



# COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the interplay between organizational structure and culture and principals' communication with their teachers in a Swedish school setting. Especially communication about issues connected to teaching and learning, student outcomes and school improvement are in focus. These issues are examples of what principals work with as pedagogical leaders. The thesis consists of four published articles on principals' communication in relation to organizational prerequisites and aims. The four separate articles are all connected to three overall questions. How do organizational factors relate to the communication process? How does the communication between principals and teachers affect and reflect principals' and teachers' work towards the national objectives in the Swedish curriculum? What, if any, differences are there in the communication process between successful and less successful schools? The research undertaken in this thesis is a part of a larger project called 'Structure, Culture, Leadership – prerequisites for Successful Schools?'. The empirical data used consists of interviews and questionnaires with teachers and principals in twenty-four Swedish schools as well as one school outside the projects study population. The twenty-four schools within the project have been divided into four groups depending on how they have succeeded in reaching academic and social objectives in the curriculum. The overall result shows that most communication in schools is related to everyday activities and individual students. Teachers state that their communication with their principals is uncomplicated and straightforward. Viewing communication as a multidimensional process including information, affirmation/feedback and interpretation reveals that many principals overestimate their ability to communicate as pedagogical leaders. The difference in the communication process between the schools was more due to organizational factors like structure and culture than the principal's individual communication abilities. In the successful schools, principals and teachers communicated more frequently about issues related to teaching and learning. These principals made more classroom visits and provided more frequently feedback on teachers' professional role. In many of the other schools, there were signs of a communicative and organizational blindness. There is a potential in many schools to improve principals' and teachers' daily conversations so the communication process to a higher extent support long-term work towards positive school outcomes.

**Keywords:** Communication; Culture; Leadership; Organization; Structure; Successful schools; Pedagogical leadership; Principal; Teacher.



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# I. INTRODUCTION

There are and have always been conversations about schools and how they should be managed and lead<sup>1</sup> to achieve good results. During the last years, there has been an increased attention on how to measure and understand what activities and actions that lead to certain results. Research shows that schools and the individual teacher and principal make a difference (e.g. Day & Leithwood, 2007; Grosin, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sammons, 2006). It is hard to determine what is most important since the work in schools, as in most organizations, is complex and intertwined.

In almost all school activities, communication plays an important role. How and what we talk about both construct and form our reality (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993). How the aims of schooling are understood and communicated, become prerequisites for what activities and perspectives are valued and lead to further actions. This implies that communication can be both a way to analyze and understand processes in schools and a process to influence others' actions and understanding. An ordinary working day for principals and teachers contains many meetings, interactions and conversations. The question is how do these activities contribute to school outcomes?

Public organizations have specific objectives and aims to fulfil. Schools in Sweden have a short and concentrated curriculum that requires local interpretation which provides the actors with a wide span of opportunities about how to realize the national objectives (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2001). The schools shall rest on fundamental democratic values and use the school funding and resources as effective as possible. There are also expectations that principals and teachers in Swedish school shall work with school improvement and constantly improve their activities and results in relation to how society changes and develops. This requires principals and teachers who are engaged, knowledgeable and have time to talk about issues related to teaching and learning. Even if communication often is described as important, a large part of everyday conversations and how they are conducted are taken for granted and are not consciously used (Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005; Miller, 2006). This can result in too many messages in the organization not coming through in the intended way (Kotter, 1996).

According to the Swedish curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994) the principal has a key role that includes conducting pedagogical leadership and

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<sup>1</sup> Some leadership research and literature differs between management and leadership. Since I believe that taking on a leadership position includes both management and leadership responsibilities I have from here on only used the term leadership.

taking responsibility so that the work inside the school is focussed on the national objectives. The principal contributes, consciously as well as unconsciously, to how structural, cultural and leadership processes develop. It is impossible to conduct any type of leadership without communication since leadership and communication are closely connected. If there weren't any meetings and conversations where principals could inform, share reflections, challenge, support and motivate the personnel the only way for a leader to affect followers would be reduced to rewards and punishments (Eriksen, 1998).

A communicative leadership is especially important in organizations with values that are non-negotiable (Eriksen, 2001). Even if the principal takes part in different processes and therefore is affected by them, there are organizational expectations on how the leader shall contribute to these processes. Is it possible to trace how principals contribute to the schools outcomes in the school's communication processes? One of the principal's challenges is to support teachers to improve student outcomes. What principals and teachers talk about and how they communicate both reflect and construct what is considered important in different processes and activities. Communication therefore also reveals what is in focus in the organization's everyday work.

This thesis is a part of a five year long research project *Structure, Culture Leadership, prerequisites for successful schools?*<sup>2</sup> Our aim is to study how such organizational aspects as structure, culture and leadership influence student outcomes in Swedish schools.

## Aim

The focus in this thesis is on principals' leadership and especially communication between principals and teachers. The intention is to study the interplay between organizational prerequisites such as structure and culture and principals' communication about teaching and learning issues and school outcomes. The following questions are guiding my research: How do organizational factors like structure and culture relate to the communication between principals and teachers? How does the communication between principals and teachers reflect and affect their work towards the objectives in the national curriculum? What, if any, differences are there in organizational communication processes between successful and less successful schools?

The thesis builds on four separate articles. In one way or another, the four articles touch on the three general research questions. The first question is relevant for all four articles. In the first article, organizational prerequisites and factors are identified in relation to the communication process. In the second article the intention is to study communication in relation to organizational

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<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Research Council has provided financial support for the project.

dimensions. The third article analyzes structural aspects of principals' communication while the fourth article examines culture in relation to the communication process. The second question, to study how teaching and learning issues are communicated as a part of principals' pedagogical leadership is also covered in all articles, but is most apparent in article one, three, and four. The last aim to discuss differences in successful and less successful schools communication processes are most apparent in article two and three, while the fourth article focuses entirely on the differences within the group of successful schools that participated in the project.

## Definitions and models

The footing for this thesis is to use organizational communication as a way to understand and describe what goes on in organizations (Deetz, 2001) such as schools. The key person is the principal and her<sup>3</sup> part of the leadership process. The theoretical assumptions build on leadership and organization theories that emphasize process and complexity (e.g. Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2008; Pierce & Newstrom, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

To be able to capture complex and intertwined processes that can contribute to understanding and sensemaking, I have chosen an interpretative perspective on organizational communication. Even if we know that concrete events and rationality influences activities and outcomes in organizations, language and the way we use different concepts contributes to our understanding of reality. The classic perspective views organizations as something that contains communication, while the interpretative tradition views organizations as products of communication (Jimes, 2005). The interpretative perspective views people's actions as controlled by their understanding of external conditions rather than the external conditions per se (Sandberg & Targama, 1998).

In the interpretative perspective, symbols, meaning and the capacity to affect organization are important. "Communication is considered to be a natural means by which the meaning of organizational events is produced and sustained" (Deetz, 2001:24). One focus is sensemaking which could be understood as what it says, to make something sensible (Weick, 1995) and therefore meaningful. Consequently the interpretive researcher tries to capture multiple usage and the in-depth understanding of meaning in organizations (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1984). In an interpretative perspective on communication, processes and culture are important (Heide, Clarén,

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<sup>3</sup> Since 62 % of the Swedish compulsory schools principals are female 2007/2008 I have chosen to use her as a pronoun in this thesis. <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/175> accessed 20081006

<sup>4</sup> Textbooks about educational administration give a good general overview of the field and research trends as they are continuously updated.

Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005). The interpretative research tradition has many different roots and departures, where one is social constructivism. Even if there is a variation within the interpretative perspective most scholars are interested in the complexity of meaning in social interaction (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1984).

Many aspects of what is understood and experienced as organizational reality are constructed and reconstructed by the organizational members through their daily actions (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993; Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005). Reality is therefore always changing (even if it sometimes goes slowly). To understand reality, different perspectives and their mutual meaning have to be taken into consideration, it is therefore important not only to study one organizational level or one actors intention with their communication (Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005). This is one of the reasons why both principals and teachers views are studied in this thesis.

The different processes inside schools are seen as complex and intertwined (see figure 1 and figure 2). Besides time the number of distinct variables in a process affect each other and their combinations are as important as a single variable. Later on, I will discuss leadership and communication in relation to organizational structure and culture. However, I start with giving a short definition of the most frequently used concepts in the thesis as a guide for the reader to understand my point of departure.

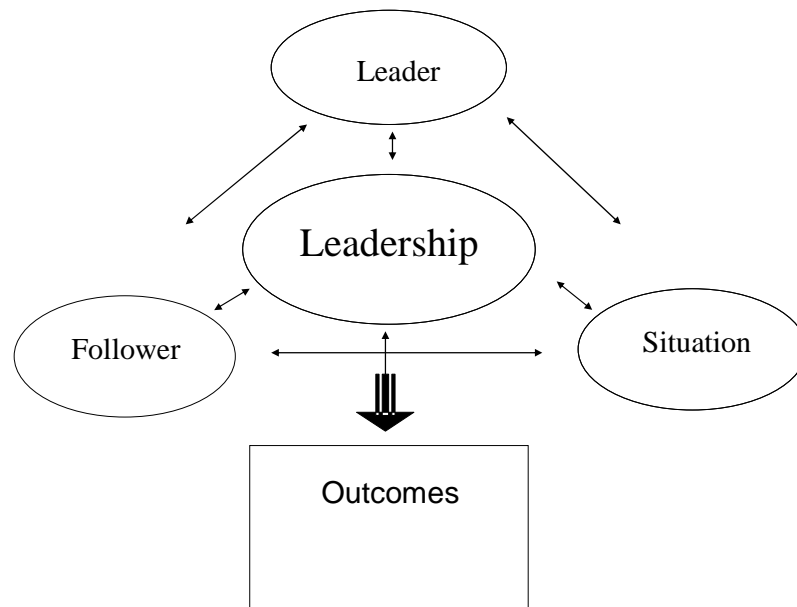
**Organizational structure and culture** Organizations, such as schools are here seen as social constructions where structure, culture and leadership are interdependent variables describing how activities and actions are constructed. Examples of structures are objectives, buildings, and organization of labour. Organizational culture is manifested in norms, history, symbols, basic assumptions and shared values (e.g. Hoy & Miskel, 2007). Examples of areas that are affected by the school culture are the way schools work with teaching and learning, collaboration and how leadership should be conducted.

**Communication (Organizational communication)** is a process of creating and exchanging messages. The process includes several key elements such as network, interdependence, relationship, environment, uncertainty and messages (Goldhaber, 1993). Communication is closely connected to organizational structure and culture. Communication can be used to analyze and reflect as well as affect what is happening in the organization. Communication is here seen as a pervasive role rather than an individual skill (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007).

**Leadership** is seen as a social and relational process dependent on the leader, the follower and the situation (Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2008; Yukl, 2002). There are many different definitions for leadership (Rost, 1991). I have in this thesis chosen to use Pierce and Newstroms (2007:6) definition

*Leadership is a dynamic and working relationship, built over time, involving an exchange between leader and follower in which leadership is a resource embedded in the situation, providing directions for goal attainment.*

To visualize the process I have created a model inspired by Hughes et al. (2008) and Pierce & Newstrom (2007), both building on the work done by Hollander (1978).



*Figure 1 A model of leadership as a social process inspired by Hughes et al. (2008) and (Pierce & Newstrom (2007)).*

Figure 1 visualizes the definition and shows the three interdependent components; the leader, the follower and the context. All components affect each other in multiple ways. This means that to analyze and understand leadership processes both contextual variables and the involved actors should be considered. The leaders' as well as the followers' characteristics affect the process even if there often are higher expectations on the individual leader. The leader influences the process through their experience, traits, skills, role and style. The followers have an active role, as the leadership process is dependent on their characteristics, their role and how they are grouped. The current situation and the organizational context is the third component that affects the leadership process. Besides how the actors more directly influence each other, their practice is dependent on how the actors are able to analyze the leadership process and the current situation. The outcomes are directly connected to the

three interrelated components and become a result of the leadership process, as well as affect the process back. This means that leadership effects can both be implicit as a part of processes and contain more immediate effects related to certain actions. The leaders' and followers' direct influence on the leadership processes is often conducted through communication.

**Pedagogical leadership** is a prescribed role for the principal in the Swedish national curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). Looking at pedagogical leadership as a role means that both the content of what the leader should strive for and the way she acts should be in accordance with the national curriculum. Signs of a pedagogical leadership can be dialogues interpreting the national objectives and focusing teaching and learning issues. Successful pedagogical leadership includes managing tensions and dilemmas and a focus on collaboration and learning for students, teachers and principals (Møller et al., 2007).

**Successful schools** Different stakeholders have different views of how to determine success. In our project successful schools have good outcomes in relation to both academic and social objectives which are in line with what is stated in the national curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). The point of departure is that principals and teachers make a difference even if students' demographic socio-economic background is the single most important variable to explain differences in student outcomes (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Sammons, 2006).

## Outlining the thesis

Analyzing complex and intertwined processes requires transparency and an ambition to define and discuss how different variables interact. My contribution is to examine how the interplay between organizational structure and culture and principals' communication with their teachers affects school outcomes in a Swedish school setting. The purpose is to contribute to a dialogue about the role of communication in leadership processes. In the introduction, I claim that communication both mirrors and affects the processes in school organizations and therefore is interesting to analyze in relation to school results.

The introductory chapter includes the aim and overall research questions and short definitions of the concepts that I use frequently in the thesis. In the second chapter, I provide a theoretical frame that adds and elaborates on how leadership and communication in organizations overlap and affect each other. The second chapter ends with a discussion about how organizations, communication and leadership relates to school outcomes and successful schools. The third chapter is a method chapter with a description of our project and such methodological aspects as study population, research instruments and ethical considerations. There is also a more detailed description of my

methodological reflections and choices in relation to the four articles in this thesis. Chapter four starts with a brief summary of each one of the four articles and then the four articles are presented as published in the journals. The overall results and conclusions are presented in chapter five. The chapter also includes suggestions for further research. The thesis ends with a Swedish summary.





## II. LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONS

### Leadership processes and communication

Leaders and leadership processes get a lot of attention both in research and in different organizations. Through the years, different trends have emerged in leadership research. Even if there is a consensus in leadership and organizational research that leadership is an important process affecting organizational behaviour and results, it is still a discussion if leadership matters or not (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Pierce & Newstrom, 2007). The research is sometimes not conclusive in what matters most in the leadership process. The wide range of different definitions shows the complexity and the challenges the researchers are faced with (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Møller, 2006, Rost, 1991). The definitions of leadership can vary from being operational as a part of the organization to a concept related to the individual. Many researchers view leadership as multifaceted processes which indicate that results in studies about effective leadership are often ambiguous, contextual and hard to assess (Alvesson, 2002; Møller, 2006). Leadership processes are therefore always influenced by time and societal discourses (Johansson, Moos, & Møller, 2000).

Earlier research often treats leadership from trait perspectives, which study the individual leaders' skills and traits. This often puts the entire focus on the leader as a person. The leadership process implies that the individual leader influence others towards a specific aim or goal which shows that the leader has a specific task and role (Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Pierce & Newstrom, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Nowadays many researchers use an integrative approach using more or other variables than individual traits and skills (Yukl, 2002). Using a process perspective does not ignore the leader's role instead it emphasizes that it is an interactive process that can be learned (Northouse, 2007).

As mentioned earlier leadership is in this thesis seen as a social process where the leader, the followers and the situation have the main influence on what happens in school organizations. "Leadership is relational. Consequently, both the leader and followers are important components" (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995:236). Leadership issues should therefore address questions that confront both leaders and followers (Northouse, 2007).

Since the role and the tasks for leaders and followers differ, the relations between them and the current situation determine how well the leadership

process works. To become successful a leader must be motivated to influence other's behaviour for the good of the organization (McClelland & Burnham, 1976). Even if the school has specific aims and objectives, there are various expectations on the principal and on how she should communicate and act. The principal is expected to both represent the political will that is expressed through the national curriculum and the educational act and represent the students and the teachers in their daily work (Hallerström, 2006).

The individual principal can affect the leadership process through her traits, role, skills, experience, and style (Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Since the teachers and situation affect the leadership process, another way for the leader to affect the process is by analyzing and understanding the teachers' characteristics and needs as well as the organization's current situation. How the principal listens, transmits information, makes decisions and leads dialogues will affect leadership and communication processes and ultimately the school outcomes. The different techniques and how individual skills are used in conversations can reveal the communicator's pre-understanding, values, knowledge and preparation (Isaacs, 1999). The principal's way of communicating affects how she is perceived and her ability to pursue change (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007).

The leader's challenges in complex organizations is to combine the work towards task and objectives (structures) with human relation work that engages and supports followers (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Yukl, 2002). To realize demanding objectives and tasks, the followers' attitudes and knowledge towards the work become important. This implies that leadership, organizational culture, communication and organizational outcomes are strongly connected. Communication becomes a way to understand and conduct leadership and actions within the organization. A communicative leadership uses language and communication to motivate different actions (Eriksen, 2001). Talk can therefore be described as action (Weick, 1984) and as work (Gronn, 1983). To view leadership as a social process makes communication essential both for understanding how the work inside organizations contribute to results and how the individual leader use communication as a tool.

A related theory to my work that elaborates on rationality and communication is Habermas' theory about communicative rationality. He argues that communicative rationality is a way to change society and meet the dominating instrumental perspective. He tries to find a more positive alternative in the modern society where communicative rationality contribute to more freedom and the development of ethics and civilized conflict solving rather than just contributing to the instrumental goal and system rationality (Eriksen & Weigård, 2000; Habermas, 1999). He claims that there is a threefold relationship between the meaning of the linguistic expression, the aim, what is said in it, and how it is expressed (Habermas, 1999).

In communicative action there is a possibility to look at what is said from four different criteria: intelligibility, honesty, level of truth and legitimacy

(Alvesson, 2002; Eriksen, 1998). Decisions and possibilities to influence depends on the argument's strength and sustainability (Eriksen & Weigård, 2000). Relating these aspects to leadership processes strengthens the idea that leadership is a mutual influence process rather than a one way relation that responds to changing contextual needs (Hallinger, 2003). This leads to a conclusion that leadership is dependent on relations and interaction between leaders and followers and that leadership is rather about dialogues than monologues (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). A successful leader has to be knowledgeable about the organization as well as how to lead communication processes (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). This verifies that if the individual principal wants to influence the communication process in a positive way, other variables are complementary and necessary to understand. Organizational communication structures and the organizational communication culture become prerequisites that can support and/or strengthen the principals and teachers work towards successful outcomes. It can also hinder or distract messages and information to become meaningful and important in principals' and teachers' daily work.

## Communication and organizations

Communication is so vivid in our everyday work and lives, we easily forget how much it affects what and how we do things. A traditional way to describe communication is as a process including a sender, a message, channels, a receiver and feedback (Dimbleby & Burton, 1998; Fiske, 1990). Before 1980 there was one dominating perspective in organizational communication – the classic/normative perspective, which means a positivistic transmission perspective building on classical organizational theories (e.g. Fiske, 1990; Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005; Jablin, 1982; Redding, 1979; Tompkins & Wanca-Thibault, 2001).

During the last 10 – 15 years, the field has evolved through influences from other research areas. New perspectives such as interpretative, critical, post-modern, and feminist perspectives have changed the rhetoric and understanding of organizational communication (May & Mumby, 2005). Today's view of communication is therefore much more complex. Communication can have several purposes, to satisfy individual and social needs, to cooperate and understand the world, as well as a way to distribute information and messages (Dimbleby & Burton, 1998). Communication therefore becomes more than distributing messages, it becomes an interplay between actors (Johansson, 2003). Depending on how communication is conducted, in what circumstances and with what actors, it can render different outcomes. The communication quality is dependent on both the actors, such as principals and teachers, and the actual situation and its prerequisites. A variety of variables are interacting which means that communication is created in the actual moment and therefore hard to predict (Englund, 2007).

Communication within an organization differs in some respect from other communication processes. Organizations have objectives to fulfil and expected results to achieve. How the tasks and meetings are organized are other structural prerequisites that contribute to how communication is conducted. Organizations are dependent on the actors and their history, values and attitudes. Weber's thinking can be described as a starting point for looking at organizations as social systems that interact with and are dependent on the environment. His way of describing organizations is mainly from a structural point of view (Hoy & Miskel, 2007; May & Mumby, 2005; Weber, 1980, 1983). Later research regards other perspectives such as informal dimensions, values and ethical perspectives as essential to understand the complexity of organizations (Johansson & Begley, 2009 Forthcoming; Starratt, 2004).

Often organization theory and literature are connected to private enterprises. Schools as public, politically governed service organizations have their own prerequisites. Different values and attitudes such as having transparency in processes and institutional factors affect the daily work. This means that organizations such as schools can not be expected to function as one actor instead it consists of tensions and dilemmas (Christensen, Læg Reid, Roness & Røvik, 2005). As leaders of public organizations principals' should provide reasons and explanations for their actions which take departure from agreed upon democratic values (Eriksen, 2001).

In the first article I created an organizational evaluation tool building on Greenbaum and his colleagues overview of organizational communication research (Greenbaum, Hellweg, & Falcione, 1987) combined with theories of leadership as a complex social process (e.g. Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Pierce & Newstrom, 2007; Yukl, 2002). The tool helped me to focus on the interplay between organizational prerequisites and principals' and teachers' communication.

### **Organizations as social systems**

A large amount of research has been conducted to understand how organizations work and function. Christensen and his colleagues differentiate between a structural-instrumental perspective and an institutional perspective. In the structural – instrumental perspective organizations are seen as something that a leader can handle with different instruments, tools and strategies while the institutional perspective describe organizations as having a life of its own and not in any simple way adjust the way leaders expect them to do (Christensen et al., 2005). Organizations can in that respect be considered as living and quite messy systems (Day & Leithwood, 2007).

Senge argues for the importance of system thinking. This does not mean that leaders should strive to find solutions on complex problems and work with details. They ought to work with wider relations and the processes rather than work with causal effects and the different parts (Senge, 1994). One way to describe organizations like schools is as open social systems combining a

rational-system perspective with focus on structure and the present environment and situation with a natural-system perspective with focus on the actors in the system<sup>5</sup> (Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Communication in organizations viewed as social systems are often expected to contribute to create a professional and responsive community. Examples of elements in a responsive community that needs support in the communication process is a wholeness that welcome diversity, strong core values, mutual trust and care, teamwork and participation, and affirmation (Bredeson, 2003).

Research in the field often returns to the difficulties managing and foreseeing followers' reactions to leadership actions. This applies largely on schools. Weick claims in his research that organizations can be described as loosely or tightly coupled. A tightly coupled system shares four characteristics; "1) there are rules, 2) there is agreement on what those rules are, 3) there is a system of inspections too see if compliance occurs and 4) there is feedback designed to improve compliance" (Weick, 1982:674). A loosely coupled system has more processes that affect each other and are harder to control which means that at least one out of the four characteristics is missing. Weick argues that schools can be described as loosely coupled systems. Loosely coupled systems, require even more sensemaking and communication than tightly coupled systems (Weick, 1995). The more people and idea intense an organization gets the more important the communication processes are (Hall, 2005; Witherspoon, 1997). Aspects that indicate that research about communication in school settings are warranted.

One way to understand organizations is to use multiple lenses. Bolman and Deal (2003) use four frames (structure, human resource, political and symbolic). A growing number of researchers use models that take several perspectives such as task and organization and human relations into account (e.g. Adizes, 1997; Ekvall & Arvonen, 1994; Hoy & Miskel, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Ekvall and Arvonen (1994) have in their research added change and improvement as an important dimension in leaders work and suggest a three-factor model of leadership. They claim that leaders need to work towards goal and objectives, with human relations and with change and improvement. To be able to work with different perspectives leaders need to "have a healthy tension between control and resistance and between different points of view" (Sandberg & Targama, 1998:189). Communicating in relation to the three-factor model should be seen as a process that includes different strategies and techniques. Ekvall and Arvonen's three-factor model inspired me to analyze how principals' communication was related to the dimensions in their model. Together with the results from the first article, this became an important theoretical point of departure for article 2.

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<sup>5</sup> See figure 2.

### **Organizational structure**

The organization's structure can be described as a skeleton or an architecture of the workplace (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Policies, goals, environment, and hierarchical levels frame what the organization can accomplish. External frames are a starting-point for the structures within the organization. These include in schools for example, curriculum, syllabus, time-schedules, and administrative rules. Often formal structures shape informal structures and relations that are closely linked to the organizational culture (Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005). Examples of such informal structures in schools can be routines about how to collaborate and divide responsibility as well as how to use time in relation to teaching and learning. This means that it sometimes can be hard to categorize a phenomenon as structure or culture dependent because both structure and culture have influenced the activities.

Structures are necessary to coordinate and facilitate everyday work and avoid conversations about issues that are a matter of routine. At the same time, structure can be limiting and negative if it becomes too bureaucratic and controlling. Structural views of organizations often lead to formal, technical and instrumental solutions to different problems (Hoy & Miskel, 2007). One criticism of research that favour the structural perspective is that it is rigid, hard to change, and that the focus is on details rather than the overall picture (Senge, 1994).

While the functionalist approach claims that organizational structure exists prior to organizational activities, the interpretive approach claims that actors within the organizations have the ability to change and construct structures (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1984). In this way structure and process merge. Organizational structures in this perspective are closely related to the organizational culture and can be seen as "a social reality partly constituted – and some times transformed – in real time interaction" (Mcphee & Poole, 2001:501).

Organizational structures such as meetings give prerequisites for how to communicate in schools. Examples of structures that can affect communication are how objectives and goals are taken into account in conversations, how teachers and teacher teams are organized, how meetings are conducted, and how time is provided for different kind of conversations. Depending on what kind of meetings and their frequency, different content and communication forms will be highlighted. In the third article, I concentrate on how principals communicate in relation to the objectives in the curriculum. Policy documents can be regarded as one structure that aims to help the principal and teachers succeed. I was interested in how communication was structured in meetings and if the content supported teaching and learning issues. Structures in organizations have a tendency to become a matter of routine rather than a tool to create meaningfulness. Related research of Weick claims that meaning, actions and sensemaking are closely connected. Sensemaking requires retro-

perspective analysis to understand how organizational structure and culture contributes to the results (Weick, 1995).

### **Organizational culture**

Culture in organizations has become a large research area since the beginning of the 80ies. Cultures are often ambiguous and diffuse to capture which as a result render many perspectives and definitions. Peterson defines culture as a part of teachers understanding. "School culture is the implicit set of understandings that shapes teachers' views of reality, of teaching and the purpose of schooling" (Peterson, 1989:15). Schein presents another often used definition where culture is described as

*a pattern of basic assumptions – invented , discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore , to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1985:9)*

The school culture gives meaning to what otherwise could be viewed as meaningless behavior (Kievet & Vandenberghe, 1993). Depending on what goes on, the culture within the school will support, preserve and/or hinder different initiatives and ideas. This can lead to that some behaviors are not questioned or changed while other behaviors are easily changed. The culture is often manifested through symbols and provides the organization with an identity (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Hoy & Miskel, 2007). Still, the responsibility and ethical dimension are connected to the individual actor, even if attitudes that become apparent in a group or an organization's culture indicate something else (Hodgkinson, 2002). Values influence the leadership process and organizational and social practice (Begley, 2001; Starratt, 2004) and they become visible as a school culture. Instead of seeing culture as what an organization is, it can be more useful to look at culture as something an organization has. This includes a view that an organization's culture is emergent and changing (Miller, 2006). All actors and especially leaders can influence the existing organizational culture. Schein even claim that the only really important thing leaders need to do is to create and maintain organizational cultures (Schein, 1985).

Researchers who analyze school cultures often describe multiple cultures in the same school, differentiating for example teacher cultures from leadership cultures. The various cultures are often described through metaphors and labels, highlighting the core values in the studied group. Individualism - collaboration, formal – informal, control - support, stability - change are examples of values that form cultures in school organizations (e.g. Berg, 1995; Blossing, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Persson, Andersson, & Nilsson Lindström, 2005).

Communication and culture are closely connected. Communication becomes the medium where the culture becomes visible (Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2004). By communicating some values and emphasizing certain aspects the communication reveals what is accepted or not. Culture emerges and is sustained through the communication processes of all involved actors (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). At the same time communication is the only process that can identify and challenge the invisible patterns that exists in organizations.

Since communication and culture is so closely connected, both concepts are interesting when analyzing schools. The fourth article examines how communication influence and become influenced by the school culture. The focus is especially on how values and trust affect a pedagogically focussed school culture. Both in the leadership process and in communication trust is seen as fundamental and will enhance or limit leaders' ability to work with school improvement (Seashore Louis, 2007). "Trust creates the conditions and mobilizes people to action and collaboration. Trust is developed through trustworthy use of power" (Møller et al., 2007:82). A related theory that goes deeper into leader follower relations, organizational justice, and trust are the leadership-member-exchange (LMX) theories (Pierce and Newstrom, 2007). Again this confirms the importance to look at leadership with a relational perspective rather than only as an individual ability (Møller, 2006; Tillberg, 2003).

Organizational structure and culture are prerequisites for communication processes in schools. Since structure and culture do not always go together as integrated parts of the organization, the leader's awareness of the contradictions that can occur together with how she uses dialogues and communication affects the development of both structure and culture. This implies that being a good communicator demands knowledge about organizations and their effect on communication processes. How the leader and the followers understand and reflect on the communication and leadership processes and its relation to the organization will affect the organizational outcomes. Low understanding and reflection can be described as a communicative and organizational blindness. Every organization has its areas of blindness. Poor communication within the organization can lead to "observable error, delay, morale problems, and other inefficiencies" (Weitzel & Jonson, 1989:99). Since communication is pervasive it reveals the actors' knowledge both as a communicator, and how he or she understands the organizations structure and culture (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). This puts the focus on the leader's ability to lead a communicative system as much as the individual ability to listen or transmit information about separate issues and details.



## Principals' communication towards results

### To meet curriculum objectives - pedagogical leadership

As mentioned earlier, a principal's communication is expected to contribute to reaching organizational aims and objectives. In Sweden, this is often connected to the concept pedagogical leadership. The term pedagogical leadership has developed during the last 60 years. In 1946, the Swedish school commission stated that the principal should lead the educational work and have enough authority to influence the school and the work inside schools (SOU 1948:27). In 1974, the SIA- report (The work within schools report) stated that the principal's role as coordinator and pedagogical leader was fundamental and should replace the present controlling and authoritarian principalship (SOU 1974:53). Related research shows that over the years pedagogical leadership has in the policy documents gradually become the principal's most important task (Nestor, 1993, Nygren & Johansson, 2000). In the latest curriculum there is a paragraph describing the principal's responsibility and role as a pedagogical leader.

*As both pedagogical leader and head of teaching and non-teaching staff, the school head has overall responsibility for making sure that the activity of the school as a whole is focussed on attaining the national goals. (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994:17)*

The Swedish commission about school leadership 2001 declared that Swedish schools need democratic, learning, and communicative principals. Courage, self knowledge, knowledge about the school mission, and adequate working methods should be significant for future principals (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2001). They stated that

*...schools need to develop into learning organizations where principals' and teachers' pedagogical leadership is in focus and are concentrated on the school's core process – student learning. (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2001:11 my translation)*

In the policy texts, there is no clear definition of pedagogical leadership or the tasks included in pedagogical leadership. In the literature it has evolved to a concept with many different definitions (Svedberg, 2000). Among practitioners there are two common definitions, a) to lead an organization where learning and education are the main tasks, b) to carry out the leadership so it contributes to learning both for the individual follower and the organization. Scherp claims that pedagogical leadership is not a specific task, it is rather a description of the whole leadership and school improvement process involving almost everything (Scherp & Scherp, 2007).

The many and often general definitions may be one reason why the concept is not so common in international educational administration literature. To some extent, pedagogical leadership can be compared to instructional leadership. Instructional leadership can be described as a leadership focusing on principals controlling, coordinating, supervising and developing curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger and Murphy describe three dimensions of instructional leadership: define the mission, manage curriculum and instruction and promote school climate. They continue by claiming that for principals to be able to conduct strong instructional leadership barriers that keep the principals away from the classroom needs to be reduced. Second, instructional leadership needs to be defined and be so concrete that it is an observable practice and the assessment methods build on reliable and valid data (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

Johansson, Begley, and Zachrisson use the term democratic leadership. They claim that for principals to conduct a democratic leadership, dialogues, knowledge, and an ability to uphold the national policies are required. That includes enough knowledge about the curriculum so the principal is able to encourage and bring up the right issues in the conversations with her teachers. Fundamental democratic values and the students' right to a good education becomes the framework for decisions and actions. This can be done by a combination of border setting through good information and decision-making and dialogues that involve and engage all actors (Johansson & Begley, 2009, Forthcoming; Johansson & Zachrisson, 2008). Descriptions of principals' role in relation to the schools educational mission by Hallinger and Murphy as well as Johansson and colleagues are in accordance with Nestor's interpretation of pedagogical leadership. I agree with them that the main task in pedagogical leadership is to influence teachers to develop their teaching and learning in relation to the national objectives (Nestor, 1993). This implies that principals' leadership needs to be strongly connected to teaching and learning issues and teachers work in the classroom.

The part of the principal's pedagogical leadership that involves teaching and learning issues has been criticized as being too weak (Berg, 1995; Ekholm, 2000; Hallerström, 2006; Skolverket, 1999). For principals to take responsibility as pedagogical leaders, the principal need to be involved in students' learning and what goes on in the classroom. Many teachers in Sweden claim that their principals do not conduct classroom visits and seldom talk about teaching and learning issues (Ekholm, 2000; Hallerström, 2005). Berg calls this division of tasks 'the secret contract' (Berg, 1995). The principals' explanation is that there is often lack of time to do classroom visits because of all other duties they need to handle (Hallerström, 2005). Svedberg on the other hand, claims that there is a lack of knowledge that restricts the principals from conducting pedagogical leadership (Svedberg, 2000). To be able to conduct a pedagogical leadership, principals need to combine their deep understanding of teaching and learning with a focus on student outcomes (Murphy, 1988). This

can be done by conversations highlighting the relations between how the teachers teach and school outcomes. Leithwood and his colleagues indicate that even if the expectations on principals' pedagogical leadership is high there are differences in how principals communicate and act as well as how they contribute to the school outcomes through their pedagogical leadership (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

### **Successful and effective schools**

To contribute to organizational success requires aims and objectives to be met. The Swedish curriculum needs local interpretation, which together with expectations from multiple stakeholders on several levels opens schools up for different expectations. What is the most important task and what it means to be successful can be hard to determine depending on what perspective you pick. Internationally there is a long tradition of research related to effective schools starting with the Coleman report and research conducted by Rutter, Mortimore and others (Coleman, 1966; Mortimore, 1988; Rutter, 1979). The first studies were mostly quantitative and directed towards academic outcomes.

During the last years, research about effective schools, school improvement and successful schools have merged. Apart from academic outcomes, economic and democratic effects are discussed as dimensions of success. To be considered an effective school the activities and results should have strong links to equity, social inclusion and reduction in the achievement gaps (Sammons, 2006). A more precise definition of an effective school is

*...as one in which students progress further than might be expected from considerations of its intake. An effective school thus adds extra value to its students' outcomes, in comparison with other schools serving similar intakes.* (Sammons, 2006:6)

To work with equity and social justices corresponds well with the aims in the Swedish curriculum that emphasizes that social objectives are as important as the academic objectives. To determine what is successful or effective is often not enough. There is an ambition to reveal how strong the relations are between specific variables or processes that lead to certain results. Even if researchers agree that students' demographic socio-economic background has the main impact on student results they also claim that principals, teachers and the activities inside the local school make a difference (Silins & Mulford, 2002; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). In an international project about successful school leadership, Day and Leithwood conclude

*Success is relative, dependent upon the school's structure, culture (social dynamic), socio-economic setting and the beliefs and biographies of the principal, staff and students.* (Day & Leithwood, 2007:185)

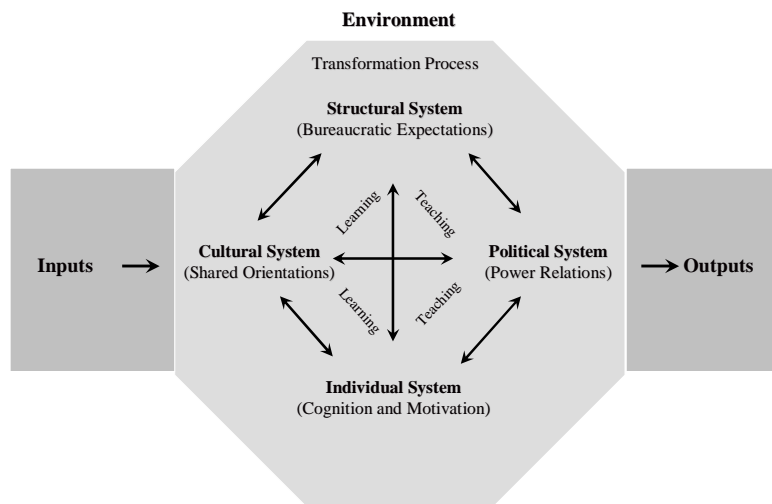


Figure 2 Social system model for schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2007:24). Reprinted with permission from MCGraw-Hill Companies.

Figure 2 illustrates the complexity of social system and how different elements interplay with each other. The school's core task, teaching and learning is in the centre of the figure and ought to be related to all work inside schools, not least in relation to school outcomes and successful schools. Structural, cultural, political, and individual elements are aspects in the transformation process that affects the school outputs. To analyse and understand how organizations such as schools work and how different actors' impact organizational processes require that many elements are taken into consideration.

Much of the principal's impact in the schools ordinary work is indirect. Their influence is intertwined in other processes in the organization while some of their actions have a more direct relation to certain results (Harris, 2008). Marzano summarizes the research that indicates that leadership has strong relations to several areas that affect the organization's outcomes

*...different research that indicates that leadership has a strong relationship with (among others) - the extent to which a school has a clear mission and goals, ...the overall climate of the school and the climate in individual classrooms, ...the attitudes of teachers, ...the classroom practices of teachers, ...the organization of curriculum and instruction, ...students opportunity to learn, ... (Marzano, 2003:172)*

How principals' and teachers' communication contributes to schools success are a multidimensional endeavour where the organizational structure and culture are important prerequisite. Figure 1 as well as figure 2 visualize the complexity but provide also important elements for understanding communication and the principals' role in successful schools. Since pedagogical leadership is an essential part of the principal's role, and teaching and learning issues are a core task in schools, all articles concentrate on if and in that case how teaching and learning issues and educational matters are communicated.



## III. CONDUCTING THE STUDY

### The project

This thesis is a part of a five-year long project named “*Structure, Culture, Leadership – prerequisites for successful schools?*”. The project is interdisciplinary and involves four senior researchers and six doctoral students from the departments of Education, Sociology and Political Science in three Swedish universities. The point of departure for the project was to study successful schools and compare their leadership, structure and culture with less successful schools.

The theoretical framework is based on theories that argue that leadership influences the organization through dialogues and a democratic behaviour where knowledge, values, and ethics are important (Begley & Johansson, 2003; Johansson, Moos, & Møller, 2000; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The theoretical framework also includes complex models of leadership, dimensions which combine a focus on task and objectives, work with human relations, and work with change and improvement (Adizes, 1997; Ekvall & Arvonen, 1994; Yukl, 2002). This implies that successful leaders combines work towards structural change with work towards cultural change (Fullan, 1993, 2001a; Höög, Johansson, Lindberg, & Olofsson, 2003; Höög, Johansson, & Olofsson, 2005).

The mutual framework was combined with each researcher’s own theoretical point of departure, and each participant in the research team contributed with his or her research questions. We were all engaged in selecting the schools, constructing the research instruments and gathering the empirical data. All together, this contributed to an empirical databank. In the second phase of the project, we have concentrated our meetings on discussions about a joint book project with chapters from the participating project members (Höög & Johansson, 2009 forthcoming). Many and repeated conversations about what we have seen and heard and how to understand our material in relation to the theoretical framework gave a broad perspective on the schools. It also calibrated our interpretations and analyses of the empirical data. Some of the other researchers’ findings are published in journals (e.g. Björkman & Olofsson, forthcoming; Höög, Johansson, & Olofsson, 2005; Norberg, & Johansson, 2007; Törnsén, 2008) and books (e.g. Ahlström & Höög, 2008; Björkman, 2008, Höög, Johansson, & Olofsson, 2007) whilst others are submitted to different journals for review.

### Study population

Selecting the schools was one of the first tasks for the project group. It involved many meetings and discussions. We wanted a study population with good representation from different parts of Sweden. Size, geographical location, and political majority in the municipality were taken into consideration. Altogether, 12 Swedish municipalities out of 290 were chosen to participate in the study.

All the selected schools had students between 13 and 15 years of age. In each municipality, two schools were selected. One of the schools reported academic outcomes (grades) for year 9, 2004<sup>6</sup>, above the Swedish national average. The other school had an academic outcome below the Swedish average. The schools within the municipalities were comparable in terms of student demographic socio economic background<sup>7</sup>. The schools selected as successful had students in the 9<sup>th</sup> form with academic grades between the 75<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to the students grades in all Swedish public schools while the schools below average were selected from the 25<sup>th</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> percentile. This percentile range was necessary to meet the other specifications of the sampling. The academic results refer to the students' grades in the end of year 9, 2004. Even if there seems to be a large variation in the results, the actual difference is quite small.

To have a pass in all subjects requires a merit ranking of 160 points. The highest merit ranking available is 320 points. Figure 3<sup>8</sup> shows the Swedish schools as small points on a cumulative line. The figure graphically shows that most schools were close to the national mean (205.3, year 2004). There is only a difference of 19.4 points between the schools that were in the first quartile and those in the third quartile. Besides that, several schools had a grade average that was just below or just above the first and third quartiles. This shows that many of our Swedish schools can identify themselves as an 'ordinary school' with average grade results. A slight improvement in the schools below or just above the national mean would dramatically increase our national results. This is one reason why we have chosen 'ordinary schools' rather than 'the best' or 'the worst' schools in the country. The main reason although is to reduce the effect of students' socioeconomic background in relation to school outcomes.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.skolverket.se> accessed 20081006

<sup>7</sup> Two schools with which we had a first contact for different reasons chose not to participate in the study. Two other schools with almost the same kind of student population were contacted and agreed to participate.

<sup>8</sup> The data in the figure is based on official data  
[http://siris.skolverket.se/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,1&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://siris.skolverket.se/portal/page?_pageid=33,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL) accessed 20081006



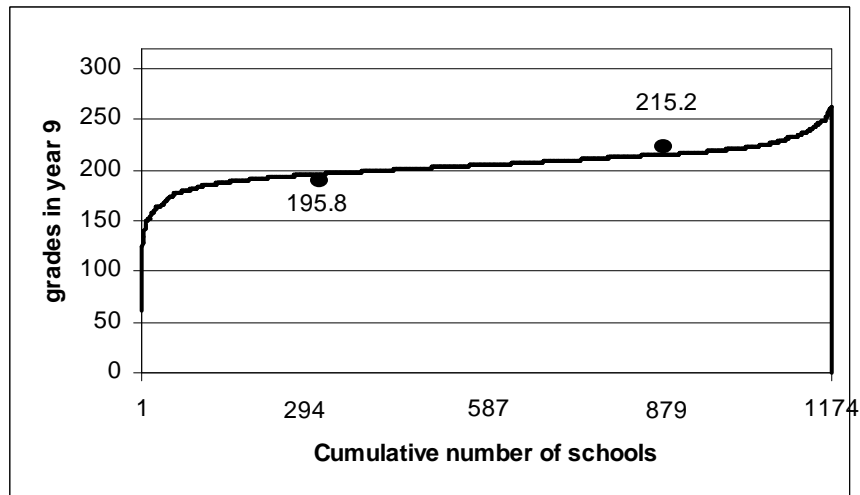


Figure 3 Merit ranking of grades in year 9, 2004. Schools with less than 10 students are not shown in the figure.  $n=1174$ . The merit value for the first quartile is 195.8 while 215.2 is the merit value for the third quartile. There were 293 schools which had an average below 195.8 and 295 had an average above 215.2.

To avoid that the ranking should be too dependent on students' performance during a single year, a new ranking based on the school's merit ranking and how many students had received a 'pass score' in their final grades during three years, 2004 – 2006, was done. The 12 schools with the highest academic ranks within the study population were considered academically successful.

The schools participating in the project were in the first step selected only in relation to academic outcomes during one year even if the Swedish curriculum states that social and academic goals are equally important (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). Today there are no national statistics or official method used to measure social and civic<sup>9</sup> objectives. Therefore success in relation to social objectives is considered as an empirical question in this project, specifically studied by two of the project members (Ahlström & Höög, 2008). A questionnaire, based on an evaluation tool, (BRUK)<sup>10</sup>, was created and distributed to all students in year 9 in the selected schools. The students were asked to answer questions regarding their own and their classmates' behaviour, and the school activities and policies related to the social objectives. The

<sup>9</sup> In international literature both social and civic are used to describe all aspects of the objectives that are included under 'sociala mål' in the Swedish curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). From here on I am only going to use the term social objectives even if the constructed research instrument is called Social and Civic Objective Scale, SCOS (Ahlström & Höög, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> BRUK is an evaluation tool provided by the Swedish National agency <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2173> accessed 20081006

findings from the questionnaire were analysed and then developed into a tool for ranking the schools in relation to their achievement of social objectives, SCOS (Ahlström & Höög, 2008). To be able to compare and summarize each school's academic results and the results from the SCOS- questionnaires, the two scales were transformed in to a z – scale<sup>11</sup>.

The schools that were above mean in each dimension were considered successful. Visualizing them in a 2x2 table, four categories of schools emerged (Höög & Johansson, 2009 forthcoming; Höög, Johansson, & Olofsson, 2005).

		<b>Succeeds in reaching academic objectives</b>	
		Obvious	Less obvious
<b>Succeeds in reaching social objectives</b>	Obvious	<b>1. AS</b> (5 schools)	<b>3. aS</b> (8 schools)
	Less obvious	<b>2. As</b> (7 schools)	<b>4. as</b> (4 schools)

Figure 4 Four types of schools in relation to how they succeed in reaching academic and social objectives.

In our study group, five schools are identified as *AS* schools, schools that are more successful in relation to both academic and social objectives. There are seven *As* schools that are successful in relation to the academic objectives only. In an international context, both these groups would be considered successful. According to our instruments it is only the first group of schools, *AS* who are successful in relation to academic and social objectives stressed in the national curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994) while the *As* schools are partially successful. The eight *aS* schools are more successful in reaching the social objectives but not in reaching the academic objective. Finally, the four schools among the *as* schools are less successful in reaching both the academic and the social objectives compared to the other three groups. Choosing schools in relation to their achievement in academic and social outcomes narrows the concept of an effective or successful school. This definition is “a necessary but not sufficient condition for any acceptable definition for a ‘good’ school” (Sammons, 2006:9).

<sup>11</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.

*Table 1 School characteristics for the four school groups based on official data 2005*<sup>12</sup>

	Number of principals on a yearly base	Average number of pupils	Number of teachers on a yearly base	Teacher/pupil ratio
<b>AS</b>	1.4	431	32.5	7.52
<b>As</b>	1.7	493	47.5	8.33
<b>aS</b>	1.75	477	39	8.5
<b>as</b>	1.25	353	31	8.6

The school characteristics differed slightly between the groups. The *As* schools was the largest schools with most students and teachers. Looking at the teacher/pupil ratio the *as* schools had most teachers with 8.6 teachers per 100 students whilst the *AS* schools had the lowest amount of teachers with 7.52 teachers. Despite what one could assume there is no connection between the size of the school, the number of principals, teachers, the teachers-pupil ratio, and the most successful schools. This makes the research on the quality of teachers' and principals' work even more interesting. Even if we have ranked the schools in four groups there is a wider complexity that needs to be mentioned. We have not yet analyzed whether there is a variation within the schools. There could be differences in how the schools meet and contribute to the learning for groups of students depending on gender, different socio economic background or ethnicity (Sammons, 2006) as well as other organizational factors. Further research to recognize such variations in Swedish schools is warranted.

### Research instruments and the research process

Creating the research instruments was a joint responsibility for the whole project group. During the first year, we devoted an extensive amount of time formulating, testing and validating questions. We formulated the questions in the questionnaire and in the interviews so we could compare the answers from different groups of interviewees. Every participant in the project group was asked to contribute three main questions. From that material, we matched and refined the questions. The questionnaire as well as the interviews started with questions about background factors such as gender, age, education, and experience. Examples of areas besides communication include issues about success, outcomes, structure, culture, readiness capacities, collaboration, quality and assessment, visions, improvement, staff development and leadership styles<sup>13</sup>. Many of the questions in the questionnaire included statements where the respondent valued the statement on a four or five grade scale.

<sup>12</sup> (<http://sirir.skolverket.se>) accessed 20081006

<sup>13</sup> See appendix 2 and 3 for the questions in the questionnaire and the interviews to principals and teachers that were directly connected to communication.

The interviews were half-structured and the teachers' interviews took approximately one hour and the principals' interviews 2.5 hours each. Long interviews can be demanding but on the other hand, it provided plenty of time for the respondent to elaborate and reflect on the questions. It is impossible to do interviews without the individual interviewer posing the questions differently and the follow up questions took different directions. That the individual researcher has an impact on the interview (Kvale, 1997) does not mean that we neglected the method or the technique. The project members spent time both discussing how to pose questions and did an evaluation and refinement of the research instrument after the first visits. The aim was to let the interviewee provide the description of what s/he thought and experienced. By capturing these nuances, there were natural qualitative variations (Kvale, 1997).

A research team consisting of three to four persons visited each school for two and a half day between September 2005 and January 2006 to gather the empirical data. The data consist of on-site-observation and official data regarding each school. We conducted interviews and questionnaires with the following respondents in each school and municipality<sup>14</sup>:

- Principal and deputy principals: individual interview, questionnaire.
- Teachers: individual interviews with five teachers teaching different subjects<sup>15</sup> and a questionnaire to all teachers teaching year nine.
- Students: Individual and group interviews with five to ten 15-year-old students in the ninth form, and the SCOS-questionnaire to all 15-year-old students in the ninth form.
- Superintendent: Individual interview, questionnaire.
- Chairperson of the municipality political school board: individual interview, questionnaire.
- Members of the municipality political school board: questionnaire.

The principals picked the interviewed teachers. This was a conscious decision since we were looking for factors for success. Among the teachers, 119 of the 120 interviews were conducted and all 36 interviews with principals and deputy principals. All teachers in year 9 and the principals were also asked to fill in a questionnaire. Of the 36 principals and deputy principals, all except two deputy principals answered. One of the two who did not answer was working

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<sup>14</sup> In this thesis I have only used empirical data from the two first groups of respondents' together with the official data and on-site-observations from each school. The SCOS-questionnaire was only used to categorize the schools.

<sup>15</sup> The interviewed teachers were teaching in one of the following subjects: Swedish and language, mathematics and science, social studies, practical and artistic subjects, and special needs education.

part-time as a principal and new in her position. The second one had a surgery treatment and a longer sick leave immediately after our visit. The total return rate for the teachers was 63%, 393 teachers, teaching year 9, answered the questionnaire. The fact that the teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaire during their workday between classes and that the total questionnaire was extensive probably reduced the number of answers we received during our stay at the school. Some of the non-responses were due to sick leave and part-time teachers who we did not meet. We wanted the questionnaire to be anonymous since it could contain sensitive data about the teachers' relation to their principal. A general reminder for those who did not complete the survey was sent out a couple of weeks after the visit. A none-response analyzes shows that 90 % of the teachers that answered the questionnaire worked 80 % or more. More than 95 % of the answering teachers had been working in the school more than one year.

During the school visits, all project members were involved in conducting the interviews and distributing the questionnaires. In the time between those tasks, we visited corridors, staffrooms and some classrooms to get a feeling of the school's structure and culture. Each team documented their experiences in a school site observation-protocol. All interviews were taped and interviews with principals and teachers were transcribed. The questionnaires were coded into a SPSS<sup>16</sup> data file. Since many questions were related, the amount of different angles helped us to validate the answers. Examples of related questions to communication were how the principals conducted their pedagogical leadership and how the collaboration within the school was organized. It would be impossible for a single researcher to both formulate such extensive research instruments and gather all the information that we now have in the project database.

### **Ethics**

The project's ethical consideration was clarified in the project application<sup>17</sup>. From the beginning of the project the ethical aspects of how we conducted our research was important. We signed an agreement to follow the Swedish research council's ethical rules and guidelines<sup>18</sup>. This means that the participants have been informed about the aims with the research and that their participation is voluntary. The study of relations and processes that includes hierarchical levels can comprise questions were teachers are asked to evaluate both themselves and their leaders. The study also elaborates on how individual actors contribute to the school outcomes. This means that some of the material can be sensitive and require respect and an obligation to not reveal individual persons' views or

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<sup>16</sup> SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a computer program for statistical calculations.

<sup>17</sup> <http://vrproj.vr.se/detail.asp?arendeid=5160> accessed 20081006

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.codex.vr.se> accessed 20081006

which schools participated in the study. It is therefore important that single statements and answers can not be connected to a single person or an individual school. Even if we have information on size, location and other characteristics I have chosen not to report those data to make sure that others will not recognize the municipality and the individual school. Each municipality has been coded with a random letter and the schools have been numbered without any connection to their results.

## My research process

To write a thesis is an individual knowledge journey. To become aware of one's own and other's point of departure and how different variables affect the results including the individual researcher has been a useful experience. By writing articles during the whole process, it becomes apparent how the point of departure gets more nuanced and how your own knowledge increases. One example is how to use concepts. The more knowledge and understanding one gains the more important and nuanced the language becomes. Concepts are to some extent overlapping and used differently in different contexts. One example is education and pedagogy. They can in some circumstances be used interchangeably and in other situations not. I have mostly used education except in relation to pedagogical leadership and a pedagogically focussed school culture.

During the first year, the pre-study in one school outside the project together with the work in the project group and the courses in the PhD programme gave me an opportunity to try out my own research issues and understand more about the complexity of communication and leadership processes. The pre-study developed into my first article. The school was an ordinary school with academic results just above the Swedish average, situated in a middle-sized town. Interviews and questionnaires with both teachers and the principals were conducted. The questionnaires<sup>19</sup> had 22 issues that were similar for both principals and teachers. They covered questions and statements about meeting routines, availability, conversation content, communication culture, staff development in relation to communication, communication policy and issues about whom the communication was directed to. Some of the questions were related to the school policies and routines. In most of the questions, the respondent valued the statement on a four or five grade scale. The interview questions elaborated on the same topics. The questions were half structured and all interviews with the teachers were done during the same day.

The results and my conclusions were discussed with the teachers and principals during two in-service days. I was pleased that they recognized and

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<sup>19</sup> Examples of questions in the questionnaire and interview with the principals are provided in appendix 1.

confirmed the results in my study. During the seminar, we discussed the differences in principals' and teachers' views, and what was needed to be developed in the organization to create a more effective communication. This helped me to refine my research questions and gave me ideas how to proceed.

The next step in writing articles was to analyze the results from the schools that I had visited myself. With the results from the pre-study together with a theoretical base, I analyzed the interviews and the observation protocol to capture different aspects, which were important in the communication process. Besides the questions that were more directly connected to communication, I used the other issues in the interviews to deepen and verify my analysis. Even if the question is about something else than the schools communication, the way the principals and teachers answers how they act and think gives insights about their communication as well as the schools structure and culture.

The analyze of the eight schools developed to my second article. The perspective is interpretative (Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005; Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1984) and therefore both the principals' and the teachers' perspective is described and analyzed. The empirical material is based on the schools in four municipalities. The article was written before we categorized the schools into four groups depending on their results in relation to both academic and social objectives. This means that three of the schools that I write about in the article and labelled academically successful is in the next article viewed as *As* or *aS* schools. By changing the criteria for how to determine success these three schools did not match the criteria's of our *AS* schools that was considered most successful in relation to student outcomes. One reason why the schools where selected in relation to our original sample of schools is due to the time aspect. Being a doctoral student requires that you use the material and knowledge that you have at hand and at the same time produce articles. This underpins the importance to remember that success and quality are always related to some sort of comparison and criteria. Since the definitions can vary it is important to define and clarify what success is in each situation and case. "Good research should be characterized by transparency and well-founded argumentation" (Bergström & Boréus, 2005). This is apparent in my final discussions where I elaborate on success in relation to my results.

The third article concentrates on schools communication structures. The empirical material is based on the questions I posed in the questionnaires to teachers and principals. Among all questions in the questionnaires there were three sections in the principal questionnaire and four sections in the teacher questionnaire that were more closely connected to communication between principals and teachers<sup>20</sup>. I have used a quantitative method even if communication often is viewed as a process closely connected to culture usually studied using qualitative methods. This article includes all 24 schools in our

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<sup>20</sup> See appendix 2

project and here I compare the frequency of meetings and their content in the *AS* schools with the three other groups of schools.

In the fourth article, I concentrate my study on the five *AS* schools. This time I examine the schools' culture and trust. I wanted to analyze the communication process with focus on the schools educational task. How does the principal communicate as a pedagogical leader? The empirical material is based on the interviews<sup>21</sup> with teachers and principals in the five *AS* schools. Each school is described separately to show both similarities and differences in the communication process. In interpretative research it is usual to include all kinds of variables and then concentrate on the ones that seems significant for the situation (Heide, Clarén, Johansson, & Simonsson, 2005). In three of the four articles, I have used quotations from the transcribed interviews. Some of them have been edited to become more readable without taking away or changing the content of the quote.

The articles have been written in the order as they are presented in this thesis. Each article contributed with a deeper understanding of the intertwined processes of leadership and communication in an organizational setting. The analytic process can be described as a combination between induction and deduction informing each other. The more complex the organization and context is, the more important it is to use several methods and ways to understand what is valued as important (MacBeath & McGlynn, 2002).

Leadership and research about school effectiveness is often normative, rational, and instrumental in its presentation. The reason for this is that this kind of research and perspectives are important for further activities among practitioners and policymakers (Sammons, 2006). The call for more empirical data is raised as a request to validate the arguments. The post-modern society on the other hand has contributed to broader perspectives. I believe as Lincoln and Guba do, that the scientific paradigms are altering and informing each other. The boundaries are changing so what is seen as reality or validity is not absolute; it is rather what is useful and variation in perspectives that creates meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). We have more research than ever before which makes the quality of the research even more important. The possibility to generalize is one aspect of quality. The aims with generalization can be many, to study things as they are, as something that might be or something that is ideal. Research can therefore contribute to more than what already exists. It can also contribute to change (Kvale, 1997). Therefore, the intention is to create a dialogue about the relations between methods, results and the objects and perspectives that are in focus.

The collaboration in the project group has given everyone the opportunity to contribute with their knowledge and perspectives and be active in dialogues as well as solving and conducting mutual tasks. We have had the possibility to

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<sup>21</sup> See appendix 3



### III. CONDUCTING THE STUDY

present our findings at international conferences and to meet and talk with internationally recognized professors in our field. This has contributed to an active dialogue about theory, methods, and findings, dialogues that have contributed to making this thesis more transparent.



## IV. FOUR ARTICLES ON PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION

This section starts with a short summary of the four articles. After the summary, the articles are presented as they were published. All articles are published with permission from the publishers.

### 1 Principals' communication inside schools – A contribution to school improvement?

The first article is a pre-study in one school that is not included in our project. The school could be described as an ordinary Swedish secondary school with about 500 students situated in a middle-sized town. The students in year 9 had grades above the Swedish average during the study. The intention with the study was to find important aspects in the communication process that could work as a framework in my coming work. It was also a possibility to try out interview and questionnaire questions. All teachers and the two principals were invited to answer a questionnaire. Interviews were made with six randomly selected teachers and the two principals. The aim with the study was to examine organizational structures, culture and communication content as prerequisites and factors in the communication process. An additional aim was to analyze if the principals' and teachers' communication was directed towards teaching and learning issues. The analysis was conducted on three levels, communication to all personnel, small group communication, and communication to individuals.

In the article, leadership is seen as a process dependent on the leaders, the followers, and the situation. There is a specific interest in how the communication processes support interpretation and sensemaking. An aspect such as interpretation is necessary to make a condensed national curriculum in a decentralized society like Sweden meaningful.

The results show that mainly the communication concerned everyday activities, information, and efficiency. The teachers felt that they were well informed and satisfied with their daily communication with their principals. At the same time, they lacked conversation directed towards their work inside the classroom, in depth conversations on issues related to student outcomes and school improvement. The school culture was directed to create a safe and sustainable environment with few interruptions and unexpected events. There was little time for meta-reflections on the teachers' and principals' work. The principals and the teachers had different views about the frequency and the content of their conversations. They defined important concepts such as school

improvement and pedagogical leadership differently even if they took for granted that they had the same understanding of the concept when it was discussed. The principals overrated their ability to communicate teaching and learning issues and school improvement. Most of the communication was directed to create predictability and to avoid conflicts rather than to start deeper conversations to explore different perspectives. The problem was not the amount of information or clarity in the content. The organizational culture and structure affected the communication processes negatively where meetings and dialogues preserved the existing patterns. The principals and teachers agreed that they needed to improve their communication process but had difficulties to come up with ideas about what to do. An evaluation tool built on different groups and organizational prerequisites like structure, culture and content can help practitioners to become aware of and analyze their own communication processes.

Published as:

Ärlestig, H. (2007) Principals' communication inside schools – a contribution to school improvement? *The Educational Forum* 71(3), 262-273.

## 2 Multidimensional Organizational Communication as a Vehicle for Successful Schools?

The second article examines how teachers and principals perceive the communication processes in relation to organizational goals. Are there differences between principals' and teachers' use of information, affirmation/feedback and interpretation in different schools? Is there a positive relation between the organizational communication processes and the school outcomes in the form of student academic grades?

One challenge in the leadership process is to align organizational structure and culture. A leader's communication should support different dimensions in relation to the organization's mission and goals. A model describing communication as a multidimensional process is the departure of the study. Information, affirmation/feedback and interpretation are overlapping dimensions that are necessary for organizational communication processes to be effective. Information helps to understand frames, highlight important messages and provide facts. Affirmation/feedback serve social and psychological needs. To be recognized as an individual is important both from a human being perspective and as a professional. Interpretation helps to visualize various understandings of concepts and the actual situation. These three dimensions in the communication process: transmission of information, affirmation/feedback, and interpretation, are in the article exemplified from both the teachers' and the principals' perspective.

The empirical data consists of interviews with five teachers and their principals in eight schools within the project study population. The eight

schools are divided into two groups. One group has students with academic grades above the Swedish average while the other four schools have students with grades below the average in Swedish schools.

The result shows that transmission of information was the most frequently used dimension in the school's communication processes. There was less focus on affirmation/feedback and interpretation, aspects that the teachers asked for and wanted principals to pay more attention to. The content in the conversations was directed towards individual students or the current situation rather than teachers' performance and attitudes. In three of the schools with academic results above the national average, the principals used information, affirmation/feedback, and interpretation as a multidimensional and reinforcing process. The principals in the other five schools left the teachers alone with their opinions to a large extent. Despite many meetings in these five schools, the principals were not able to keep the focus on teaching and learning issues in their communication. For communication to contribute to students' outcomes, information about educational issues needs to be supported by affirmation/feedback, and dialogues that encourage interpretation. In the schools where the principals' awareness and knowledge about how to lead communicative processes were low, their everyday conversations with teachers unintentionally preserved and reinforced negative aspects of the schools' structure and culture.

Published as:

Ärlestig, H. (2007) Multidimensional organizational communication as a vehicle for successful schools? *Journal for School Public Relations*, 28(2), 137-163.

### 3 Structural Prerequisites for Principals' and Teachers' Communication about Teaching and Learning issues

This article is a quantitative study in all 24 schools. The article concentrates on what kind of meetings teachers and principals communicate in and what issues they talk about during their workday. The study also examines whether there are differences in the organizational communication processes between successful and less successful schools. For organizational communication to be manageable and meaningful, it needs support from organizational structures such as meetings and agendas. If meetings and agendas do not support issues about teaching and learning, student outcomes, and school improvement, it is hard for principals to conduct a pedagogical leadership. Pedagogical leadership is in the article seen as a democratic leadership with a focus on the national curriculum. Primarily, pedagogic leadership should contribute to collaboration and learning for all actors inside the school. Principals have the possibility to set the agenda and determine the issues to discuss during meetings. This is even more important since many meetings are a matter of routine. Enabling

structures require two-way communication while hindering structures can force consensus, mistrust and control.

The empirical data is based on questionnaires to principals and teachers. In the article, principals' and teachers' views in successful and less successful schools are compared. The results show that there is a difference in how teachers and principals view their mutual communication. Principals tend to overrate their ability to communicate. Many of their meetings are a matter of routine. There is a lack of pedagogical leadership in many schools and in addition there is an organizational and communicative blindness where teachers and principals are unaware of how structural and cultural aspects affect their communication. There are also indications that the principal's communication is unequally distributed. A few teachers seem to get the most of the principal's communication time. One reason for this can be that the teachers often initiate the conversations. The findings show that there is a difference between successful and less successful schools. By letting the teachers choose between different categories of issues, the teachers in the successful schools indicated that their principals talked more about all categories of issues related to teaching and school improvement. The only exception was conversations about everyday matters, which the principals in the other groups communicated more frequent. The principals in the successful schools conducted more classroom visits and provided feedback to a higher extent to their teachers compared to the other groups. How principals understand and use structure and culture in the communication processes inside schools seems to be as important as principals' individual ability and communication skills. A more conscious use of communication would probably affect the schools positively.

Published as:

Ärlestig, H. (2008) Structural prerequisites for principals' and teachers' communication about teaching and learning issues. *Improving Schools*, 11(3) 191-205.

## 4 In-School Communication: Developing a Pedagogically Focussed School Culture

Communicating as a principal includes handling conversations with staff that have different experiences and opinions about the schools educational mission. Even if there is well establish communication structures, other aspects affect the communication process. Viewing communication as a pervasive process means that besides the spoken content, it is possible to detect the sender's aims and the sender's individual values in conversations and dialogues. This indicates that the sender's personal values and knowledge are important to make communication coherent and meaningful. Communication is closely connected to the organizational culture. Communication can therefore be seen as dependent on the quality of the relationships in organizations, which makes trust an important variable in the communication process. Trust can have different

forms and be connected to the institution or to the individual principal's abilities and aims. The Swedish curriculum states that the principal should conduct a pedagogical leadership and take responsibility for school outcomes. This forms a hypothesis that a pedagogical leadership focussed on teaching and learning issues requires that the leaders' personal values and communication are aligned with the organization's objectives and mission.

In the fourth article the five schools that are labelled as successful (*AS* schools) in the project are examined. The research questions are twofold; how does the principals' communication contribute to a pedagogically focussed school culture that supports collaboration and work with teaching and learning issues? What do the communication processes reveal about trust among principals and teachers? The analysis is based on the interviews with principals and five teachers at each one of the five schools.

By describing each one of the schools, it becomes apparent that the principals have different strategies in their communication. In four of the schools, the principals' communication is consistent with the principals' individual values and the national curriculum. In these schools, there are also signs that trust is built in three directions: principal's trust in teachers, teachers' trust in the principal as a person, and teachers' trust in the principal's role. The principals contribute through their communication to a pedagogically focussed school culture. In the fifth school, the principal's communication is undermined by values that are not part of the Swedish curriculum. The trust in the principal is low, openness and conversations about the teachers' work inside the classroom is lacking. In all, the principal's communication can support, preserve and/or undermine if the school develops a pedagogically focussed school culture.

Published as:

Ärlestig, H. (2008) In-school communication: developing a pedagogically focussed school culture. *Values and Ethics in Educational Administration*, 7(1), 1-8.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL  
SCHOOLS



## V. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

What can we learn by studying principals' communication and its relation to student outcomes in various schools? The question is adequate since the interest for how principals and teachers affect student outcomes and school results are in focus for many policymakers and practitioners around the world. The relations are not simple to capture since communication in organizations are multidimensional and complex often intertwined with other processes. Still the findings in this thesis indicate that the understandings about organizational prerequisites like structure and culture affect principals' communication and implicitly school outcomes. The communication process in the more successful schools differs from the processes in the less successful schools.

In this chapter, I will summarize and elaborate on some of the key results in the articles. Some of the findings have been evident in all articles while other results are only addressed once. I will structure the conclusions in relation to my three overall research questions: to analyze the interplay between organizational factors such as structure and culture and the principal's communication, how communication between principals and teachers reflect and affect their work with teaching and learning issues and implicitly student outcomes, and what differences there are in the internal communication processes related to teaching and learning issues in successful and less successful schools.

### **Principals' communication and organizational structure and culture**

Everyone who has worked in a couple of schools knows that there are differences in the schools' communication processes, including a variety in content and focus in the principals' and teachers' daily conversations. School structures together with teachers' and principals' values and attitudes affect how the internal communication processes contribute to students' results. The context is significant for what kind of results an organization achieves. Looking at the context as one of the active components in the leadership process (Pierce & Newstrom, 2007) highlights the importance to consider both how the organization forms prerequisites for the actors' behaviours and how actors affect the organizational structure and culture.

For conversations and meetings to be effective they need to be organized in relation to the school objectives and issues related to the work towards good outcomes. At the same time, we know that many meetings and scheduled

activities in organizations often are a matter of routine. To some extent, this is probably necessary. It is however, useful to be aware that planned meetings often is the base in the communication process. The school's meeting structure seem to favour general information rather than dialogues about the teachers work inside the classroom (Ärlestig, 2008b).

Meetings between principals and teachers that include dialogues and affirmation/feedback of the teachers professional work and interpretation of visions and objectives as well as teachers daily work in the classroom seem to be quite scarce in many of the studied schools (Ärlestig, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b). An external pressure with constantly new expectations from different stakeholders on all levels explains the amount of information that is necessary in today's school organizations. However, this can contribute to too little time for deeper dialogs and interpretation in how to understand and make use of the information.

Communication is closely related to organizational culture. To make an organization work, collaboration between different actors is necessary. Values and attitudes about work and collaboration affect how activities are conducted. Beside structural aspects, such as how much time is devoted to various content and meetings, and who is participating, cultural aspects such as trust between the involved actors affect how and what is communicated (Ärlestig, 2008a).

Trust in the individual principal and her aims, knowledge and capacity affects the communication. Some teachers indicate that their current principal is not "knowledgeable and professional" enough to lead their school in a successful way. This probably affects what issues the teachers choose to raise in their conversations with the principal. Well-established individual roles and routines create strong cultures that affect how open the communication is. Without knowledge about how to use communication and the role of culture in schools, the principal's individual capacity to affect the school outcomes can be limited. In the fourth article the focus is on culture and trust in the five AS schools. One of the reasons for choosing those schools were that in many of the other schools there were a lack of conversations between principals and teachers about the school's educational tasks.

Principals have limited time to communicate (Katz & Kahn, 1978) therefore it becomes even more important how the communication is supported by the organizational structure and culture. Inefficient structures can contribute to meetings with such general character that it does not contribute to sensemaking and a long-term support for the teachers work. Routine meetings can support well-established and strong cultures where it becomes more important to preserve old habits and discussions than to work for improvement. Unreflected communication can support strong individual opinions and unsolved conflicts, which can become obstacles that overshadow the content of the meeting. The dynamics between the participants and the organizational structure and culture do not allow alternative ways to discuss or understand

different issues. Insufficient communication does not only reflect or can be mixed up with cultural problems (Schein, 1985) it can also contribute to them.

The overall findings in many of the studied schools indicate that there is low awareness about their organization and communication processes and how they affect principals and teachers daily activities. Many of the interviewed teachers had difficulties to separate organizational factors, the content in the conversations and individual actors. When they described their communication and leadership prerequisites, both principals and teachers related their views to individual abilities rather than as processes dependent on the context and all involved actors. The teachers and principals had few or no ideas or thoughts about if, and in that case how, the communication patterns could be changed. The discrepancy between principals and teachers views of what and how often various issues are communicated together with their low awareness of the communication processes indicate that there are few meta-reflections about communication and how it is used (Ärlestig, 2007b, 2008b). This organizational and communicative blindness can create problems in the work towards good school outcomes.

One example of the communicative blindness is how principals and teachers take concepts and many actions for granted even if deeper analysis shows that they have different interpretations of the phenomena. Principals express that they often work with and think about teaching and learning issues, but according to the teachers, this does not come through in their communication. Even if the principal has good individual communications skills, the communication structures and culture can support or undermine the leader's intentions. For example, in a resistant culture with limited meeting time a principal can undervalue the importance of mutual interpretation. If the main part of the principal's time goes to transmission of information and listening to individual teachers problems, communication can preserve existing patterns rather than being an active tool for improvement. If there is a low awareness about organizational prerequisites and communication processes, it can be hard for the actors to determine the reasons why the communication does not come through as intended. Using communication as an instrument for analysis could help organizations to reflect on how different processes interplay and how communication can become an active tool in the schools work towards good educational outcomes.

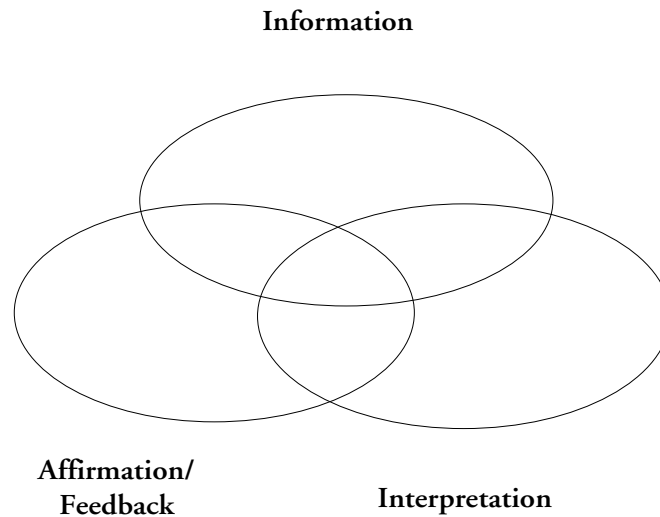
Even if the principal has sufficient individual skills in communication, the challenge is to lead a communicative system where many variables interact. Using communication as an active leadership tool requires a picture of all dimensions in a communication process. What kind of meetings occurs? Who participates? What kinds of issues are treated? What are the shared values? Who is responsible and who is talking? Communication and meta-reflections about the existing patterns as well as the desired patterns can contribute to changes in both structure and culture. To work with improvement often requires both restructuring and reculturing (Fullan, 2001b). Since communication can

contribute to preserve or change existing patterns it becomes relevant for principals and teachers to be able to analyze what is connected to such organizational factors as structure and culture, what is related to the individual leader and the leadership process and finally what is dependent on the communication processes.

## Principals' communication as pedagogical leaders

To be a leader in an organization includes leading towards specific goals and being accountable for organizational outcomes. A principal's communication and tasks includes many different issues. Beside issues more directly related to teaching and learning, budgeting, administration, marketing, issues related to students in need of special care, and information to parents are examples of tasks that are linked to running a school. Even if organizational structure and culture are in order there needs to be a message in the conversations that can be identified as essential for the work towards good student outcomes. According to the curriculum the principal is expected to be a pedagogical leader and also responsible for the school results (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). Despite that clear statement, there is a risk that other issues can overshadow conversations about the schools core tasks (Kotter, 1996). My research examines conversations that are related to teaching and learning. This does not set aside that other issues are relevant in the principal's communication. Instead it emphasizes that for the principal to conduct a pedagogical leadership and take responsibility for the school results, the content in the conversations should be more directly connected to teaching and learning issues and student outcomes. Even if student results, teaching and learning issues and school improvement are core tasks for schools, it seems like some teachers almost never talk with their principals about these issues and for many others it is not the dominating topic.

Already in the first article there are indications that much of the conversations in schools deal with practical issues and individual students (Ärlestig, 2007b). It seems that many conversations that are intended to strengthen classroom practice become too general or are connected to individual students. To be recognized as a main process, communication ought to include more than transmission of information. Conversations interpreting how the current work relates to the school objectives and conversations that affirm and provide feedback become necessary for leading a school towards good outcomes (Ärlestig, 2007a). The model in figure 5 visualizes three dimensions that are relevant when analyzing different meetings and communication processes.



*Figure 5 Organizational communications as a complex and multi-dimensional process - three basic dimensions. (Ärlestig, 2007a)*

The three dimensions: information, affirmation/feedback<sup>22</sup> and interpretation, are necessary to meet different organizational aims. The dimensions are to some extent overlapping, still each dimension can not fully compensate another dimension. Different meetings or conversation techniques can support the various dimensions. In a loosely coupled organization (Weick, 1982), and with well educated and professional followers, the followers perspective and interpretations become even more important for organizational success. How much the different dimensions overlap each other and how much attention each perspective gets differs depending on the organizational prerequisites and the involved actors. Using the above model revealed that in some of the schools affirmation/feedback towards the teacher's professional role and conversation that connected everyday work with visions and more long term strategies towards the objectives were missing (Ärlestig, 2007a). An extended analysis using the model on all 24 schools in the project confirmed the data in my second article (Ärlestig, 2009 forthcoming). Mostly communication was used to transmit information and many schools lacked conversations directed towards affirmation/feedback as well as interpretation of visions, objectives and how the teacher's daily work with students affected the school

<sup>22</sup> The reason why I use two concepts is that even if both concepts are connected to individual confirmation there is no suitable concept covering both positive social support and constructive feedback.

results. It was only in 6 out of 24 schools where communication was used in a more multidimensional way that frequently included information, affirmation/feedback and interpretation (Ärlestig, 2009 forthcoming).

Earlier research claims that principals do not engage themselves enough in the teachers work inside the classroom (Berg, 1995; Ekholm, 2000; Hallerström, 2006). This is verified in the articles in this thesis (Ärlestig, 2007a, 2007b, 2008b). Teachers express a lack of classroom visits and professional feedback from their principals. This implies that principals and teachers have too few joint forums with conversation about teaching and learning issues. One explanation can be a too diverse reality and lack of time. My study shows that there is a potential for principals and teachers to prioritize and improve the quality in their communication process, at the same time the role of the district, the superintendent, and the political initiatives affecting the local schools prerequisites should not be underestimated.

The findings also show that principals' communication with their teachers are unequally distributed (Ärlestig, 2008b). To give some teachers more time for conversations can be an organizational strength, if the decisions are conscious and based on the current situation and the individual actors. It can on the other hand be a problem especially if the principal is not aware of the differences and the meetings take time from other individuals or issues. Many principals provide an 'open door policy' where some teachers take the opportunity to talk with their principals while others do not. Since principals have a limited time to communicate this can lead to an inappropriate amount of time spent on issues that could be solved more efficiently. Teachers ask for more professional affirmation and feedback. At the same time, it seems like the 'open door policy' does not contribute with feedback or at least do teachers not recognize these conversations as feedback on their profession and performance.

Principals seem to overestimate their ability to make their pedagogical leadership come through in their communication. Even if I argue that a successful leader must lead a communicative system where structure and culture are important dimensions, the content of the conversations is also an important dimension. Today many issues compete for space in meetings between principals and teachers. Apart from more knowledge about organizational communication processes, providing time for deeper conversations about the teachers work in relation to student outcomes is a challenge for each principal. An active pedagogical leader is able to use communication so the content of the conversation is focussed on the schools core mission and how to reach good outcomes for the students (Ärlestig, 2008a).

## Successful and less successful schools

One aspect of my studies was to find out if there were any differences in the communication processes in successful and less successful schools. The first challenge in talking about success is to define the concept. Depending on

perspectives and whom you ask the definitions can take different forms. Keeping the budget, having a safe and inviting environment, working with school improvement projects can to some principals, teachers, and parents be examples of definitions of successful schools. In the project we have chosen to define success as student outcomes in relation to the national curriculum which includes both academic and social objectives (Ahlström & Höög, 2008). These aspects can be hard to measure and there are disputes about how reliable academic grades are. To determine and define success is one important component of conversations related to school outcomes. Taking different concepts for granted and not interpreting them can contribute to communication problems as well as cultural difficulties such as value conflicts. It was apparent in some of the schools that they had not discussed and agreed on what the most important issues were. (Ärlestig, 2007b, 2008b).

In this thesis various definitions of success are used. In an international context, success is often only used in relation to academic grades. The schools in the first two articles were chosen based on their students' academic results while the following two articles also took social objectives into account. The schools participating in the project were 'ordinary schools' which means that they were not the 'best or worst' schools in the country. The same definition of success with the same study population in all four articles could have given a deeper understanding of each schools communication in relation to outcomes. Even if the differences in student outcomes among Swedish schools are small, the various definitions and study population used in the four articles validates the findings indicating that the variation in the communication and leadership processes among schools affects the school outcomes.

Some of the results that I have examined are the close connection between the organizational structure, culture and the leader's communication, the importance in using communication as a multidimensional process and having a relevant content. To validate the earlier described model of three dimensions as multidimensional communication (Ärlestig, 2007a), the instrument was used in an extended analyse of all 24 schools in the project. As mentioned before six out of the 24 schools were considered to use communication in a more multidimensional way. Of these schools 4 were among the five **AS** schools (Ärlestig, 2009 forthcoming). Compared to the other three groups, the communication structures in the successful schools are largely focussed on work related to the national curriculum. Principals talked more frequently about issues related to teaching and learning, student outcomes, and school improvement. They conducted more often classroom visits and gave more frequently individual affirmation and confirmation to their teachers. The school culture in the successful schools indicated mutual trust and shared values among the principal and the teachers. The principals as well as the teachers in the **AS** schools described an open climate where the principal as an individual was interested in teaching and learning issues. They also argued for the

importance of collaboration and the possibility to discuss different viewpoints (Ärlestig, 2008a), all signs of an responsive community (Bredeson, 2003). Earlier findings state five combinations of principals and practice for building and sustaining successful schools:

1. *sustaining passionate commitment and personal accountability;*
2. *maintaining moral purpose and managing tensions and dilemmas;*
3. *being other centred and focussing on learning and development;*
4. *making emotional and rational investment;*
5. *emphasising the personal and the functional.* (Day & Leithwood, 2007:171)

In four of the five AS schools, there are frequent statements by the respondents that fit in on these descriptions. The five combinations are all dependent on frequent and conscious communication processes.

In the less successful schools, it was hard for principals and teachers to put words on what was missing. They were disappointed in how meetings were conducted and that there were too few classroom visits. When they tried to explain what caused their dissatisfaction they could not distinguish what was connected to the organizations structure and culture, the communication process, the content, and/or the individual leader. Instead of describing their communication and organization, they were talking about what they were missing and what values were apparent or lacking in their school culture.

Communication is a multidimensional process where the combination of variables and perspectives can be more important than a single variable. One way to become more aware of the different parts of communication is to separate individual communication skills from leading a communicative system. To use communication as a multidimensional process implies creating and maintaining structures that involve interpretation and affirmation/feedback rather than only transmission of information. It also involves creating a trusting culture that contributes to collaboration, learning and directing communication content towards teaching and learning issues and student outcomes. It cannot be taken for granted that principals have enough knowledge and experience about how to lead a communicative system and how to use their individual communication skills effectively. To use communication as an active leadership tool is possible to learn (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007) and ought to be a part of principals education and training. Communication in successful schools is a joint venture where many variables need to be taken into account to contribute to the work towards good educational outcomes.



## Further research

Since communication and leadership are main processes in organizations, there are many aspects left that would be interesting for further research. Examples of perspectives related to communication that have not been considered within this thesis are organizational size, principals' and teachers' educational background, students' and parents' perspectives, political dimensions and gender. The project has empirical data that has still not been analyzed, data that can contribute to a deeper understanding of school success, school leadership and organizational structure and culture.

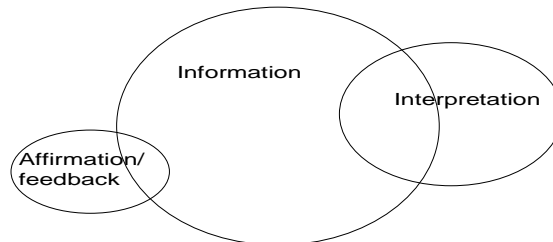
In this thesis the empirical data mainly comes from questionnaires and interviews with principals and teachers. Other methods like observations, action research, and case studies would probably contribute with more nuances in how communication and leadership relates to different kind of results. Reflections on the results in this thesis also create new questions and perspectives that would be interesting for further investigations.

The research instruments that I created in the pre-study have been improved and translated to English and are currently used in a dissertation study in Georgia, USA. The study is replicated in a secondary school to study the principals' and teachers' communication about teaching and learning issues. The possibility to compare the Swedish study with studies in other countries can give new knowledge about national variation in local schools leadership, structure, and culture in relation to communication. By comparing principals' leadership and communication in Swedish schools with leadership and communication in other countries cultural aspects that are taken for granted could be revealed. It can also clarify how various structures and cultures contribute to student outcomes and school results.

Is there a difference between female and male principals' communication? Are there different expectations on how female and male leaders' should communicate in schools? Both questions deserve more research. Deepening the question and comparing the answers with the respondents understanding and knowledge in gender issues would make the research even more interesting.

Another research task that could be of interest is developing the multidimensional communication model to an instrument that could be used to analyze and describe school communication. By developing more exact questions related to the three dimensions information, affirmation/feedback, and interpretation, the model could be adjusted to visualize and give examples of various schools current situation. Some models could be more overlapping and also show the variation in size among the three dimensions. Figure 6 illustrate one hypothetical model illustrating a principal's communication. The figure displays an example of a school in this study where information is the main dimension in the principals' communication. Affirmation/feedback is not

so frequently communicated and most of the affirmation/feedback is not connected to the information and interpretation dimensions.



*Figure 6 A hypothetical figure of how a principal's communication can be illustrated.*

The figure can then be used to discuss ideal types and improvement in the local school. It could also be used as an element in principal training courses. If the research was done in a larger study, different models could be studied in relation to school outcomes. The model could also be developed to study teachers' communication among each other or teachers' and students' communication.

What I find most interesting to study is however how the changes in policy and political ambitions will affect the principals' pedagogical leadership, communication and student outcomes. The current government in Sweden proposes large changes at the national level, a new educational act, new curriculum and syllabus are expected in the near future. The intention is to reduce the number of objectives and more clearly communicate the achievement requirements for students (SOU 2007:28). There are also new initiatives to publish test data and student grades on the Swedish school agency's homepage<sup>23</sup>. Together with new tests, a new grading system and an increased state inspection the local schools work towards better student results becomes even more relevant. All Swedish schools are already required to write a yearly quality report (Skolverket, 1999:1). The reports aim is to both inform and be a document for school improvement. A new national principal program was introduced 2008. The new program puts more attention to law, exercise of authority and steering towards goals and results.

The whole system builds on the logic of New Public Management where rational instruments and an extended control should contribute to improved outcomes. The principal holds a central role in the NPM-ideology as

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<sup>23</sup> <http://siris.skolverket.se> accessed 20081006

accountable for school results and students outcomes. At the same time, hand learning processes are complex and public organizations have fundamental democratic and social values to consider (Eriksen, 1998). To make these structural changes become a part of everyday work presumes high expectations on the principal and the school leadership processes. Will these new initiatives strengthen the principals' pedagogical role and change principals' and teachers' communication and activities? Will this lead to an increased number of classroom visits? Will the teachers receive more affirmation/feedback and in that case what kind of affirmation/feedback? Will the results from the state inspections together with official data be communicated and will those results in that case contribute to better student outcomes? Will principals recognize that their responsibility as leaders of the school also includes accountability for student outcomes? Will principals become more engaged in teachers' work with their students and the relation to student outcomes or will the initiatives just increase principals' administrative burden?

My study shows that even with small differences in student outcomes there are differences in principals' communication and pedagogical leadership. Would a study on schools with very high and schools with very low results compared to the national average verify the results? There are still many issues worthwhile studying to create a better understanding of the relations between successful schools, leadership, organizational prerequisites and principals' communication.



## VI. SWEDISH SUMMARY

Idag finns det ett ökat intresse kring hur den lokala skolan presterar och bidrar till elevernas lärande och resultat. Vissa skolor bedöms som mer framgångsrika än andra. Forskning visar att den enskilda skolan liksom den individuella läraren och rektorn bidrar till vilka resultat eleverna har möjlighet att uppnå (se t.ex. Day et al., 2007; Grosin, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

En av de viktigaste processerna inom organisationer som skolan är kommunikation. Samtal och möten tar en stor del av rektorers och lärares tid i anspråk. Kommunikation både speglar och påverkar verksamheten i skolan och bidrar på så sätt direkt och/eller indirekt till skolans resultat. Samtidigt är många möten och samtal i skolan rutiner och det är inte ovanligt att viktig information och många meddelanden drunknar i det stora informationsflödet (Kotter, 1996).

Frågan är hur den vardagliga organisationskommunikationen stödjer skolans uppdrag. Finns det kommunikationsstrukturer i form av möten som mer direkt stödjer samtal om lärande och undervisning? Finns det förutsättningar i skolkulturen som ger förtroende för rektor att föra samtal om lärande och undervisning? Kommunikation är en genomgripande process som inte bara avspeglar ämnesinnehållet i sig utan även sändarens kunskap om organisation och kommunikation. Hur ledaren kommunicerar påverkar ledarens trovärdighet och förmåga att leda mot förändring (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007).

Den här avhandlingen är en del av ett fem år långt forskningsprojekt: *'Structure, Culture, Leadership - prerequisites for successful schools?'*. Syftet med projektet är att studera hur struktur, kultur och ledarskap relaterar till skolans resultat. Huvudtemat i avhandlingen är rektorer och lärares kommunikation och mer specifikt hur rektors samtal är förknippade med den nationella läroplanen och skolans kärnverksamhet, lärande och fostran. Syftet med avhandlingen är att få svar på följande forskningsfrågor: Hur påverkar organisatoriska faktorer som struktur och kultur kommunikationsprocessen mellan rektorer och lärare? Rektorerna ska enligt LPO 94 bedriva ett pedagogiskt ledarskap och ta ansvar för att skolans aktiviteter är inriktade mot de nationella målen (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994). Hur speglar och påverkar samtal mellan rektorer och lärare deras arbete med läroplansrelaterade frågor? Finns det skillnader, och hur ser de i sådana fall ut, mellan framgångsrika och mindre framgångsrika skolors kommunikationsprocesser?

Ledarskap ses som en social och relationell process där någon medvetet påverkar andra i en bestämd riktning (Pierce & Newstrom, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Processen består av tre huvuddelar: ledare, följare och situation. Följare är ett ovanligt begrepp i svenska skolor. I Sverige används vanligtvis begreppet medarbetare istället. Internationellt är "followers" ett accepterat begrepp. Ledarskapet påverkar direkt eller indirekt organisationens resultat. Det ledarskap som bedrivs är beroende av den organisation som den finns inom. Struktur och kultur är två aspekter som formar och ger förutsättningar för hur arbetet kan bedrivas. Strukturer i form av mål, policys och hur arbetet är organiserat kan ses som en ryggrad i organisationen (Bolman & Deal, 2003). De värderingar, attityder och normer som finns hos rektorer och lärare påverkar hur de förstår och agerar i olika situationer. Det kan beskrivas som skolans kultur (Schein, 1985).

I projektet har det ingått tjugofyra 7-9 -skolor fördelade på tolv kommuner. Urvalet är baserat på att kommunerna ska ha en god geografisk spridning, ska variera storleksmässigt och utgöra en variation vad gäller politisk representativitet. Inom varje kommun har två skolor valts ut och dessa skolors elever har en jämförbar socioekonomisk bakgrund. I den ena skolan hade eleverna i år 9, 2004, ett högre betygssnitt än genomsnittet av elever i landet, medan eleverna i den andra skolan hade ett lägre betygssnitt än svenska elever generellt. Baserat på detta urval har de 24 skolorna sedan delats in i fyra skolgrupper.

		Framgångsrika i relation till kunskapsmålen	
		Mer (A)	Mindre (a)
Framgångsrika i relation till de sociala målen	Mer (S)	AS 5 skolor	aS 8 skolor
	Mindre (s)	As 7 skolor	as 4 skolor

Figur 7 Fyra grupper av skolor som illustrerar deras framgång baserat på hur de når skolans kunskaps- respektive sociala mål.

Indelningen i de fyra skolgrupperna har gjorts utifrån ett beräknat mått baserat på hur skolorna har lyckats nå såväl kunskaps- som sociala mål (Ahlström & Höög, 2008). Hur väl skolorna har lyckats i sitt kunskapsuppdrag har beräknats på vilket meritvärde eleverna i år 9 har fått och det antal elever i år 9 som har fått godkända betyg under en period av tre år, 2004-2006. Den sociala måluppfyllelsen har beräknats utifrån en enkät till elever i år 9 där de har

bedömt hur skolan, de själva och deras kamrater lyckats i arbetet med att nå läroplanens sociala mål<sup>24</sup>. Av de 24 skolorna bedömde 5 skolor (*AS*) vara framgångsrika i relation till både kunskapsmålen och de sociala målen. Det var 7 skolor (*As*) som var framgångsrika i relation till kunskapsmålen men mindre framgångsrika i relation till de sociala målen. Av de återstående skolorna bedömdes 8 skolor (*aS*) framgångsrika i relation till de sociala målen men inte i relation till kunskapsmålen och 4 skolor (*as*) bedömdes som mindre framgångsrika i relation till både kunskapsmål och sociala mål.

Studien har ett tolkande perspektiv där organisationskommunikation har använts som ett sätt att förstå och beskriva vad som sker i organisationer. Intresset riktas mot att förstå sociala interaktioner och hur dessa kan skapa meningsfullhet. Det empiriska materialet bygger på intervjuer och enkäter med rektorer och lärare då en tolkande ansats vill fånga komplexitet och samspel ur flera perspektiv.

Avhandlingen består av fyra publicerade artiklar som behandlar olika aspekter av rektors kommunikation med lärare i relation till läroplanens uppdrag samt en övergripande kapp. Den första artikeln är en förstudie i en 7-9-skola. Rektorer såväl som lärare har svarat på enkäter och intervjuer om skolans interna kommunikation. Den andra artikeln beskriver en teoretisk modell som kan fungera som ett analysinstrument för kommunikationsprocesser i organisationer. Modellen har använts i en analys av åtta skolors kommunikationsprocess. Den tredje artikeln är en kvantitativ studie av de 24 skolornas kommunikationsstrukturer. Via lärare och rektorers svar i en enkät analyseras hur ofta rektor deltar i olika möten och vad som är det vanligaste mötesinnehållet i rektorers och lärares kommunikation. Den fjärde artikeln behandlar kommunikationsprocessen i de fem *AS*-skolorna. Syftet är att ge exempel på fungerande kommunikationsprocesser och behandlar bland annat förtroendet mellan rektorer och lärare och dess påverkan på en pedagogiskt inriktad skolkultur.

De övergripande resultaten visar att den vanligaste förekommande kommunikationen mellan rektor och lärare i de studerade skolorna bestod av information och informella samtal kring enskilda elever och vardagsfrågor. Samtalen beskrevs som lättsamma och trevliga. Många lärare samtalade sällan med sin rektor om frågor som rörde undervisning och lärande. Lärarna beskrev att rektor sällan genomförde klassrumsbesök. Även om lärarna i viss utsträckning var kritiska mot rektor så hade de svårt att skilja på vad som relaterade till organisationsfrågor, vad som berodde på den enskilda ledaren och vad som var beroende av kommunikationsprocessen. Kommunikation var nära

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<sup>24</sup> Enkätfrågorna bygger på Skolverkets utvärderingsverktyg BRUK, <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2173> hämtat 20081006.

kopplad till organisationens kultur och baserades många gånger på väl etablerade rutiner. Detta medverkar till att kommunikationen togs för given och inte användes som ett aktivt ledarskapsverktyg.

Ett av rektors uppdrag är att verka som pedagogisk ledare. Även om rektorerna förmedlade mycket information var det mer sällsynt med samtal som gav tid och möjlighet att tolka informationen i relation till lärarnas klassrumsarbete i flera av skolorna. Studien visar också att feedback och bekräftelse i relation till lärarens arbete i klassrummet var dåligt utvecklat. Många lärare uppger att de väldigt sällan fick direkt feedback från sina rektorer. Det verkar också som att rektors kommunikation var ojämnt fördelad. Vissa lärare träffade rektor ofta medan andra i princip bara mötte rektor på personalmöten och i fikarummet. Flera av rektorerna tillämpade en 'öppen dörr policy' vilket innebar att mycket av rektors samtalstid styrdes av vilket initiativ den enskilda läraren tog.

Resultaten visar också att rektorer och lärare många gånger tog begrepp och uttryck förgivna även om en närmare granskning visade att det fanns flera olika tolkningar av vad begreppet betyder. Pedagogiskt ledarskap och framgångsrika skolor är exempel på sådana uttryck. Vad som menas med en framgångsrik skola varierar i dagens debatt och forskning. Vi har i projektet valt att definiera framgångsrika skolor i relation till läroplanen och dess kunskaps- och sociala mål. I de framgångsrika skolorna kommunicerade rektorerna oftare om läroplansuppdraget. De gjorde fler klassrumsbesök och använde kommunikation på ett flerdimensionellt sätt. Förmedlandet av information blandades med tolkning och bekräftelse/feedback.

Organisationers struktur och kultur, ledarskap och skolans interna kommunikationsprocess är ofta komplexa och påverkar varandra. Hur de påverkar varandra är nog så viktigt som en enskild variabel. De studerade skolornas resultat påverkades i högre grad av rektors förmåga att leda ett kommunikationssystem än rektors enskilda förmågor som kommunikatör. Både hur och vad rektor kommunicerar påverkar direkt eller indirekt skolans resultat. Idag finns det starka politiska initiativ att följa elevers lärande och resultat. En utökad utbildningsinspektion, en ny skollag som underlag för nya läroplaner och ett nytt betygssystem kommer att sätta fokus på skolans resultat och målstyrning. Fortsatt forskning om hur det kommer att påverka rektors pedagogiska ledarskap och rektorer och lärares kommunikation är eftersträfvansvärt.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Research instruments – pre-study

Examples of questions in the principals' questionnaire and interview during the pre-study (article 1). The questions in the teachers' questionnaire cover the same issues.

### Meeting protocol

I meet with teachers on the following occasions	Almost never	1-2 Times each semester	1-2 Times each month	Every week	Daily
Faculty/Staff meetings					
Teacher team meetings					
Individually organized meetings					
Other planned meetings; e.g. Team leader meetings Development meetings Student conferences					
Informal meetings initiated by teacher					
Informal meetings initiated by principal					
Unannounced classroom visits					
Announced or planned classroom visits					
Other meetings (please specify)					

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Principal's availability

	Everyday	Every week	A few times each semester	Almost never	More than 50% of total work hours
How often are you visible in classrooms, hallways, and rest areas?					
How often are you available at your office? (open door policy)					
How often are you not on campus?					

Meeting content

I am actively involved in...	Almost never	1-2 Times each semester	1-2 Times each month	Every week	Every day
Communication about teaching and instruction					
Communication in relation to the curriculum and school policies					
Communication about every day activities (school management)					
Communication about the schools vision and goals					
Communication about student social behavior and rules					
Communication in relation to assessment and grading					
Communication about school outcomes					
Communication where concrete feedback on teacher work is given					
Communication regarding school improvement					

## Examples from the interview guide

- What is the first thing you think about in relation to communication within the school? (Between the principal and teachers?)
- What subjects do you most frequently talk/communicate with your teachers about? (Why? Who initiates the conversation?)
- What are the most important issues to communicate with your teachers? (In relation to school outcomes? When do you do this?)
- Principals are expected to be pedagogical leaders and communicate the school's mission and objectives related to student outcomes. Give some examples of how you act as a pedagogical leader?
- What is it in your school's culture that supports or hinders a good communication process? (Look for hinders, support, openness, trust, etc...)
- Are there meetings where you would like to participate more frequently and/or be more active? (Which meetings? What is hindering you from participating?)
- How does your communication affect the school's internal work? (What do you initiate? Take responsibility for? Objectives/policies in relation to communication? Is there a difference between what you want to communicate and what you need to communicate? What is important in relation to success?)



## Appendix 2: Principals and teachers questionnaires

Principal questionnaire SCL-project - questions connected to communication

I participate actively in	Almost never	Once or twice each semester	Once or twice each month	Every week	Every day
Communication about teaching and instruction					
Communication about every day activities (mainly practical issues)					
Communication about the schools vision and objectives					
Communication about students social behavior and rules					
Communication regarding school development					
Communication about outcomes in relation to teaching and learning					
Communication where concrete feedback on teachers work is given					
Communication regarding school improvement					

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

I meet teachers during following occasions	Almost never	Once or twice each semester	Once or twice each month	Every week	Every day
Faculty-meetings					
Teacher team-meetings					
Individually organized meetings					
Other planned meetings e.g. Pupil-conferences, principal lead team-meetings, development-groups					
Informal meetings initiated by teachers					
Informal meetings initiated by principals					
Unannounced classroom visits					
Announced or planned classroom visits					



When I communicate as a principal I believe I am good at	Agree				
	Not at all				To a high extent
expressing my self					
discussing issues					
convincing others					
dialogues					
listening					
transmitting information					
negotiating					
decision making					
solving everyday issues					
reflecting					
being open minded towards new perspectives					
affirming others					
challenging others ideas					
evaluating					

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Teacher questionnaire SCL-project - questions connected to communication

Circle the most appropriate. The principal is actively involved in	Almost never	Once or twice each semester	Once or twice each month	Every week	Every day	Do not know
Communication about teaching and instruction						
Communication about everyday activities (mainly practical issues)						
Communication about the schools vision and objectives						
Communication about students social behavior and rules						
Communication regarding school development						
Communication about outcomes in relation to teaching and learning						
Communication where concrete feedback on teachers work is given						
Communication regarding school improvement						

How often do you meet your principal during the following occasions?	Almost never	Once or twice each semester	Once or twice each month	Every week	Every day
Faculty-meetings					
Teacher team-meetings					
Individually organized meetings					
Other planned meetings e.g. Pupil-conferences, principal lead team-meetings, development-groups					
Informal meetings initiated by teachers					
Informal meetings initiated by the principal					
Not planned classroom visits					
Planned classroom visits					

When my principal communicate he/she is good at	Agree				
	Not at all				To a high extent
expressing him/her self					
discussing issues					
convincing others					
dialogues					
listening					
transmitting information					
negotiating					
decision making					
solving everyday issues					
reflecting					
being open minded towards new perspectives					
affirming others					
challenging others					
evaluating					

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

I am actively involved in	Almost never	Once or twice each semester	Once or twice each month	Every week	Every day
Communication about teaching and instruction					
Communication about every day activities (mainly practical issues)					
Communication about the schools vision and objectives					
Communication about students social behavior and rules					
Communication regarding school development					
Communication about outcomes in relation to teaching and learning					
Communication where concrete feedback on other teachers work is given					
Communication regarding school improvement					

## Appendix 3: Principals and teacher interviews

### Principal interview SCL-project - questions connected to communication

Communication between you and your teachers	I am going to pose some questions about the communication process between you as a principal and your teachers. Communication is always an interaction between different actors and can include many factors. Despite that, there are often higher expectations on the principals' role.
Can you tell me about the communication process between you and your teachers	I want answers including each one of the following themes: Form (When, where, frequencies, transmission, informal, formal) Content (What do they talk about)
How would you describe your way to communicate with the teachers?	(Try to capture the characteristic for the individual principals way to communicate) How (how is it done, feeling, stile, climate) How do you prepare in relation to different communication activities? How does the communication change when you participate?
Is there an issue that you are aware of that exists but nobody talks about? An issue that would lead to school improvement if it were communicated?	

Teachers interview SCL-project - questions connected to communication

<p>Communication between you and your principal</p>	<p>I am going to pose some questions about the communication process between you as a teacher and your principal. Communication is always an interaction between different actors and can include many factors. Despite that, there are often higher expectations on the principals' role.</p>
<p>Can you tell me about the communication process between the teachers and your principal/s</p>	<p>I want answers including each one of the following themes:                  Form (When, where, frequencies, transmission, informal, formal)                  Content (What do they talk about)                  Tell me about the principal communication in relation to teaching and learning issues.                  Are the conversations practical and concrete or more general?                  What is the most common content?                  Does the conversation give any effects? Can you provide some examples?</p>
<p>How would you describe your principal/s way to communicate?</p>	<p>(Try to capture the characteristics for the individual principals way to communicate)                  How (how is it done, feeling, stile, climate)                  How well prepared do you think the principal is in different communication situations?                  How does the communication change when the principal participate?</p>
<p>Is there an issue that you are aware of but that nobody talks about? An issue that would lead to school improvement if it were communicated?</p>	