

Analysis of LeLeNet Output 2 interviews from Swedish Partner

1. A short description of the situation related to school networking in Sweden.

Mainly due to declining results on international tests like PISA the pressure on Swedish schools to develop to better meet the needs of pupils in order to achieve at a higher level have been strong the last decade. A number of school reforms have taken place and a lot of politically initiated national programmes for school development organized by the National Agency for Education have been running for some years. No matter what the developmental needs are, raising the school results in different subjects, formative assessment or ITC-competences, the training modules have all been strongly influenced by sitebased school development ideas and collective reflection and learning approaches.

The idea that the teaching profession should be characterised by collegial critical reflection has been reinforced in Sweden also by the wording of the Educational Act of 2010 that states that educational programmes must be based on scientific knowledge and proven experience. Proven experience here often referred to as knowledge based on the experience of the practitioners that has been tried out and constructed over time and been shared by many.¹

Education for children with special needs have its own national curricula and have by tradition been organised in special schools. For quite some time now these classes are physically integrated into the ordinary school buildings and under the responsibility of the head teacher. But in many cases the integration stops there, and the children with special needs have their own classroom and teachers etcetera.

2. The aims of the data gathering

(Identical for all countries – SI partner)

¹ Swedish National Agency for Education (2014). *Research for Classrooms. Scientific Knowledge and Proven Experience in Practice.*

3 . Methodology

A group interview was conducted with five experienced headteachers participating in a state-commissioned in-service university training course (7,5 ECT) for experienced headteachers. The course deals mainly with school improvement and instructional leadership and Torbjörn is one of the trainers. The interview took place in February on the fifth day of their training and lasted for 1hr 45 minutes. It was lead by Kristina, Torbjörn participated as an observer taking notes and the interview was recorded.

All participants operated within primary and/or lower secondary municipality schools with pupils aged 6-16 years.

4. Participants

<i>fictitious name of headteacher*</i>	<i>Size of the city</i>	<i>Size of the school</i>	<i>Length of the practice of the headteacher</i>
SE1 (female)	150 000 inhabitants	248 pupils (lower secondary 7-9 grade) 41 staff	5 years in this school 10 years in total
SE 2 (male)	220 000 habitants	320 pupils (primary 0-6 grade) 38 staff	1,5 year at this school 6,5 years in total
SE 3 (female)	900 000 inhabitants	700 pupils (primary and lower secondary 0-9 grade) 90 staff	3 years in this school 14 years in total
SE4 (female)	23 000 inhabitants	300 pupils (primary and lower secondary 0-9 grade) 35 staff	5 years at this school 7,5 years in total
SE5 (male)	220 000 habitants	650 pupils (primary 0-5 grade) 70 staff	3 years at this school 6 years in total

5. The results of the analysis

5.1. Linking networking with teaching and learning

We tried to categorise the topics in line with the recommendations given in the template. In the Swedish case networking within school is by far the most common form of networking

5.2. Topics for networking (both, inside and/or outside of schools)

a) networking aimed to the development of special pupils competences

Three HT give examples of networking with the main purpose to create a more inclusive education by strengthening the teachers attitudes towards meeting all pupils needs and adapting their teaching methods to each of them.

b) networking aimed to curriculum and methodology/didactics development

All HT mention nationally initiated and supported programmes for developing teaching methods to improve pupils results in mathematics, reading and language where networking place an important role. These networks are subjectbased, they are lead by a supervising teacher from the school and not all of the staff participate.

Networking to improve both formative and summative assessment competences is mentioned by one HT.

Networking aiming at curriculum development exist both within schools and between schools. In some municipalities subject teacher meet between schools if the amount of subject teachers are very few in each school.

c) networking aimed to the support of school specialization

No HT mentions networks supporting the school specialization. But aims the networking activities are somethings motivated to school improvement needs. There are examples of networks initiated by head teachers, the school health care team or by teachers themselves. SE5 stresses the importance of co-learning among his teachers:

We have share on the collective competence we have in the school, share and make use of experiences and learn from one and another, that helps to get an common base for the staff
(Headteacher SE5)

d) networking aimed to the school leadership development.

One HT are participating in a network (professional learning community) of school leaders in her municipality (organised through a European project *HeadsUp*)

5.3 Teachers motivation to networking

The group interview gave only the perspective of the head teachers. Here are some arguments given by our informants that give some ideas about teacher motivation.

A growing need of co-operative learning

Many headteachers give examples of how their staff see the advantages of participating in learning activities together.

The teachers have become more comfortable with sharing teaching experiences both by talking about their challenges and by taking part of other teachers lessons. (Headteacher SE3)

By visiting each others classrooms the math teachers have become aware of their different teaching strengths. Now they co-operate more and use the resources they have in a more effective way. (Headteacher SE1)

One HT describes it as a changed school culture.

A more sharing culture have developed – the “Jante” culture have disappeared – and the teacher team have talk with each other in a different way (Headteacher SE4)

Self-regulated networking

Some teachers are very motivated to network to develop the curriculum for a certain group of pupils.

If teachers takes initiative to network , I do my best to support them (Headteacher SE1)

Some teachers are still difficult to motivate

Two HT describes how they as heads have to work harder to motivate some of their teachers in lower secondary (grade 7- 9) to participate in networking

5.4 The role of HT in networking

The role of motivator and of facilitator

The role of motivator is very clear in many exemples in the interview. Also when they describe the strategies they use.

- The role of initiator but often together with for example the lead teachers in networks about inclusive education and how to deal with individual differences within class.

- The role of organizer – to create conditions and structures but also make sure that roles are defined in leading processes such as tutor/ facilitator – both when it comes to networks initiated on an external level or an internal level.

5.5 The benefits from networking

Benefits for the teachers

- Developing a shared culture within the organization.
- Leaving the class room- teachers visiting colleagues class rooms, co-operation between teachers.
- Distribute classroom leadership in relation to teachers strenghts and competencies instead of more traditional “one class, one teacher“.
- Other topics on the agenda - focus on students learning and teachers teaching – not only an administrative focus, also networking which purpose is to improve, develop and learn.
- Developing the teaching – methods, formative assessment, improving reading and writing skills, languages, how to meet individual differences.
- Co-construction – a common language between teachers when it comes to lesson plans, instructions to the students or teachers interpretations of policy documents.

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Benefits for the students

- Developing assessment for learning in class – the students know what to learn and how they learn (visible learning) thanks to formative assessment strategies in classroom.
- Increasing results in languages.
- Special needs comprehensive school with Primary and Lower Secondary school is an exampel of good practice how to support students with SEN.
- Inclusive education. A class with big needs used external resources. Good results for the students beahour in clasroom

5.6 Strategies of HT for networking support and sustain

In their answers we found the following categorises:

- To motivate the teachers working in networks.
- The importance for the HT her/him-self to participate in learning communities in order to be a role model.
- Create conditions for the teachers networking
- Support the staff with data and analysis of results in the quality work in order to clarify the needs of the students.

- Challenge and support the staff in relation to their needs.
- Sense making and sense giving – giving the big picture.

This is what they answered:

Headteacher SE1:

- Being a role model by participating in learning communities with other head teachers where I get challenged.
- Analyzing needs from development talks in teacher teams
- Set conditions
- Challenge and support the staff according to their needs.

Headteacher SE2:

- Motivate
- Create legitimacy
- Give structures
- Clear commission to the lead teachers
- Distribute the leadership - important to be involved initially
- Focusing on few development areas during a long period
- Satisfaction among the staff in achieving goals
- Have a strong vision; you believe in this, "all in"

Headteacher SE3:

- To be a part of the work analyzing our results
- To identify developing areas together with the leadership team and lead teachers in order to see what kind of PLC we need to focus on.
- Motivate the staff why it's important
- Create conditions
- Systematic quality work creates perseverance (uthållighet)
- Create transparency
- Finding a balance in the process.
- Adaptation to the needs of the teachers

Headteacher SE4:

- Collect data, make needs analysis in order to motivate the staff to develop their practice
- Show engagement
- Participate in the ongoing learning processes
- To highlight the voices of the students – my role to be close to the student, taking the student's perspective
- Showing the big picture, the helicopter view
- Showing interest by systematically collecting data
- Role model, to be a part of a professional learning community yourself
- Clear and transparent commission and expectations for leader roles

Headteacher SE5:

- Create conditions and organize the systematic quality work
- See the needs
- Working bottom-up
- Prioritize the external demands and internal needs
- Sense making and sense giving
- Remember that my support is needed during a long period
- Creating a sharing culture in order to counteract competition among the teachers
- Going back to what we have done before, sometimes reconstruct

5.7 Limits, challenges and needs of HT

Several head teachers stress the importance of school culture and talk about the challenge to engage year 7-9 teachers (secondary school teachers) due to the traditions to work on your own, the importance of limiting the numbers of developing projects and to be persistent. But also structural aspects as time, size of school and space. Below you find their answers:

Headteacher SE1

- Find the time, create space of time
- To motivate all staff

- Develop my leadership capacity to be able to motivate the staff who don't understand or see their need to develop as teachers

Headteacher SE2

- Hold on
- To limit the numbers of development projects

Headteacher SE3

- Prioritize
- During the process stick to "the red thread".
- Balance the needs of them who are eager to try new thing and those who are less motivated to develop.

Headteacher SE4

- The staff turnover makes it difficult to keep the continuity. We have to restart again and again, which slows down the process and make some teachers impatient.
- If the percentage of teachers on short terms contract is high makes it difficult to involve this staff.

Headteacher SE5

- The size of the school. More than 70 employees is a challenge for me to organize.
- How to create an organization where I in my indirect leadership still can be visible as a leader among the staff. I want them to see me as the leader.

5.8 Short summary

The headteachers express in different ways how teachers networking is useful for pupils with special needs. One of the principals has worked with inclusive education by including students with special needs for five years and can describe good examples of networking (see an example of good practice below). Several headteachers give examples of networking where there aim is to develop methods and strategies in purpose to reach all pupils in class.

An example of good practice – case study

A school working very systematically to integrate the pupils from classes with students of special needs (in Swedish "grundsärskolan") with the rest of the school.

The concrete example given was a teacher co-operation when teaching about World War 2 in History. The aim is to develop inclusive education both from a more structural level (charing rooms and practical arrangements) to pedagogical and learning level.

Involved teachers/schools and role of the head

Co-operation between "grundsärskolan" (students of special needs) year 1 and secondary school year 9. The teachers working in the secondary school made the lesson plans, all students in year 1 and year 9 were involved.

The role of the head teacher is to enhance the goals, put them in the forefront and to make it possible through structures and other conditions. Scheduled time for co-operation between teachers. The overall aim is to increase teachers' competences and gain more knowledge about pupils with special needs.

Activities are evaluated regularly.

Motivation (starting points)

The co-operation between the different school forms started five years ago. The starting points for this example are

- A shared definition of inclusive education
- Learning areas for both staff and pupils
- HT showing the importance of developing the inclusive education
- Pupils of "grundsärskolan" are included as much as possible with secondary school
- More co-operation between teachers
- All staff are participating

Benefits

The school now have a shared definition of inclusive education. The pupils from the special needs comprehensive school are more socially included and are participating more socially and actively than before.

Focus on the pedagogical part of the inclusive education.

Experience - limits, challenges

The obstacles for inclusive education is not the pupils. It's more about how teachers and head teacher think about inclusive education, what's possible, the culture of the school.

Follow up (sustainability)

This example of good practice is a part of a five year long project on inclusive education. To make it sustainable the school have had scheduled time in their quality work during a year focusing on inclusive education.

Maybe later we can add some proofes (photos, documents, outputs) .

Uppsala April 2018

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