 1999).

The national level makes inspections to determine whether municipalities, schools and principals come up to national expectations. Suppose the national inspections and/or municipal evaluations make visible a less successful school

for which the principal is responsible. The question is how might national and municipal leaders interpret this finding. Do they explain the shortcomings by pointing out the principals' characteristics, by teacher resistance and school culture, by the width of responsibilities and lack of adequate support, or by the interaction between the three?

The expectations are high on schools, teachers and principals in an era where school outcomes are centred because school matters for student learning. The role and responsibility of the principal is emphasized from national level. The high expectations imply great trust in principal leadership. To be successful principals have to understand the expectations and demands, make possible for their teachers to understand, learn about, and realize the expectations and demands to enhance student learning. To succeed, a fruitful interaction between principals and teachers and between principals and district level leaders is important, especially in times of extensive reforms and external control.

To conclude, in the study of the principal of the *A/S* school Anderson Secondary (Article IV), all three concepts of prerequisites, processes, and outcomes and the connection between these show. First, prerequisites for principals' success in terms of district level prerequisites are presented. These are seen as good but the study goes further to describe success within a complex of prerequisites related to the local school and to characteristics of teachers and principals. Furthermore, it identifies successful leadership processes described as strategies, and insights into why this principal and school are successful. The displayed successful leadership processes match Swedish policy expectations and international findings on what successful principals do. The principal of the *A/S* school Anderson Secondary has a leadership style that reaches into the teaching and learning and takes place inside and outside of classrooms. When leading teaching and learning the principal supports and challenges teachers at the core of their work and monitors progress on school and student levels. The empirical data verify principals' processes related both to providing prerequisites for teaching and learning and to leading teaching and learning that incorporates school outcomes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the principal has a positive affect on success both at stay and at exit. Although only a single case, it confirms that success is possible to achieve (Törnsén 2009c).

## Further research

Principals' processes are well worth continuing to research for several reasons. One is the overall responsibilities placed upon principals. Another is the current expectations for successful school outcomes, a responsibility that rests on principals as responsible for goal-setting, processes and outcomes. In consequence, principals are important actors within the decentralized system. Their work with teachers is worth examining, foremost the part of pedagogical

leadership that reflects instructional leadership and taking responsibility for teaching and learning. The purpose would be to identify what processes successful principals are involved or not involved in and how they do it. The findings in this thesis overall indicate that pedagogical leadership is an area of development and further research.

This thesis is about success. The schools with the highest and lowest means in Sweden are not represented. The next study may be on lack of success. To examine principal leadership in secondary schools with less satisfactory outcomes over a longer period of time, and where the principal has been in office during that period. To measure the social objectives in these schools as well as in other schools is necessary.

It has been suggested by reviewers of the Article II that it would be useful to conduct an international study replicating this study on prerequisites for success. This would definitely be of interest despite situational differences.

The role of the municipality and/or school district is of interest. For example, the alignment between national expectations, district leaders' reception of these (or not), and how these are negotiated between district level leaders and principals would bring light to the implementation process in practice and to roles and responsibilities on the different levels. A central question in Sweden as well as in the US is whether 'they help to create district conditions that are viewed by school leaders as enhancing and supporting their work' (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008). Another area of interest is the recruitment of principals. What qualities in a principal are district level leaders searching for and how do they secure 'quality at entrance'? What prerequisites do they provide for? Do they offer 'one size fits all' solutions or individualized support to principals and schools based on their specific needs? Do they hire a principal or the 'right' principal for the 'specific' school? A third district level area is the follow-ups and evaluations. Do they scrutinize both processes inside schools and outcomes of schools? What implications and consequences follow from the analysis of findings? These questions and others are of interest for further research.

## F. SWEDISH SUMMARY

I denna avhandling studeras rektors ledarskap. Syftet med avhandlingen är att undersöka framgångsrikt ledarskap i svenska 7-9-skolor i relation till skolans resultat och inom ramen för det decentraliserade styrsystemet. Avhandlingen består av fyra artiklar och en kapp.

Avhandlingen är en del av projektet 'Struktur, kultur, ledarskap - förutsättningar för framgångsrika skolor?'<sup>22</sup> Tjugofyra 7-9-skolor i tolv kommuner har ingått i projektet. I denna avhandling har dessutom två 7-9-skolor i ytterligare en kommun ingått. Kommunerna är geografiskt spridda över landet, är av varierande storlek (stad - landsbygd) och har olika politisk styrning. De två skolorna i varje kommun är i fråga om elevrekrytering socioekonomiskt jämförbara.

Syftet med SCL-projektet är att studera förutsättningar för skolors framgång i termer av struktur, kultur och ledarskap. I projektet definieras en framgångsrik skola utifrån skolans resultat, förutom i form av betyg även vad gäller sociala mål, eftersom svenska skolor har i uppgift att arbeta med både kunskapsmål och sociala mål (Lpo94 1994). En viktig uppgift för projektet var därför att undersöka de tjugofyra skolornas resultat vad gäller kunskapsmål och sociala mål. Vid urvalet av skolor år 2004 hade eleverna i år 9 i den ena skolan i varje kommun ett högre betygsmedelvärde än riksgenomsnittet, i den andra skolan ett lägre. Det ursprungliga betygsurvalet kompletterades år 2006 med att meritvärdena under tre år, 2004-2006, samt antalet elever med godkända betyg under de åren i de tjugofyra skolorna jämfördes. De tjugofyra skolornas resultat vad gäller de sociala målen blev en empirisk fråga i projektet. Eleverna i år 9 i de tjugofyra skolorna besvarade en enkät<sup>23</sup> där de bedömde sin egen och skolans utveckling i fråga om normer, värden och personlig utveckling (Ahlström & Höög 2009, forthcoming; Höög 2009, forthcoming). En ranking av skolorna gjordes därefter, baserad dels på hur väl skolorna lyckats med kunskapsmålen enligt beräkningen som gjordes 2006, dels på hur väl skolorna lyckats med de sociala målen enligt enkäten som besvarades av eleverna i år 9. Skolorna indelades i fyra grupper.

<sup>22</sup> Projektet 'Struktur, kultur, ledarskap - förutsättningar för framgångsrika skolor?' förkortas härfter SCL. Projektet är finansierat av Vetenskapsrådet.

<sup>23</sup> Enkäten baserades på BRUK, Skolverkets verktyg för självskattning av kvaliteten i läroplansstyrda verksamheter. <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2173>, hämtat 2009 0110

### Framgångsrika i relation till kunskapsmål

		mer(A)	mindre (a)
Framgångsrika i relation till sociala mål	mer(S)	<b>A/S</b> fem skolor	<b>a/S</b> åtta skolor
	mindre (s)	<b>A/s</b> sju skolor	<b>a/s</b> fyra skolor

Figur 1. Fyra grupper av skolor baserat på deras framgång vad gäller kunskapsmål och sociala mål.

Av de tjugofyra skolorna bedömdes fem skolor vara framgångsrika i relation till både kunskapsmål och sociala mål (*A/S*), sju framgångsrika i relation till kunskapsmål men mindre framgångsrika i relation till sociala mål (*A/s*), åtta mindre framgångsrika i relation till kunskapsmål men framgångsrika i relation till sociala mål (*a/S*), och slutligen fyra skolor mindre framgångsrika i relation till både kunskapsmål och sociala mål (*a/s*).

Syftet med denna avhandling är att undersöka rektors framgångsrika ledarskap i svenska 7-9-skolor. En fråga är: Vilka ledarskapsprocesser kan identifieras hos en framgångsrik rektor? Rektors ledarskapsprocesser analyseras i relation till skolans resultat vad gäller både kunskapsmål och sociala mål genom frågan: Finns det något samband mellan rektors ledarskapsprocesser och skolans resultat? En annan fråga är: Vilka är förutsättningarna för rektors framgångsrika ledarskap? Data insamlades genom intervjuer med rektorer, biträdande rektorer och lärare och genom enkätfrågor till lärare.

I avhandlingen väljs ett holistiskt perspektiv på rektors framgångsrika ledarskap. En ram-process-modell används för att skapa helhet av de tre perspektiven på rektors framgångsrika ledarskap som studeras i denna avhandling, nämligen förutsättningar för framgång, framgångsrika ledarskapsprocesser och rektors ledarskapsprocesser i relation till skolornas måluppfyllelse både vad gäller kunskapsmål och sociala mål. Förutsättningar kategoriseras som interna och externa. De interna handlar om rektors individuella karakteristika. De externa är kopplade först till rektors nationella och kommunala uppdrag, vilka rektor styrs av. Det rör förutsättningar relaterade till att skolan är en decentraliserad och mål- och resultatstyrd verksamhet, där stat, kommun och den lokala skolan och ledare på alla nivåer har ett gemensamt ansvar för skolans framgång. Skolans mål bestäms nationellt, kommunerna ansvarar för att ge exempelvis ekonomiska förutsättningar för skolan och för rekryteringen av rektorer. De externa faktorerna är vidare relaterade förutsättningar för rektors ledarskap i den lokala skolan. Samtidigt

som rektor styr och leder verksamheten och medarbetarna blir rektor påverkad exempelvis av skolkulturen. Processerna av intresse i denna avhandling är främst rektors ledarskapsprocesser vilka inbegriper processer i skolan. De fyra skolgrupperna och deras resultat används vid analyserna för att jämföra ledarskapet i de fyra skolgrupperna i relation till skolgruppernas resultat.

I artikel 2 besvarar tjugofyra rektorer i de tjugofyra projektskolorna forskningsfrågan: Vilka är förutsättningarna som möjliggör eller inte möjliggör rektors framgångsrika ledarskap? Rektorerna beskriver förutsättningar på kommunal nivå som möjliggör framgång, nämligen ett begränsat ansvarsområde för rektor och tillgång till stödfunktioner på kommunal nivå och möjligheter att bli avlastad vissa uppgifter. Detta skulle ge rektor tid att tänka, tid i verksamheten och tid för samspel med exempelvis föräldrar. Frågan om kommunala förutsättningar är inte ny. I såväl svenska som internationella studier pekar resultaten i samma riktning som i denna studie (Leithwood & Jantzi 2008; Pont et al. 2008; Skolverket 1999, 2007). Rektors egna förutsättningar i form av egenskaper, kunskaper och utbildningsbakgrund har betydelse för rektors framgång. Rektors liksom lärares förhållningssätt till uppdraget, förändring och människor har betydelse. Rektors samspel med lärarna har särskild betydelse. Sammanfattningsvis kan sägas att rektorerna lyfter förutsättningar som ligger nära dem och som de kan påverka. Däremot nämner rektorerna inte faktorer som de inte kan påverka, såsom skolans socioekonomiska förutsättningar, de nationella inspektionerna eller konkurrensen från fristående skolor som svar på frågan om förutsättningarna som möjliggör eller inte möjliggör rektors framgångsrika ledarskap, vilket kunde ha förväntats. En förklaring kan vara att den öppna frågan var en fråga bland många andra frågor och att rektorerna vid intervjuutillfället helt enkelt inte tänkte på dessa faktorer.

Rektors ledarskapsprocesser avhandlas i artikel I, III och IV. De studeras i artiklarna genom huvudfrågan som är: Vilka är en framgångsrik rektors ledarskapsprocesser?

I artikel 1 studeras två skolor och deras ledarskap genom intervjuer med lärare och rektorer. De två skolorna, som studerades innan urvalet av de tjugofyra projektskolorna, har liknande yttre förutsättningar genom att de har samma nationella uppdrag, finns i samma kommun och genom att skolorna har liknande socioekonomiska förutsättningar. Betygsresultaten i de två skolorna är goda. Vilka ledarskaps- och skolprocesser anses som framgångsrika i de två skolorna med liknande förutsättningar och betygsresultat? Båda rektorerna anses framgångsrika av de intervjuade lärarna och skolan likaså. Beskrivningarna av framgången skiljer dock skolorna åt. I skola A är både ledarskapet och skolans processer svagt relaterade till skolans nationella uppdrag. Istället är det skolans traditioner och den trevliga stämningen som beskrivs. Lärarna anser sig inte ha tid att samarbeta. I skola B beskrivs ledarskapet och skolans verksamhet

utgå från skolans nationella uppdrag. Lärarna samarbetar och skolutveckling är högprioriterad. Två olika skolkulturer och ledarskapsroller framtonar. Hur olika kan skolor få ledas och vara och ändå kallas framgångsrika? Hur olika kan processerna vara? Konsekvenser för en likvärdig skola diskuteras i termer av framgång 'at entry, stay and exit' det vill säga ur perspektiven att en elev ska ha likvärdiga möjligheter till skolgång, en likvärdig skoltid, och likvärdiga resultat i termer av kunskapsmål och sociala mål. Frågan är hur likvärdig skoltiden (at stay) är för eleverna vid en jämförelse mellan skola A och B.

För artikel 3 besvarade lärare i de tjugofyra skolorna en enkät om i vilken utsträckning rektor tar ansvar för uppgifter som formuleras i Lpo94, 'Rektors ansvar, 2.8' (1994, pp. 17-18). Läroplanen utgjorde därmed den teoretiska utgångspunkten för studien. Uppgifterna som ingår i 'Rektors ansvar 2.8.' realiserar, om de realiserar, som ledarskapsprocesser i och utanför skolan och ses i denna studie som kriterier på vad en framgångsrik svensk rektor gör. 393 lärare bedömde rektors ledarskapsprocesser i relation till läroplansuppdragen och en jämförelse gjordes av processerna i relation till de fyra skolgruppernas resultat. Föga förvånande är vissa av uppgifterna realiserade i högre grad än andra. En fråga som ställs är i vilken grad rektor tar ansvar som pedagogisk ledare. Resultaten visar att det pedagogiska ledarskapet, enligt lärarna, är lågt prioriterat i jämförelse med exempelvis chefsuppdraget när det gäller gruppen av tjugofyra rektorer. Rektorerna som grupp tar ansvar för lärares kompetensutveckling i lägre grad; för skolans sociala mål mer än för kunskapsmålen; för att skolans verksamhet inriktas mot nationella mål och för skrivandet av lokala mål i en lokal arbetsplan i högre utsträckning än för uppföljning och utvärdering av verksamheten gentemot nationella och lokala mål; och slutligen prioriteras samspel med omvärlden i lägre grad. Vid en jämförelse mellan de fyra skolgrupperna visar det sig att rektorerna i de framgångsrika skolorna (*A/S*) enligt lärarna tar ansvar i hög grad för majoriteten av de uppgifter som ingick i enkäten, så även det pedagogiska ledarskapet. Därefter följer rektorerna i skolorna som är framgångsrika i relation till enbart de sociala målen (*a/S*). I skolorna som är framgångsrika i relation till enbart kunskapsmålen (*A/s*) och i skolorna som är mindre framgångsrika vad gäller både kunskapsmål och sociala mål (*a/s*) bedöms rektorerna av lärarna som minst ansvarstagande för de nationella uppdragen i Lpo94. Sammanfattningsvis kan sägas att rektorerna i de framgångsrika skolorna är mest framgångsrika i att utöva ett ledarskap i enlighet med det nationella uppdraget och uppgifter som ingår i 'Rektors ansvar' 2.8.

I artikel 4 presenteras en framgångsrik rektor. Artikelnen bygger på intervjuer i en av projektets fem framgångsrika skolor (*A/S*) med rektor, biträdande rektor och fem lärare. Syftet med artikeln är att beskriva ett framgångsrikt ledarskap i en framgångsrik skola i skenet av kommunala förutsättningar. Den framgångsrika rektorns processer presenteras som tio strategier, varav en del rör

rektors samverkan med kommunen, föräldrar och internationella kontakter och andra det som pågår inne i skolan, mellan rektor och lärare och i relation till undervisningen, klassrummen och skolans resultat. Rektor engagerar sig tydligt i undervisningen och elevernas resultat. Strategierna jämförs med vad framgångsrika ledare gör enligt internationell forskning. Huvudfrågan är om rektor är en demokratisk ledare och om rektor ägnar sig åt skolans sociala mål, parallellt med att rektor tar ansvar för lärares och elevers prestationer och för skolans ekonomi. Sammanfattningsvis kan sägas att rektor är en tydlig demokratisk ledare, som för dialog med människor men också sätter gränser.

Vad kan då sägas om rektors ledarskapsprocesser baserat på de empiriska resultaten som presenterats i artikel I, III och IV? För att möjliggöra en sammanfattande analys av framgångsrika rektorers ledarskapsprocesser har två definitioner på pedagogiskt ledarskap skapats. De baseras dels på de empiriska resultaten av dessa studier, dels på teorier och policybeskrivningar av ledarskap i skolan. Läroplanen generellt och mer specifikt 'Rektors ansvar 2.8' och beskrivningen av rektors pedagogiska ledarskap utgör en utgångspunkt (Lpo94 1994). Två internationella ledarskapsmodeller (transformational leadership, instructional leadership) och forskningsbaserade beskrivningar av vad framgångsrika rektorer gör utgör en andra utgångspunkt (Day & Leithwood 2007). Den ena definitionen benämns ett pedagogiskt ledarskap där *'rektor skapar förutsättningar för undervisning och lärande'*, den andra ett där *'rektor leder skolans kärnprocesser - undervisning och lärande'*. De två definitionerna är komplementära till sin karaktär.

Det pedagogiska ledarskapet där rektor skapar förutsättningar för undervisning och lärande kan ta sig uttryck i att rektor exempelvis ändrar strukturer som elev- och lärarscheman och skapar tid och rum för lärarsamarbete i arbetslag. Rektor skapar därmed förutsättningar för lärares arbete med undervisning och lärande och för elevers lärande. Uppgifterna formulerade i läroplanen generellt och under 'Rektors ansvar 2.8' (Lpo94 1994), som har använts som teoretisk utgångspunkt i artikel III, ses här innefattas i definitionen *'rektor skapar förutsättningar för undervisning och lärande'*.

Det pedagogiska ledarskapet där rektor leder skolans kärnprocesser - undervisning och lärande - innebär att rektor är direkt involverad i skolans kärnprocesser genom att exempelvis göra klassrumsbesök, ge återkoppling till lärare och analysera skolans resultat i relation till det som pågår mellan lärare och elever i undervisnings- och lärandesituationen. Rektor kan stödja, utmana och utveckla lärare genom att föra dialog om skolans kärnprocesser. Den specifika uppgiften under 'Rektors ansvar 2.8' (Lpo94 1994) att vara pedagogisk ledare ses här motsvara definitionen där *'rektor leder skolans kärnprocesser - undervisning och lärande'*. Rektors arbete med skolans

kunskapsmål och sociala mål såsom formulerade under 'Rektors ansvar 2.8' (Lpo94 1994) ingår även de i denna definition.

Om man applicerar de två definitionerna på resultaten i artikel I, III och IV bekräftas och tydliggörs både likheter och skillnader i vad dessa ledare gör. Rektorer i de framgångsrika skolorna (*A/S*) är framgångsrika i jämförelse med rektorerna i de mindre framgångsrika skolorna både vad gäller ett pedagogiskt ledarskap där rektor skapar förutsättningar för undervisning och lärande, och ett där rektor leder skolans kärnprocesser - undervisning och lärande. I artikel I motsvarar ledarskapet i skola B tydligt både det förutsättningskapande och det kärnprocessinriktade ledarskapet av undervisning och lärande. I den fjärde artikeln synliggörs båda inriktningarna i rektors tio ledarskapsstrategier.

Finns det då något samband mellan rektors ledarskapsprocesser och skolans resultat? Ambitionen att identifiera ett samband är en utmaning. Trots svårigheten att bevisa samband måste frågor ställas: Vilka ledarskapsprocesser har betydelse för skolans resultat? Vad avslöjar resultat om skolans och ledarens processer? Två resultat utgör grunden för de slutsatser som dras. För det första resultaten av studien i artikel III, där de framgångsrika skolornas rektorer (*A/S*) tar ansvar för sina nationella uppdrag i högre grad än de mindre framgångsrika skolornas rektorer. För det andra elevernas bedömning av hur väl skolan lyckas i arbetet med de sociala målen, en bedömning som tillsammans med analyser av kunskapsresultat utgjorde grunden för indelningen av skolorna i fyra grupper (figur 1).

Mönster av samtidighet kan identifieras. För det första tar rektorer i framgångsrika skolor (*A/S*) enligt lärarna ansvar för sitt nationella uppdrag i hög grad samtidigt som skolan har goda resultat vad gäller både kunskapsmål och sociala mål. För det andra avspeglar skolans resultat vad gäller de sociala målen intressanta mönster. I skolor som enligt eleverna i år 9 är framgångsrika vad gäller sociala mål (*A/S*-, *a/S*-skolor) bedöms rektor ta ansvar för sitt nationella uppdrag i hög utsträckning. I skolor som enligt eleverna är mindre framgångsrika vad gäller sociala mål (*A/s*-, *a/s*-skolor) bedöms rektor enligt lärarna ta ansvar för sitt nationella uppdrag i lägre utsträckning. En framgångsrik implementering av sociala mål förutsätter tolkning av mål, dialog och samarbete i 7-9-skolor som har en tradition av autonoma lärare och ämnesundervisning. Implementeringen har varit mer framgångsrik i *A/S*- och *a/S*-skolor. Detta indikerar att rektorerna där kan ha betydelse för skolans resultat vad gäller sociala mål men även betydelse i övrigt genom sitt arbete med skolans uppdrag generellt. Det indikerar även ett samarbete mellan lärare utöver ämnessamarbetet, eftersom de sociala målen är ämnesövergripande till sin karaktär.

En framgångsrik skola definieras i SCL-projektet som en skola med goda resultat både vad gäller kunskapsmål och sociala mål. I artikel I i denna avhandling vidgades definitionen till att gälla framgång 'at entry, stay and exit'.

Framgång kopplades till rätten till en likvärdig utbildning ur tre perspektiv: en elev ska ha likvärdiga möjligheter till skolgång, en likvärdig skoltid, och likvärdiga resultat i termer av kunskapsmål och sociala mål. Jag avslutar genom att återvända till denna vidare definition på framgång.

Rektorer och lärare är ansvariga för elevers framgång både 'at stay' och 'at exit', det vill säga för att eleverna ska ha en bra skoltid och få goda resultat både vad gäller kunskapsmål och sociala mål. Rektors och lärares framgång har alltså betydelse för elevers framgång. Rektors inflytande över skolans resultat är indirekt och utövas genom rektors ledarskap av och samspel med lärare. För att verka för ökad måluppfyllelse behöver rektor både skapa goda förutsättningar för lärares arbete med undervisning och lärande och utveckla och stödja lärares arbete genom att leda skolans kärnprocesser - undervisning och lärande.

Kraven på rektor är höga i en tid då skolans resultat är i fokus. Den nationella nivån ställer krav och kontrollerar om och i vilken grad kommuner, skolor och rektorer motsvarar kraven. Detta för att skolan har betydelse för elevers lärande. De nationella förväntningarna och kraven på rektor innebär att den nationella nivån hyser tilltro till rektors ledarskap. För att lyckas, måste rektor förstå förväntningar och krav och möjliggöra för lärare att förstå, lära om, och genomföra förändringar för ökad måluppfyllelse för elever. För att lyckas krävs ett fruktbart samarbete mellan rektor och lärare och mellan rektor, skolchef och kommunala skolpolitiker. I tider av extern kontroll och omfattande reformer är kvaliteten på samarbetet troligen än viktigare.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Principal and teacher interviews

<b>Principal interview questions on success</b>	
Main questions	Follow-up and <i>support</i> questions
What do you expect from a principal that you regard successful?	<i>What separates a successful principal from a less successful principal?</i> <i>What does a successful principal do/prioritize to do?</i> <i>What results should a successful principal attain?</i>
What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership?	Are there other prerequisites? (context, personal, education, experience) <i>What kind of educational background should a principal have?</i>
What can hinder a principal from being successful?	
Do you regard yourself a successful principal?	(If yes) In what way? (If no) Why not?

<b>Teacher interview questions on success</b>	
Main questions	Follow-up and <i>support</i> questions
What do you expect from a principal that you regard successful?	<i>What separates a successful principal from a less successful principal?</i> <i>What does a successful principal do/prioritize to do?</i> <i>What results should a successful principal attain?</i>
What are the prerequisites for successful principal leadership?	Are there other prerequisites? (context, personal, education, experience) <i>What kind of educational background should a principal have?</i>
What can hinder a principal from being successful?	
Do you regard your principal successful?	(If yes) In what way? (If no) Why not?

**Appendix 2. Teachers' questionnaire**

Estimate your principals' work.	Agree					Do not know
	Not at all	To a high extent				
The principal takes responsibility as pedagogical leader	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility as head of teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for the school attaining the national objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for drawing up a local work plan	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for follow-ups and evaluations in relation to the national objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for follow-ups and evaluations in relation to the local work plan	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for school outcomes	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for organizing teaching so that pupils receive support and help	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for organizing pupil welfare to support students	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for cooperation with non-compulsory schools and working-life	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for counteracting abusive treatment	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for pupil participation	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for interdisciplinary areas of knowledge being integrated in the teaching of different subjects	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for cooperation between school and home	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for staff professional development	1	2	3	4	5	6
The principal takes responsibility for the school's inter-national links being developed	1	2	3	4	5	6

## **FOUR ARTICLES ON SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP**

**I Success as Equivalence - The Swedish Case**

**II Keys to Successful School Leadership - High Support to Capable and Versatile Principals**

**III Principal Leadership, National Responsibilities and Successful School Outcomes**

**IV Strategies, Accountability and Democratic Values: A Successful Principal in a Swedish School**

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