School Leadership and In-Service Training: Reflections on Organisation Theory and Pedagogy

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The fact that society is changing rapidly and gives schools a new role to play makes school leadership important, but how are school leaders to play their role? If it is possible to specify this more precisely it ought also to be easier to know what type of skills are demanded. The purpose of this paper is to use arguments based on both perspectives of organisation theory and pedagogy to discuss some possibilities and problems when organising and carrying out relevant in-service training of school leaders. The following questions will be raised:

1. What are important elements of school leadership and what skills may be relevant for school leaders?
2. What kind of knowledge do school leaders require and how should in-service training be organised?
3. What prerequisites are needed for co-operating on in-service training of school leaders on a national as well as on an international level?

INTRODUCTION

Society is changing rapidly at the same time giving schools a new role to play. Teachers get increased scope for action (Berg et al. 1999). New possibilities are created which at the same time give rise to an atmosphere of insecurity for some. Each individual school now has to develop work forms and to be more open for what is happening in the outside world. This will give school leadership an important position. Because of this, some questions arise. How, for example, are school leaders supposed to play their role? If this can be specified more precisely, it ought also to be easier to know what types of skills are demanded of school leadership. This will raise questions about how to educate, recruit and arrange in-service training of school leaders.
There are, of course, many different answers to these questions and these vary from country to country. In some countries, a formalised exam for school leaders is required and in others, such as Sweden, there are no formal demands of education.¹ A reasonable assumption may be that existing courses also vary as to content and processes. One basic problem regarding school leader education and especially in-service training seems to be demands for both a wide and deep range of knowledge, which for practical reasons is not possible. School leaders have a heavy workload and so little time, although there seems to be no disagreement about the need. This appears to be the main reason why it is necessary to make different kinds of priorities. At the same time, there is reason to assume that different individuals need different kinds of knowledge, among other things because they have different backgrounds, education and spheres of experience. In-service training ought, therefore, to include a broad range of courses on a basic level, from among which it is possible to choose, but it should also include the opportunity to do in-depth studies in different subjects. For many educational organisers it may be hard to marshal the necessary resources to be able to manage in-service training. This may create a possibility for co-operation, both within nations and on an international level.² Co-operation of this kind would also make it possible for specialisation creating as a result a clear profile, good quality high competitiveness and a broad range of courses for different needs and interests.

From this point of departure, the purpose of this paper is to discuss some possibilities and problems in the organisation and implementation of relevant in-service training of school leaders based on the perspectives of organisation theory and pedagogy. The following questions will be raised:

1. What are important elements of school leadership and what skills may be relevant for school leaders?
2. What type and extent of knowledge do school leaders require and how should in-service training be organised?

¹. Swedish law states: ‘Only persons who, by education and experience, have acquired pedagogical insights may be employed as headmasters’ (SFS 1985:100, 2 kap. 2 §). Our translation of quotation.

². At present we lack the necessary overview to know how extensive this co-operation is at the moment.
3. What prerequisites are needed for co-operating on in-service training of school leaders on a national as well as on an international level?

We try to reflect on what an in-service programme of training of school leaders may consist of, as a result of what knowledge and skills the role requires. This also raises questions of how an in-service training programme for school leaders could be organised and what pedagogical methods may be suitable.

LIMITATIONS AND METHOD

This paper mainly take its point of departure in the authors’ experiences gained from teaching, from organising education and as managers in local authority administrations and for one of us also as a researcher. What we write is mainly built upon our experiences and to some extent on available research in this area. Our statements, of course, cannot be supported empirically, but they must at the same time be supported by arguments and it should also be possible for the reader to compare his or her experiences with those presented in this paper. As the problem under investigation is very complex, it is only possible to discuss some aspects of the problem within the scope of this paper.

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Within the field of organisation theory, many kinds of theories and models have been developed in order to describe and understand how organisations work. The education of school leaders, in this case in-service training, has to start from the way schools function as institutions and organisations (see for example, Berg et al. 1999). The following main fields and perspectives seem to be possible to distinguish (figure 1).

We will briefly discuss the different fields and perspectives in figure 1. The model consists of five different fields or perspectives, including

3. A problem is however that we do not have the necessary overview to claim that we have control of the state of art within the field. We will also stress the fact that we do not have a clear opinion of how existing in-service training of school-leaders is carrying out today. An investigation from that point of departure should require another design, for example to map what types of education there are in the market and in what way these are carried out.

4. It is hardly necessary to mention that the model is a rough simplification of reality.
actors and stakeholders, their roles and relations. The ability to see schools from different perspectives (see, for example, Montgomery & Qvarsell 2001) must accordingly be seen as central to understanding the school leader’s role. The role must, for example, be understood in terms of the ability to take the perspective of pupils, teachers and politicians, but also a perspective seen from other actors’ and stakeholders’ point of view. These factors will be important in order to be able to decide what kind of knowledge and skills a school leader should possess in order to be able to act as a professional manager.⁵

What is happening within schools (A) is what in the organisation theory is sometimes called ‘the black box’, because we still seem to know quite little about what takes place inside the organisation. This appears to be the situation despite the fact that a lot of research has taken place. On the other hand, the result seems to be more and more complex theories.⁶ Within this area, the main question is how to manage the

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⁵ In this case we look at the relation and the degree of correspondence between an individual’s knowledge and skills, and existing demands on the role to be played as synonymous with this person’s professional skills.

⁶ The image of how organisations work also has an important impact on the way organisations are built up.
organisation, for example, in terms of organisation charts, leadership, economy and administration, rule-systems, organisation culture, management by objectives and so on (see for example Lundgren 1999). Altogether, this requires different types of knowledge and skills for the school leader.

The question concerning cooperation between the local political level (b) and schools seems to involve some problems about the different roles. When school leaders turn out to be in this ‘field of force’, it seems unavoidable that they should have some knowledge of these roles. School leaders also have to handle stakeholders (c) of different kinds. The main groups of interest must however, be seen to be pupils. This makes pedagogy a central area of knowledge for school leaders. We must also see schools in a context, both in a local society (d) and in a related context, sometimes called the global society (e) (see for example Bauman 1998; Beck 2000; Giddens 1999). The relation between the actors (a + b) and the surroundings (c + d + e) has been the subject of above all of theories on new-institutionalism (March & Olsen 1989; 1995; Powell & DiMaggio 1991; Etzioni 1988; Selznick 1992) and for system theory-oriented researchers (Senge 1995).

If we consider that school leaders have knowledge about and skills in all of these aspects the demands grow rapidly. Possibly the most troublesome question is not what knowledge school leaders ought to have; the question rather is what can be removed without too many negative consequences. Another important question will be, as a result, how to find suitable and efficient pedagogical processes within the in-service training of school leaders.

This very short presentation may be seen as an attempt to give an overview of areas, which school leaders are supposed to handle. On a more practical level, we will now discuss possible consequences of what we have said so far. It will also be necessary to limit the discussion to what we have called field and perspective a.

School Leadership and In-Service Training: Some Problems and Possibilities

A school leader must have a clear understanding of the mission of schools in order to make it possible to transform that mission into daily reality. The curriculum stands out as a compromise of different opinions; an adjustment to accommodate many stakeholders’ demands. School leaders have to face the complexity of the curriculum and accordingly often have difficulties in making appropriate interpreta-
Schools exist in a complex cohesion, where pupils may differ greatly in social background, intellectual prerequisites and motivation, etc. Together, these create situations that in many cases are difficult to manage. It seems reasonable to expect that all these factors influence the role school leaders have to play. In the following, we will discuss the role of school leaders and what possible demands on knowledge and skills this role will give rise to. From this point of view, we ask what consequences this will have for the form and content of in-service training of school leaders. We will focus on both organisational and pedagogical questions. We will finally present some thoughts about what possibilities educational organisers may have if they build up a school leadership training programme in co-operation with other organisations, both national and international.

SCHOOL LEADERS AS PROBLEM SOLVERS AND SCHOOL DEVELOPERS

School leaders must be able to create methods suitable for the activities they are supposed to manage. Leadership has a strong social-psychological side, but if there are more than about 30 persons involved in a school, leaders have to use different kinds of tools in addition to personal influence. A great part of a school leader’s time is spent meeting groups of people and individuals and dealing with their problems. A school leader’s daily work will accordingly be fragmentary and characterised by many different meetings, continually interrupted (see for example Wolcott 1973; Sayles 1989). The individual school leader risks drowning in specific individuals’ problems and however important these may be, there is a risk that they will take much time and that structural problems never will be solved. The result will be like a ship taking in more water than the crew can manage to bale out; in other words, the odds are bad. One consequence seems to be that, if an organisation is to function, it must have the ability to solve problems. On the other hand, organisations will always have to face problems. From our experiences we, on the other hand, consider that many schools lack the ability to solve problems. The school leader must accordingly be a

7. We will in this case oversee the issues from the point of view of a representative leadership, so to say be the person representing the organisation and be a symbol of the organisation.
problem solver. At the same time, this gives school leaders an important role that of managing school development (Fullan 1991) in order to prevent problems in the future.

In general terms, the solution to problems may be seen from two different points of view. The first is to act and the other to think before acting. Kansanen (1993) talks, for example, about a perspective mainly consisting of a ‘here-and-now-orientation’, one which headlight acting. This seems to be a common way to solve problems in schools. Kansanen also talks about two different perspectives, named the first and the second level of thinking. The first level of thinking aims to find theoretical explanations to give the single individual an opportunity to better understand his own practice and as a result make a basis for action. The second level of thinking consists of the ability to analyse acts seen as a result of a more or less considered choice. This form of strategy, on the other hand, seems to be relatively rare in schools. To be able to manage school-development it appears to be necessary for school leaders to analyse and go behind what appears to be obvious facts; to have an ability to distinguish cause and effect relations, so to speak.

THE ROLE OF PEDAGOGICAL LEADER

An important part of the school leader role, as we have already stressed, is to be an interpreter of the mission of schools and to help teachers (in an active way) to transform that mission into concrete and feasible activities in the classroom. At the same time, this could be seen as the role of pedagogical leader, a role often stressed as an ideal for school leaders. This part of the role stands out, at the same time, as problematic. Pedagogical researchers (see for example Stalhammar 1984) have shown that school leaders mainly devote themselves to administrative tasks and the teachers decide on processes and content. Berg (1988) expresses this as an ‘invisible contract’, where school leaders and teachers tacitly agree not to do each other’s tasks. To function as a pedagogical leader, it seems necessary to have well developed ideas about what knowledge is (epistemology), how to know something about reality (ontology) and how

8. We probably have to keep in mind that there will always be problems that seem to be more or less insoluble, which also demands some kind of strategy.
9. If we in this case do not perceive the problem to exist as a real problem.
10. Our interpretation of Kansanen, probably somewhat extended.
the individual can acquire knowledge (learning). School leaders ought to develop their thinking on a higher level (see for example Kansanen 1993), taking its point of departure from science and philosophy.

The pedagogical perspective may perhaps in some sense be seen as the ‘production aspect’, how pupils acquire knowledge. This process, directly or indirectly, ‘sorts’ out individuals at the same time. Schools also fill several other functions, expressed or unexpressed. They are, for example, places for social development with the ambition to create good and democratic citizens. The other side of this coin could, on the other hand, be to see schools as a dumping ground for young people (Andersson 1999; Christie 1972) or for adult pupils as an alternative to unemployment. Taken together, these factors place school leaders in a troublesome situation where problems in many cases may be seen as a result of different expectations and demands both from inside the organisations and from other stakeholders’ points of view. As school leaders are not, more than within given limits, able to act on their own, they will risk being more or less without the power to solve all the problems they meet. They have not caused most of these problems and will not be able to solve them all. We believe that the possibility to understand what is going on and what role they play in this course of events, not to be guilty of everything that goes wrong, as it were, will make life easier for school leaders even if it does not solve the problem entirely.

THE CONTENT AND FORMS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Content and forms (processes) may sometimes be seen as two different things. In reality, no phenomena exist which, at the same time, are not both content and form. Accordingly, content may have different forms, which may be more or less suitable in different connections: the form will affect the content and vice versa. This is important for what choices of content and form the in-service training of school leaders has. We will try to define some aspects of this.

CONTENT

In-service training of school leaders ought to include elements from all of those fields, perspectives and relations that we have already outlined in the theoretical part of this paper. The question is which elements are necessary and which can be taken away. What criteria can guide us in this respect? It seems to be impossible to be able to do everything
desirable in the time available for the training programme and also impossible for the individual to learn every single fact. The problem has to be solved in another way. One point of departure may instead be to give more attention to the ability to learn and to analyse and understand connections of different kinds, to take a ‘thinking-perspective’. At the same time, we consider it likely that there are some types of facts, concerning primarily an ‘acting-perspective’, which are necessary in order to learn to handle the role. For example, knowledge concerning the task at hand, the rule-system, finance and administration, etc.¹¹

The elements within the in-service training of school leaders should be defined by the participants.¹² For example, real or fictional cases, which may be used for analysing possible cause-effect relations, as well as solutions to the problems that the cases represent. This also gives an opportunity to test as a school-development project, the solutions proposed. The in-service training will give benefits to the participant’s school and not only to the professional development of the individual. A significant difference when working in this way is that the learning-process will be qualitatively different. One important reason is that the problems under investigation have been thoroughly discussed and also for this reason are more open to evaluation. In this case, it is clear that content and form are closely connected to each other. The result of in-service training of school leaders designed in such a way may of course miss some elements, which are also probably necessary for the profession, but, on the other hand, this is not a new situation. The great advantage seems to be the possibility for the participant to be learning to learn and as a result support and develop a learning organisation.¹³ (Senge 1990).

**WORKING-FORMS**

In-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing. A renewal of both content and working-forms of in-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing. A renewal of both content and working-forms of in-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing. A renewal of both content and working-forms of in-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing. A renewal of both content and working-forms of in-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing. A renewal of both content and working-forms of in-service training of school leaders is hardly likely to have radically better conditions in the future than those already existing.

¹¹. In this respect, there is of course a difference between training to become school-leaders, where these elements are not known beforehand and in-service training of school-leaders, where these elements must be assumed to be more or less well known already.

¹². This will also impact things like for example choice of course literature.

¹³. We will here use the concept learning organisation in a broad sense, but still within the definition made by Senge, which for example contains elements as personal mastery, team learning, thinking-models, visions and system thinking.
leaders must accordingly be managed inside existing financial frames. The teachers responsible for the in-service training of school leaders probably have to play another role in the future, switching from the role of teacher to that of tutor. The time before used for planning, making lectures and setting examinations must now instead be used for dialogue in order to support the learning process, which, of course, will not be easy. Here, an important factor is probably what kind of ideas both the participants and the university teachers have about what characterises higher education. There still seems to be great trust in traditional pedagogical processes, at least in Sweden. Perhaps this is an effect of the financial control system, which does not leave any scope for other alternative methods of managing education. Perhaps one must anyhow dare to try new and unconventional methods. What we have said so far about methods for in-service training of school leaders may for some be seen as quite radical and perhaps it is if we look at how education is usually carried out. At the same time, our thoughts appear only as a quite simple application of what is usually called problem-based-learning\textsuperscript{14} and learning-by-doing (Dewey 1980).

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING OF SCHOOL LEADERS

Finally, we will discuss very briefly some aspects of how educational organisers of in-service training for school leaders may co-operate and what possibilities and difficulties arise. To make it possible to arrange an international network of in-service training for school leaders there are several problems that have to be solved. Are there, for example, only advantages in co-operation or are only new types of problems created, for example, problems of communication, language and culture, administration obstacles and so on?

If one intends to start a co-operation project, a starting-point could, for example, be to offer a number of courses to choose from\textsuperscript{15} in a way that makes it possible for the participants to select courses that suit their interests and needs. In each case, the educational organiser will examine

\textsuperscript{14} Problem oriented learning is based on researchers as Piaget (1972), Brunner (1972) and Illeris (1979).

\textsuperscript{15} There may be contradictions in relation to the thoughts we earlier have presented according to working-forms.
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the courses. The final exam will be carried out by the students’ home-university where a person is registered. This may of course create some problems concerning which courses may or may not be counted. The basic idea is here that the students would be able to do their studies from their home-university perhaps with a seminar at the course organisers’ university. As a result, it seems necessary to develop what has been called distance studies (see for example Keegan 1993), flexible learning or e-learning. There still seems to be some development work left to do, however, but why not start at once?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, we consider in-service training of school leaders must be organised as flexibly as possible because school leaders have different backgrounds and accordingly different needs for knowledge and skills. Secondly, the methods must also be flexible because school leaders usually have a heavy workload and, as a result, they often cannot join a course even if they would like to. The courses must accordingly be arranged in such a way that the participants will not be dependent on time and space. Thirdly, the working-form must give the participants real power over the content. One way to carry out the courses is to use a problem-based-learning model in a way that will help the participants to connect to their daily practice. Fourthly, the work form must also give scope for reflection and dialogue, both physical meetings and as well as virtual conferences. Finally, in-service training for school leaders can include co-operation between education organisers, in order to have a broad choice of courses. This would make it easier for school leaders to meet colleagues from other countries, with a positive influence on the participants’ motivation and offering new perspectives. A prerequisite seems, however, to be to offer modern information technology.

We hope this paper in some aspects will provoke a dialogue between educational organisers of in-service training for school leaders and perhaps also result in co-operation on a practical level within the ENIRDEM network.

REFERENCES


