

Moving Beyond Internal Affairs

Making Sense of Principals' Leadership Practices in
Collaboration for School Improvement

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Moving Beyond Internal Affairs

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To Tindra and Saga

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Mädan, 31st of August 2019

Susanne Sahlin

Table of contents

Abstract	xi
List of included papers	xiii
List of tables	xiv
List of figures	xv
1 Introducing the Research Problem	1
Aim and Research Questions	3
Key Concepts	3
Background to the Research Problem	7
Outlining of the thesis	11
2 Research in the Field of Principal Leadership Practices and School Improvement	13
Principal Leadership Practices in School Improvement Processes	14
Collaboration Beyond Schools	17
3 Points of Departure	25
An Institutional Perspective on Organisations	25
4 Conducting the Study	33
Case Study	33
Selection of Participants	34
Context of the Case	36
Qualitative Data	40
Coding and Analysis	45
Credibility, Dependability, and Transferability	47
Ethical considerations	50
Some considerations regarding the research process	50
5 Summary of the Papers	53
Paper I	53
Paper II	54
Paper III	55
Paper IV	56
6 Discussion	59
The construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices in school collaboration that goes beyond local schools	59
Principals and teachers sense-making of beyond-school collaboration in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects	64
How the various collaboration forms beyond school enable or restrain the principal's and, thus also, the school's leadership practices	71
7 Concluding remarks	75
Further Research	77
Swedish Summary	79
References	85
Appendix	

Abstract

The thesis takes its point of departure from the recent interest in collaboration and networking as major school improvement strategies and the school leader's crucial role in these processes. Educational research indicates that if schools are to meet future demands, then leadership must rest on trust within the organisation and a principal's leadership must be understood in the frame of professional collaboration and social learning. The aim of this thesis is to, from an institutional perspective, deepen the understanding of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of school leaders' practices in collaboration beyond school at the local school level.

The research undertaken in this thesis is a part of a larger research and school improvement project. This longitudinal study draws on data from a qualitative case study of three schools conducted over three years. Qualitative data including semistructured interviews, a part of a questionnaire to participating teachers with open-response questions, and observations were used. Additional contextual data, such as field notes, document analysis, and project meeting notes were also used. The theoretical framework is based on institutional perspectives on organisations and sense-making theory, used to provide an understanding of how principals and teachers make sense of principal leadership practices.

This thesis builds on four separate papers (I-IV) with their own aims and research questions but with the common goal of providing answers to the overall aim and research questions of the study. The four papers are complemented by this introductory part that ties them all together. Paper I, "Internationalization as an internal capacity builder for school improvement: a case study", examines if and how the work with internationalization can build internal capacities for school improvement, but also examines the meaning of a principal's leadership in relation to the work with professional collaboration and social learning. Paper II, "Collaboration With Private Companies as a Vehicle for School Improvement - Principals' Experience and Sense-Making," elaborates on principals' experiences and sense-making of a school collaboration with private companies from the local community of the school, focussing on leadership and school improvement. Paper III, "Making Sense of External Partnerships: Principals' Experiences of School-University Collaborations," examine principals' sense-making of a school-university collaboration. Paper IV, "Teachers Making Sense of Principals' Leadership in

Collaboration Beyond School,” aims to create a deeper understanding of collaborations beyond the school with a focus on principals’ leadership and of how such processes reshape regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects (Scott, 2008). The role of the formal leader is addressed in all four papers.

Finally, the findings show that the principals have had the possibility to build professional capacity in their schools, create a supportive organization for learning, and connect with different external partners as a result of these beyond-school collaborations. The different actors in the beyond-school collaborations also became a part of the schools’ overall distributed leadership practices. The findings show that beyond-school collaboration influences and affects the normative and cultural-cognitive aspects that exist in the participating school to some extent. The development of collective commitments to guide collaboration, engagement in collaborative work, an increase in shared responsibility for work, and the fostering of learning-oriented collaboration and research-based knowledge construction are examples of norms and values that seem to have started to move during the various beyond-school collaborations. From the cultural-cognitive aspect, the study shows that aspects of this dimension appear more or less in the schools. The principals have interpreted and made sense of the value of beyond school collaboration in different ways. The cultural-cognitive aspect also seems to affect the teachers somewhat, where they make sense of the importance of the formal leader in beyond-school collaboration. They also emphasise the importance of having a pedagogical leader. The findings showed that there were challenges that became visible in the various beyond-school collaborations. However, being aware of the challenges and broadening professional learning communities through collaboration that goes beyond school all in all seem to support the principals in their leadership practices at the local school level and also support development in a school’s practices.

Keywords: beyond-school collaboration; collaboration; leadership; leadership practices; organisation; principal; principal leadership; school leader; teacher.

List of included papers

Paper I

Sahlin, S. & Styf, M. (2019). Internationalization as an internal capacity builder for school improvement: A case study. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. doi: 10.1080/13603124.2019.1591511. This is an accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *International Journal of Leadership in Education* on 4/4/2019, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/13603124.2019.1591511>

Paper II

Sahlin, S. (2018). Collaboration with private companies as a vehicle for school improvement - Principals' experience and sensemaking. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 4(1), 15–35. doi:10.1108/JPCC-03-2018-0013. Published with permission from Katherine Thompson, Managing Editor, *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, on 21/1/2019, available online: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JPCC-03-2018-0013/full/html>

Paper III

Sahlin, S. (2019). Making sense of external partnerships: Principals' experiences of school–university collaborations. Submitted for publication.

Paper IV

Sahlin, S. (2019). Teachers making sense of principals' leadership in collaboration beyond school. Submitted for publication.

Paper I is coauthored with Dr. Maria Styf. The first author, Susanne Sahlin, was responsible for the introduction, previous research concerning leadership and school improvement, and the methodology part. Data collection, the analysis of the data, and the discussion/conclusion were joint responsibilities.

List of tables

Table 1. Interviews, observations, and a teacher questionnaire conducted in the three case schools

Table 2. Overview of titles, research questions, theoretical frameworks, and empirical data in the four papers

Table 3. Example of the analysis process in paper III

List of figures

Figure 1. Multiple case study design: illustration of how the individual cases relates to the overall case

1 Introducing the Research Problem

This thesis is about principals' leadership practices in the context of leading collaboration that goes beyond the school in school improvement processes. It is based on a longitudinal Swedish study. During the last few years, there has been increased attention to collaboration and networking as major school improvement strategies in a number of countries (Ainscow, 2016; Azorin, 2019; Brown & Poortman, 2018; Day & Smetham, 2010; Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, & West, 2011). In Sweden, collaboration with external actors and partnerships between schools and the local community are not as widespread as they are in other countries, for example in the United States and England, where schools are more dependent on collaboration due to how the education systems are funded (Muijs et al., 2011). The education system in Sweden is based on public funding and is therefore not dependent on external collaboration in the same way. Although there is no long tradition of working with partnerships and external actors for school improvement in Swedish schools, there are initiatives where schools collaborate with the surrounding community in different ways. For example, collaboration between universities and schools is reported as a common strategy for school improvement, both through continuous professional development and collaboration (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2016). Some initiatives take place in a similar direction when it comes to external collaboration (e.g., international collaboration and collaboration with parents and the local community), but when it comes to research it is an unexplored area within the Swedish context.

On the one hand, the increased focus on collaboration and networking in school improvement processes can be seen to arise from shiftings in the understanding of learning and especially perceived advantages of collaborative learning (Muijs et al., 2011; Senge, 1990; Stoll et al., 2006). On the other hand, it can be seen in the light of institutional pressure on schools (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987), emanated from sources such as the state and other regulatory bodies. The emphasis on a school's collaboration with the surrounding society is something that policy stresses increasingly as one way of improving schools (OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015; SOU 2017:35). The principal is emphasised as a key actor in improvement work according to curricula (Skolverket, 2011, 2018), research (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007), and policy (Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; SFS 2010:800; Skolverket, 2011a, 2011b, 2018). It includes conducting

pedagogical leadership and enacting school improvement where the principal is ultimately responsible for improving his or her schools in accordance with content in the national Education Act (SFS 2010:800). Today, collaboration with the surrounding community is something that the principal needs to deal with in her¹ mission and leadership. However, previous research has shown that it is difficult for principals to initiate and lead school improvement with different expectations from politicians, local school boards, parents, teachers, and students. These different expectations create something that can be understood as a cross-pressure in a principal's leadership of the school (Berg, 2018; Jarl & Rönnberg, 2010; Persson, Andersson, & Lindström Nilsson, 2005). School leaders'² responsibilities have changed from monitoring in the regulatory system to managing in the goal-oriented system. Principal leadership has also extended to include responsibility for the work environment and personnel issues, as well as responsibility for budgeting, marketing, and monitoring the quality of the work and taking action accordingly (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013). In addition, the principal is responsible for practising pedagogical leadership and leading the pedagogical work in the school (SFS 2010:800). In line with new institutional theory, it has been argued that ideas "on the vogue" create institutional pressure on organizations to make use of them. From an institutional perspective, it could be framed as institutional pressure on the local school and the formal principal to collaborate more with the surrounding community to improve the school.

Educational research can help to understand and explain contemporary processes of influence such as fosterage, education, and leadership within a social context. With regard to previous research, it seems relevant to examine how principal leadership in collaboration beyond school in school improvement processes is interpreted and expressed in local leadership practices within the Swedish context and how this can be connected to a broader educational context. It therefore seems reasonable to claim that we need to deepen our knowledge about how school leaders and teachers understand and make sense of principals' leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration. In this thesis,

¹ Because 69% of the Swedish compulsory schools principals and 52% of the Swedish upper secondary schools principals are female 2017/2018 I have chosen to use her as a pronoun in this thesis. <https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/sok-statistik-om-forskola-skola-och-vuxenutbildning> accessed 20180924

² Throughout this thesis, the terms *school leader* and *principal* are used interchangeably.

“beyond-school collaboration” is used as a concept, and it is defined as local schools collaborating with external actors within their local communities and beyond. The intention in this thesis is not only to contribute to the discussion but to further deepen the understanding of how principal leadership practices in collaborations that go beyond the school are constructed.

Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to, from an institutional perspective, deepen the understanding of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of school leaders’ practices in collaboration beyond school at the local school level. The regulative aspect refers to structure; the normative aspect refers to values, norms, and how leadership should be performed; and the cultural-cognitive aspect refers to how meanings regarding leadership are constructed when the schools are working in collaboration beyond school. The following research questions guided the work:

- How are principals’ leadership practices constructed and characterised in school collaboration that goes beyond the local school?
- What kind of sense do principals and teachers make of collaboration beyond school in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects?
- In what ways do the various collaboration forms beyond school enable or restrain a principal’s and thus also a school’s leadership practices?

Key Concepts

The foundation of this thesis is based on an institutional perspective of organizational change as a way to understand and describe leadership practices and teachers’ professional collaboration in local schools when they collaborate beyond the school, and it takes into consideration that change in school is both a top-down and a bottom-up process (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The theoretical assumptions build on leadership and organization theories that emphasize both process and complexity (e.g., Yukl, 2013). Taken together, these theories are used to understand the processes of leading and organizing a local school’s improvement processes and work and how schools are influenced by beyond-school

collaboration in the schools' internal work and organisation. Short definitions of the most frequently used concepts in this thesis are presented next as a guide for the reader to understand the points of departure.

Leadership

Leadership is seen as a social and relational process dependent on the leader, the follower, and the situation. There is a wide variety of definitions for leadership (e.g., Northouse, 2016; Yukl, 2013), but for this study the definition of Ogawa and Bossert (1995) is relevant. In line with the theoretical framing of this thesis, they adopted a perspective of organisations offered by institutional theory, where leadership was perceived as an organisational quality. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) argued that leadership extends beyond influencing individuals to influencing organisational structures. They concluded that "leadership is organising" (1995, p. 238) and further developed their ideas by defining leadership as a quality of organisations:

Leadership flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people. Leadership shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational events. (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995, p. 224)

Leadership practices

Leadership practices are understood as practices distributed over three elements: leaders, followers, and their situations. Constituted in the web of interaction of all three elements, leadership practices cannot be extracted from their sociocultural context of structure (rules and resources) and system (institutions that have some level of stability and regularised patterns of stability; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Followers influence both leaders and leadership strategies by drawing on special knowledge and expertise, access to information, and personal characteristics, but also by finding subtle ways to resist administrative controls. Members in practices create social norms and act as though these norms already existed. This implies that it is not just individual actions but the interrelating and interacting between the individuals that constitute practice. Understanding leadership as stretched over leaders and followers and not just a sum of individual contributions visualises this relationship

between the participants in practice and the practice. To examine principal leadership practices in collaboration that goes beyond school, it is of importance to look at more than the formal leader of the school. Leadership practices take form in the interactions among people—teachers, administrators, parents, and others external to the organisation—and their situations (Spillane, 2013).

Collaboration within, between, and beyond school

Collaboration is one fundamental phenomenon in schools (Tillberg, 2003) that can be understood in different ways. The concept of collaboration is commonly used to describe any situation in which people work together to promote change. Various theorists grasp collaboration as a process to achieve a common goal (Rice, 2002). Muijs et al. (2010) theorised the concept of collaboration in their work and defined collaboration as “joint activities between actors from different organisations within the network” (p. 6). Collaboration, in this study, refers to both horizontal and vertical levels of collaboration and is defined as a process where participants use resources, power, interests, and people from each organisation to collaborate for the purpose of achieving mutual goals (Muijs et al., 2010; Rice, 2002).

In this study, the focus is on the collaboration between schools and various external actors in a school’s local community in terms of professional collaboration and social learning within the schools. Ainscow (2016) used the concepts within, between, and beyond schools to distinguish and clarify three interlinked areas in a study of collaboration as a strategy for promoting equity and developing collaborative improvement approaches. This framework, taking a within, between, and beyond perspective, has been adapted in this study to define collaboration and different approaches to collaboration.

Within schools: Collaboration within the schools in this study refers to both horizontal and vertical levels of collaboration (e.g., between occupational groups, teachers, different leaders and management functions, subjects, teams, and collective structures within the organization).

Between schools: Collaboration between schools refers to local schools collaborating or networking for purposes connected to the school activities and learning in school.

Beyond schools: Collaboration beyond school is defined as local schools collaborating with external actors within their local communities or within

the global community (e.g., companies, institutes, universities, schools in other countries).

Background to the Research Problem

In this section a background to the stated research problem will be presented to frame the study in a broader international and national context. Throughout the first decades of the second millennium, there have been several major reforms in the field of education in many countries to enhance competitiveness (Jarl, 2013; Lundahl, 2016). Many of these reforms are rooted in neoconservative and neoliberal governance ideals, where competition and choice are seen as key drivers for growing the public-school system's effectiveness and improving student outcomes (see, e.g., Apple, 2006; Dalin, 1994; Giddens 1996; Hargreaves, 1998; Kumar & Hill, 2009). Particular examples of changes realized in this sense are privatization in the sector, decentralization of responsibility, and an intense control of school quality and students' academic performance (Blossing et al., 2015). The increased focus on leadership and improvement can within this context be understood as being closely related to the broader trend of accountability and rationalisation. From an institutional perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987), these reforms and changes in the educational system can be seen as institutional pressure on the local school and the principal as a formal leader, which affects the institutionalized aspects of the school organization (Scott, 2008).

Framing the study in a broader national context

Sweden, as well as in the other Nordic countries, has during recent decades been affected by the changes brought about in the wake of globalisation. In Sweden, a downward trend in students' progress has been shown in international meta-evaluations (PIRLS, PISA, and TIMSS), which is in line with all Nordic countries except Finland. Despite the fact this downward trend is just a fall from top to a more ordinary position internationally, this has according to Blossing et al. (2015) created an image of a school system in crisis and has led to a chain of political decisions to create a school system that can better rise to the inherent expectations of international comparisons. This, in turn, has created a pressure for reform, which has placed great demands on schools' capacities to improve their work. Today, school leaders struggle to build local improvement capacity among their teachers to put reforms into practice (Blossing et al., 2015).

Swedish schools have, over the last decades, turned from previously characteristic social democratic regimes to neoliberal policy regimes. The

move has been underpinned by institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In educational contexts, since the beginning of the 2000s the shift has meant increasing focus on school leadership, with demands from the state for school leaders to guarantee that student results (which have been declining in international comparisons) improve via scientific goal- and result-oriented management (Blossing et al., 2014; Lundahl, 2005). School leadership and school improvement are highlighted by researchers, practitioners, and political representatives as essential if schools are to meet future requirements and fulfil their mission to enable all students the possibility to cultivate and achieve their educational goals and personal development (Huber & Muijs, 2010; Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock, 2017; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, 2019; OECD, 2013; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008; Skolinspektionen, 2010).

In policy today, the Swedish school system is described and understood as a weakened and partially fragmented school system with a low degree of cooperation, collaboration, and joint improvement work between schools and local authorities (SOU 2017:35). In Swedish schools, some of the most important challenges are the schools' internal work, capacity shortage, collaboration, and how school leaders, pedagogical leadership, and teachers can be strengthened in their professional roles (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2016; OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015; SOU 2017:35). In the OECD review of improving schools in Sweden, the OECD (2015) argued that a national strategy is necessary with clarity about how capacity will be strengthened in school and how to support schools and encouraging partnerships between municipalities and private organisers, as well as among schools, to allow for mutual support and development. A much more collaborative culture would encourage in-school, between-school and beyond-school partnerships around the priorities. The importance of collaboration with the wider community is highlighted by Moos et al. (2011), who emphasized that one important function for principals is to manage and lead relations in the world outside the physical boundaries of their schools.

Principals' Roles and Responsibilities in Swedish Schools

In Sweden, the school system is built on equality and inclusiveness for all students. It is a system that is both centralized and decentralized, meaning that the education system is a goal-driven system with a high degree of local responsibility. The main responsibility for schools lies with the local

authority in the municipalities (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2015). Participatory democratic thinking, social justice, equity, equal opportunities, and inclusion in line with the cornerstones of the welfare state have been the guiding words in the emergence of the Swedish school system since 1946 (SOU 1948:27). For schools to live up to this, leadership has also been framed by democratic values and democratic leadership has been the guiding principle for Swedish school leaders (Blossing, Imsen, & Moos, 2014; Moos, 2013).

National policy documents such as the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and curricula (Skolverket, 2011a, 2011b) describe what the principal should do and is entitled to do, and they stipulate that a principal must lead and coordinate the educational work and work to develop education (SFS 2010:800). School leaders are responsible for quality assurance. In Sweden, this is regulated by the Education Act (SFS 2010:800). This means that, based on the national goals, school leaders continuously and in an integrated way should improve their schools by planning, following up with, and developing and improving processes (Ärlestig & Törnsén, 2014). School improvement should also, according to the Education Act, be science-based. Principals in Sweden are responsible for improving their schools in accordance with the ideas in the national Education Act (SFS 2010:800). Increased complexity and profound changes in the principal's assignment since the 1990s has led to tensions between different interests when the principal is to translate the assignment into practice (Ekholm et al., 2000; Jarl, 2007). A principal is a municipal official but acts under the government as well as municipal government. The principal has both performance and business responsibilities, which require administrative and management skills, as well as the management of the educational work and the employees. Previous research has shown that principals are in a tension between a government and a municipal task, between management and activities with pupils, teachers and other adults, as well as between change and persistence, which poses a challenge for them to fulfil their mission (Jarl & Rönnberg, 2010; Nytell, 1994; Persson et al., 2005). Principals feel constrained by local school politicians (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013), and their work seems to be more affected by teachers than by policy documents (Franzén, 2006; Hallerström, 2006; Leo, 2010). These results can be seen as different ways of understanding how school leadership can take shape within the framework described above.

A principal's responsibility has been strengthened in the new Education Act from 2010 compared to the previous (Jarl, 2013). The new

Education Act clarifies a principal's responsibility for a school's internal work but a principal has the right to delegate specific management tasks. However, a principal is still the one ultimately responsible for developing a school's activities (SFS 2010:800). Jarl (2013) pointed out that the new Education Act in many respects implies a strengthening of a principal's responsibility for proper school development, and Nihlfors and Johansson (2013) emphasized increased regulation of a principal's responsibility. A principal's formal mission is expressed in a cross-pressure of expectations (Berg, 1995). A principal's working conditions and profession can be seen as a cross-pressure of more or less contradictory demands and expectations. A principal is expected to assume a professional role that can be expressed as responsible for both performance and operation or business (Berg, 2011).

A principal's central role and importance for quality improvement in development work are emphasized in international and national research (Ekholm, Blossing, Kåräng, Lindvall, & Scherp, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Johansson, 2011; Moos, Johansson, & Day, 2011; Timperley, 2011). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) emphasized that a key function of successful school leaders is to negotiate direction in development work. According to Møller (2014), a prevailing belief in the school policy debate is that the principal is the one who can push through the desired changes in a school. Both international and national evaluations of the school and its leadership conducted by the OECD (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008), the Swedish Agency for Education (2011), and the School Inspectorate (2010, 2012) point to the principal's key role in school development—the principal is the one who shall lead the educational work and create preconditions for development. The principal shall clarify and communicate goals and lead teachers in development processes. To sum up, the Swedish education system has undergone an extensive transformation and a new policy context characterised by external control, marketing, and managerial accountability is now in place. These institutional pressures on school leaders and the school as an organisation has meant a changed role and new demands on the principal and the local school, where policy emphasises collaboration with the surrounding community as a way of improving schools.

Outlining of the thesis

Examining complex and intertwined processes requires transparency and an aspiration to define and discuss how various conditions interplay in various contexts. The contribution is to, from an institutional perspective, a deeper understanding of how school leaders' practices are constructed and characterised in collaboration that goes beyond the local school level in a Swedish context. The initial part has served to contribute to giving a brief introduction to the overall theme of the thesis. It is also meant to introduce the current context the thesis has been carried out in and introduce leadership and the current context in which this thesis is positioned. The aim and research questions have been presented in this initial part, followed by a draft of the thesis determining how the aim and research questions relate to the four papers. In the second part, a brief overview of national and international research relevant to this study are outlined. This is followed by a third part, in which the theoretical points of departure of this thesis are elaborated: an institutional perspective on organisation and the sense-making theory are used to provide an understanding of how principals and teachers make sense of principal leadership practices. Then, in part four, a description of the research methods used in the study are provided: a case study design, case schools, interviews, observations, and the questionnaire, as well as the analysis, coding processes, and ethical considerations. In part five, a summary of each of the four papers will be described. After that, the main findings and an overall discussion will be presented. In part seven, concluding remarks will be drawn in relation to the aim and research questions, and also directions for further research will be discussed. Finally, a Swedish summary of the thesis is presented.

2 Research in the Field of Principal Leadership Practices and School Improvement

In this part, national and international research relevant to this study will be presented. The focus is initially on national and international research highlighting principal leadership in improvement processes. Formal leaders have an important role in building leadership practices, and as pedagogical leaders they play an important role in capacity building for improvement at the local school level. This is followed by research about collaboration beyond school and broadening professional learning communities. Systematic searches for relevant research have been carried out using various databases. For example, the databases Eric and Ebsco have been used with help using keywords such as “principal leadership,” “school leadership,” “distributed leadership,” “professional learning communities,” “collaborative partnerships,” and “external collaboration.” Further, earlier theses, published articles, handbooks, and research overviews of relevance to this study have been used. In addition, snowball searching has been a complement to include research that was relevant to the study but not found in the more systematic searches.

The importance of school leadership, in general, is well known (Ärlestig, Day, & Johansson, 2016; Huber, 2010; Moos et al., 2011), and although definitions alter, several studies reinforce that one of the main functions of school leaders is to facilitate learning among both staff and students (Clarke & Wildy, 2011; Moos, 2010; Youngs, 2007), attaching the purpose of school leadership closely to the purpose of schools. This indicates that the ultimate purpose of school leadership is to support learning, within and outside school. Moos (2010) pointed out that this of necessity involves school leaders in a complex web of relationships, not only with staff and students but with the wider community. In a recent study, Goodall (2017) emphasized that the mission of the school leader extends beyond the school gates, just as learning extends well beyond the confines of the school; schooling is a subset of education, which is itself a subset of the much larger process of learning. Taking this into account, Goodall (2018) argued, the school leader’s role cannot, and should not, be confined to only what happens within the walls of the school building, or even the metaphoric confines of “the school” as an entity. Of interest to this study, a body of research suggests that school leaders who create

relationships and connections with the community can see increased student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2012; Salfi, 2011; Sheppard & Dibbon, 2011).

Principal Leadership Practices in School Improvement Processes

The past two decades of educational leadership research has identified an increasingly common set of core leadership practices, often in the context of exploring the effects on schools, teachers, and students of distinct models or approaches to leadership. The bodies of evidence resulting from this research are large enough to attract significant systematic syntheses (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2017). To make an impact on student learning, school leaders need to focus on the core business of schools: teaching and learning (Bush & Glover, 2003; Istance & Stoll, 2013). Based on this premise, research has identified practices and behaviours and related competencies of effective leadership that are described as pedagogical or learning-centred leadership (Day et al., 2009; Schratz et al., 2013). A recent comparative synthesis of three comprehensive leadership frameworks (Murphy et al., 2006; Leithwood, 2012; Sebring et al., 2006), identified five domains of school leadership shared by these frameworks and of interest for this study: establishing and conveying the vision, facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students, building professional capacity, creating a supportive organization for learning, and connecting with external partners (Hitt and Tucker, 2016). In a study by Salfi (2011), the findings showed that the majority of the successful school leaders emphasised the professional development of teachers as well as themselves, and they involved parents and the community in the process of school improvement. Effective leaders make connections with the community to promote broad participation from parents, families, and other external stakeholders who can contribute to a positive learning experience for students (Salfi, 2011; Sheppard & Dibbon, 2011). Effective leaders acknowledge that external partners, particularly in urban schools, are untapped resources. Leaders who find ways to optimize the contributions of parents, families, and community partners see increased student achievement (Sebring et al., 2006).

In line with other results (Day et al., 2009; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Harris, 2008; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002), Leithwood et al. (2007) underlined that a formal school leader plays a central role in creating conditions for a successful outcome.

In Sweden, a principal has the ultimate responsibility for developing school activities, and from 2010 a principal's responsibility, authority, and decision-making rights were strengthened (SFS 2010:800). For example, a principal makes single decisions about the internal organization of a school unit at the same time as the principal is given new opportunities to delegate decision-making rights. All in all, this gives a principal new tools that can be continuously used to shape and develop school activities. This means that it is especially interesting to follow up and elucidate how the principals take on their responsibilities and enact their new authorities to create school improvement. Håkansson and Sundberg (2016) stressed that some of Swedish schools' most important challenges are about their internal work and how school leaders can be strengthened in their professional role. This was also emphasised in a recent study by Forssten Seiser (2017), who meant that principals need to be strengthened in their role as pedagogical leaders and in their professional practice. The findings also showed that the principals' leadership emerges as situation oriented but it is also described as a leadership that mainly deals with the conditions for teachers' collegial learning. However, it was rather defined as an indirect leadership in which the principal focused on arranging the conditions for the teachers but still with a clear commitment towards student learning and development.

Moos et al. (2011) pointed out some important findings for sustainable school improvement from the perspective of principal leadership and stated that the principal has to involve and make it possible for the staff to become "life-long professionals" in what they do. Staff must be prepared for reorganisation and reconstruction, in relation to a changing world, moving from one leader to different types of distributed and shared leadership, also including more of a joint responsibility with an increasing focus on communication and a shared responsibility. Research has pointed to four broad categories of leadership practices to take into consideration: point out the direction, develop the people, develop the organization, and develop the teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Beyond the belief that leadership matters, Southworth (2009) meant that research and professional experience also show that leadership is contextualized (i.e., where one affects what one does as a leader), leadership is distributed because one increasingly thinks about leadership rather than just the leader, and leadership is about providing a sense of direction. As Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) also stated, it means knowing where the school is going. School leaders have to look onward to see what is on the horizon and what implications the future could have for a school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006,

p. 94). Formal school leaders have an important role in the construction of distributed leadership at the local level if capacity building and school improvement are to take place (Liljenberg, 2015a). School leaders contribute to this by creating favourable structural conditions but most of all by influencing locally embedded norms and values so that a democratic and reflective understanding of leadership that implies “power-with” rather than “power-over” can be created (Møller, 2002). School leaders also create a high degree of openness to collaboration, shared sense-making, and trust between different actors. Recent research of interest for this study, by Liljenberg (2015b), indicated that institutional pressure penetrates schools through the norms and values embedded in local school contexts. Liljenberg argued that the school leaders in the study were not primarily governed by the new policy context. Rather, in their role as the primary coupling agents, the school leaders expressed agency as they acted following their pre-existing frameworks but also when they adjusted these frames and reinterpreted the institutional pressure to improve their local practices by using a variety of coupling mechanisms. In another recent study, Nehez (2015) focussed on how principals’ practices in improvement work are formed and how these practices affect principals’ possibilities to work with planned change. The findings showed that what becomes meaningful for principals to engage in is not formed only by the aim of the planned improvement work, but also by already existing practices competing for space and by arrangements constraining principals’ possibilities to work with planned change. Many practices and projects were competing in the arena where the improvement work was planned to proceed. Nehez (2015) problematized the principal’s assignment and role concerning development work and argued—just like Hallerström (2006) and Ludvigsson (2009)—that the principal cannot implement planned changes on her own but needs support. However, the question is where and how the support is to be realized.

There is a growing knowledge base that suggests that of all the ways that principals have at their disposal to influence student learning, developing and supporting collaborative communities of professional practice is one of the most powerful (Murphy & Torre, 2014; Supovitz et al., 2010). Scholars have argued for the need for more research on access to external expertise to help teachers work more effectively together (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Saunders et al., 2009; Youngs & King, 2002). Hitt and Tuckers (2016) fifth domain of school leadership, connecting with external partners, is of particular interest in this study. It includes three key

dimensions for school leaders: (a) building productive relationships with families and the community, (b) engaging families and the community in collaborative processes to strengthen student learning, and (c) anchoring schools in the community (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 558). Murphy (2017) argued that gaps in the research on communities of professional practice still remain. The critical need to carefully examine cultural and structural barriers makes the infusion of professional culture very difficult. A second need is to document how school leaders can surmount cultural and structural problems. With increasing frequency, research confirms that a principal must maintain her crucial role in building communities of professional practice in schools (Cosner, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2010; Stoll et al., 2006). One of the main conclusions that has emerged from the research in this area over the last two decades is that creating learning communities from which formal leaders are absent is nearly impossible (Louis et al., 2010). A key finding of interest, in a study by Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2011), is that leadership that matters is higher where principal turnover is lower.

International evidence increasingly points to the importance of establishing powerful collaborative improvement cultures (Fullan, 2009; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017; Jarl et al., 2017), as well as strengthening local improvement capacity (Blossing et al., 2015; Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018). Southworth (2009) stated school organizations have a strong internal culture of collaboration, and it is also extended to networking with other schools. He emphasized that collaboration is one major element of a school's culture. The other major element is learning. Southworth stresses that such schools are professional learning communities (PLCs) and also different from other school contexts because they have a collective stance on learning in the context of shared work and responsibilities.

Collaboration Beyond Schools

There is an increasing amount of initiatives that aim to connect internal school improvement and innovation with other schools and educational contexts. Researchers have begun to understand these as ways to pass ideas and practice around the system through different networks, chains, partnerships, and collaboratives (Ainscow, 2016; Chapman, Chestnutt, Friel, Hall, & Lowden, 2016). This is often argued as a way to circulate knowledge and practice within a system (Ainscow, 2016), even though establishing partnerships for educational improvement is not new. A

growing number of external partnerships around the world, initiated at both the school and system levels, suggests that schools have moved beyond the realms of their inner work towards nonschool factors and an equity framework that encompasses schools as part of the surrounding community interacting with external contexts. Researchers have shown that these interplays can contribute to meaningful changes in the teaching and learning processes in schools (Ainscow, 2012; Henig et al., 2015; Melaville et al., 2006). Prior findings additionally indicate that this approach to school improvement could constitute a valuable platform for professional development and change in schools (e.g. Chapman & Allen, 2005; Harris, Chapman, Muijs, Russ, & Stoll, 2006; Muijs, 2008). Accordingly, there are numerous terms and concepts to describe collaboration in educational contexts, such as collaboration inquiry within, between and beyond school (Chapman, Chestnutt, Friel, Hall, & Lowden, 2016), networks (Chapman & Hadfield, 2010b; Muijs, 2010), school-based networks (Chapman & Hadfield, 2010, 2010b), school-to-school cooperation (West, 2010), federations of schools (Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman, & West, 2011), temporary-intermediary organisations (Jaquith & McLaughlin, 2010), research-engaged school (Godfrey, 2016), and school-university partnerships (Day & Smethem, 2010; Burton & Greher, 2007).

Chapman et al. (2016) explored the development of professional capital in a 3-year, collaborative school-improvement initiative that used collaborative enquiry within, between, and beyond schools in an attempt to close the gap in outcomes for students from less well-off backgrounds and their wealthier counterparts. Over time, relationships within the partnerships developed and deepened. While these networks expanded, participants reported increases in human, social, and decisional capital, not only among teachers but also among other stakeholders. In addition, through their collaborative enquiries, schools reported increased evidence of the impact on positive outcomes for disadvantaged students. Ainscow (2016) reflected on many years of working with development and research projects that have been based on collaborative ways of working. In one recent study (Ainscow, 2016), he pointed to the many possibilities that this approach offers while, at the same time, examining the barriers that can obstruct progress. Ainscow constructed a proposal regarding the conditions that are needed to make collaboration work, focussing in particular on what he sees as the major challenge facing education systems around the world, that of achieving equity. The aim must be to “move knowledge around” and the best way to do this is through strengthening

collaboration within schools, between schools, and beyond schools (Ainscow, 2016). In this study, the focus is on principal leadership practices in collaborations that go beyond school.

Conditions and factors important for success in partnerships

Several researchers have presented evidence of the important conditions and factors for succeeding with professional collaborations. Campbell et al. (2016) stressed that collaborative professional inquiry is a key component in raising teacher quality and securing better learner outcomes. Their work has reinforced that professional learning with impact must be focussed, rigorous, and critical to make any real or lasting difference to professional practice and student learning outcomes. Harris and Jones (2017) synthesised previous research on collaboration, which shows that collaboration is most effective when it is relevant, relational, authentic, engaging, practitioner driven, contextual, and ongoing (see, e.g., Timperley et al., 2007), as well as intentional in its content, purpose, goals, and desired outcomes that balance individual classroom needs with the broader school and system (Ainscow, 2016; Campbell et al., 2016; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Similarly, Chapman et al. (2016) noted that, to be most effective, professional collaborative inquiry within, between, and beyond schools should be evaluative and focussed on improving learning and teaching. The notion of PLCs draws attention to the potential that a range of people based inside and outside a school can mutually enhance each other's and pupils' learning as well as school improvement (Stoll et al., 2006). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) proposed that the system will not change unless "development becomes a persistent collective enterprise" (p. 3). It is a collective endeavour where the idea of creating, building, and sustaining "professional capital" is central. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggested that it is a movement from "power over to power with," where those best placed to improve teaching and learning are given collective responsibility to do so. This is reflected in a recent Swedish study (Jarl et al., 2017), where successful schools are characterised by common norms to collaborate, support each other, and share experiences. One other result of the study is the finding that the existing norms, views, and rules have been there for a long time.

Shared goals, mutual respect, trust, common planning, and the need for time have been highlighted as conditions for success in partnerships (Ainscow, 2016; Borthwick et al., 2003; Bresler, 2002; Day & Smethem, 2010; Huberman, 1994; Kersh & Maszta, 1998; Sachs, 2003; Thorkildsen & Stein,

1996; West, 2010). Nehring and O'Brien (2012) also emphasized collegial engagement through reflective conversations as important. They also highlighted problem solving and situational planning by enquiry and processing of data as key factors that enhance school improvement. Success also depends on whether and how the leadership is distributed in the system, how the partnership is conducted, and on what basis (Day & Smethem, 2010). Day and Smethem (2010) concluded that challenges to relationships and sustainability have been identified in terms of issues of power, culture, time, ownership, and leadership. This is in line with Nehring and O'Brien (2012), who also identified the following as obstacles to success in collaboration: an overabundance of ongoing projects at the same time, teachers' negative perceptions about change initiatives overall, and tensions in teacher teams. Despite the potential for mutual benefits from partnerships, successful partnerships also come with numerous challenges (Nelson et al., 2015; Walsh & Backe, 2013). Amidst these challenges, inequitable power dynamics, differing incentive structures, differences in organizational cultures, and ineffective communication can hinder the collaborative efforts between partners (Nelson et al., 2015). Coburn et al. (2013) also noted that cultural differences can be further intensified in an environment of increased accountability and limited resources.

Muijs et al. (2010) concluded that a number of studies have shown evidence that networked learning can increase school capacity (Chapman & Allen, 2005), can help forge relationships across previously isolated schools (Harris et al., 2006), and can therefore be an effective means of sharing good practices (Datnow et al., 2002; Harris et al., 2006). This is in line with Day and Smethem (2010), who concluded that partnerships can represent desirable, fruitful paths for the further development of teacher professionalism, school improvement, enhanced student learning and achievement, and increased capacity for learning and change. The evidence, so far, is consistent in pointing to their important contribution to raising the quality of teaching and learning in the ever-shifting landscapes of policy and practice. In a study about school-based networking for educational change, Chapman and Hadfield (2010b) reflected on three challenges that need further attention in terms of research and policy documents if school-based networks are to foster educational change for school improvement: (a) constitution—the mix and balance of those involved in the network; (b) relationships—the interactions between those involved; and (c) purpose and identity—the aims and objectives of the network and the identity those

involved create for the network (p. 777). However, collaboration and networking are by no means a panacea for school improvement, according to Muijs (2010). Clear goals and changes in culture and attitudes, structures, and incentives are required for collaborative strategies to work (Muijs, 2010).

Another important dimension of educational collaboration is the extent to which external organizations or partners are involved with the network or collaboration (Muijs et al., 2010). School-improvement partnerships frequently involve a local education authority, universities, or external counsellors. The extent of involvement of these external bodies can vary considerably. In some cases, the external partner can even be the main driving force behind the network, as is the case with some school reform programmes (Muijs et al., 2010). Leadership is a facilitator, but external facilitation and support for connecting learning communities can also make a difference (Stoll, 2010). External agents may bring specialist expertise as mediators of community dialogue or support networks' enquiry efforts, for example, by helping members interpret and use data (Lee, 2008).

Broadening professional learning communities in schools

An emerging body of research suggests that there is an opportunity to broaden professional communities and strengthen professional capital by building intentional connections between teachers in the local school organisation and community partners (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016; Malone, 2013). Broadening professional learning communities has been introduced in a number of educational contexts around the world (Ainscow, 2016; Chapman et al., 2016; Muijs et al., 2010). External support and partnerships with other schools and networks are additional processes that can support collective learning and PLCs to strengthen schools' improvement capacity (Muijs et al., 2011). Although partnerships by themselves are not a sole solution for school improvement, the role of external partners cannot be overlooked (Blankstein & Noguera, 2016). Such collaborative approaches to school improvement could establish a valuable platform for professional collaboration and improvement within local school organisations (e.g., Cordingley, 2015; Muijs, 2008), as well as serve as enablers of the internal capacity building in schools (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

A consistent message in contemporary writings about educational change is about the power of collective work in building the capacity for system-level change (Fullan, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b; Hargreaves et al.,

2010; Levin, 2010). Collaborative practice is where teachers work together to develop effective instructional practices and where there is a deep commitment to improving the practice of others as well as their own. Hattie (2009) noted that “the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching” (p. 22). In addition, the greatest gains are secured where these collaborative practices shift the drive for improvement away from the centre and bring it closer to the front line of teaching and learning. This is in line with Liljenberg’s conclusion (2015a) that if the organisation of teaching in schools continues to be based on an individual understanding of learning, then it will mean that improvement is restricted to issues that are important to individual teachers, and therefore preserving an individualistic teacher culture and at the same time counteracting collective capacity building. In the fourth generation of school improvement, it is evident that the building of teachers’ individual and collective learning and capacity is important to support and improve students’ learning in school (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

The basic concept of PLCs (Hord, 1997) is not new and, in fact, has been used under related concepts such as collaborative cultures (Fullan, Hargreaves, & Ontario Public School Teachers’ Federation, 1992; Leiberman, 1990), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), learning organisations (Senge, 1990), and professional communities (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). The term professional learning communities has no universal definition, but there seems to be a broad international consensus in which several researchers have mentioned similar important aspects: a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, and growth-promoting way (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000) and operating as a collective enterprise (King & Newmann, 2001). Previous literature highlights characteristics of PLCs which seem to be intertwined, operating together (Stoll et al., 2006): shared values and vision, respect and trust among colleagues, a focus on serious educational issues with challenging of the existing conditions, and the importance of creating cultures for learning as well as collaborative structures. Furthermore, supportive and shared leadership practice and involvement in decision-making seem to be important for building and sustaining PLCs (e.g., DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Fullan 2009; Harris, 2010; Harris & Jones 2010; Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007; Stoll et al., 2006).

The notion of PLCs draws attention to the potential that a range of people based inside and outside a school can mutually enhance each other’s

and the pupils' learning as well as school improvement (Stoll et al., 2006). The argument is that by cultivating PLCs, it is possible for schools to improve student performance through changes in teaching and classroom practice (Harris & Jones, 2010). Learning within PLCs involves active deconstruction of knowledge through reflection and analysis and reconstruction through action in a particular context (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000), as well as co-construction through collaborative learning with peers. Participants learning in communities of practice gradually absorb and are absorbed in a culture of practice, according to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), which gives participants exemplars that lead to shared meanings and a sense of belonging and increased understanding. At the heart of the concept of PLCs is the notion of community, according to Stoll et al. (2006). The focus is not just on individual teachers' professional learning but on professional learning within a community context—a community of learners and the notion of collective learning.

Summing up

To sum up, this section has given a deeper understanding of previous research related to the aim of this study. The formal leader plays a central role in creating conditions for successful outcomes (Day et al., 2009; Höög & Johansson, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2007; Louis et al., 2010; Törnsén, 2009). A burgeoning knowledge base implies that of all the ways that principals have at their disposal to influence student learning, developing and supporting collaborative communities of professional practice is one of the most powerful (e.g., Murphy & Torre, 2014; Supovitz et al., 2010). However, previous research also showed that initiating and leading school improvement is difficult for principals in an era of cross-pressure and different expectations from policies, parents, teachers, and students (e.g., Berg, 2018; Jarl & Rönnerberg, 2010). Research has showed that collaborating with the surrounding community and external actors is one way to strengthen local schools' improvement capacity (e.g., Ainscow, 2016; Chapman et al., 2016; Goodall, 2017; Riley, 2017b). Altogether, this raises several questions and can thus be seen as a starting point for finding out more about how principals' leadership practices are constructed and characterised in collaboration that goes beyond the local school in the Swedish context. It therefore seems reasonable to claim that more research is needed to deepen the knowledge of how school leaders and teachers understand and make sense of principals' leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration. With this study, the intention is to contribute to the

knowledge base and to the wider discussion of principals' leadership within the educational field by examining how school leaders' practices can be understood in beyond-school collaboration on the local school level within the Swedish context.

3 Points of Departure

In this part, the main theoretical perspectives guiding the analysis of this thesis will be presented: An institutional perspective is used to examine the school as an organisation, and the sense-making theory is used to provide an understanding of how principals and teachers make sense of principals' leadership practices.

First, the institutional perspective is presented as a framework for understanding the work process in local school organisations when school leaders and teachers work with beyond-school collaboration in school improvement processes. The institutional theory enables comprehension of the more general and structural aspects that benefit change. Second, to provide an understanding of how principals and teachers make sense of principals' leadership practices, the sense-making theory is used to elucidate the processes of interpretation, experience, meaning construction, and enactment in this work. To understand the choice of theories, it is also important to understand that the theoretical perspectives used in this thesis have been developed during a long process, in which sense-making theory (Weick, 1995) was the first to be used. It supported the analyses of the principals' and teachers' sense-making of principals' leadership practices. However, during the progress of the study, the need for another theory emerged. The institutional theory became a tool for understanding the work processes in an organisation and made it possible to grasp the more general and structural aspects that benefit change. One argument of the choice of theoretical perspectives in this study is as Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) emphasised: that sense-making and organisation constitute one another arguing that the central theme in both organising and sense-making is the way people organise to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly (p. 410).

An Institutional Perspective on Organisations

In this study, the new institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987) is used to understand local school organisations. When a new institutional perspective is based on organisational theory, organisational structures and processes are focused on organisational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott 1994, 1995; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Institutional theories emphasise the importance of the relationship between an organisation and its

environment, which is of interest in this study focusing on local school organisations, and research on educational leadership and school improvement also emphasises it (e.g., Harris, 2011; Leithwood, 2006; Southworth, 2009). The institutional theory seeks to understand how structures, norms, and patterns of social relationships in organisations both change and resist change by emphasising the ways in which organisations are linked to the broader social and cultural environment and, thus, the need to seek legitimacy in relation to other organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; March & Olsen, 2005; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). One of the earliest insights on the perspective and still one of the most basic assumptions is that organisations are not just formal systems created to achieve certain goals. Organisations are also social and cultural systems. Their activities are characterised in different ways by the individuals who are part of them and their surroundings. In various ways and over time, organisations become institutions (Scott, 2001). This is usually called institutionalisation, which means that as they are social systems, they gradually develop a set of norms and values and a certain way of doing things. This means that there is an important difference between the concepts of organisation and institution.

The institutional perspective assumes that every organisation has a distinct history. Over time, organisations develop sets of norms, rules, and routines that play an important role in guiding everyday action. Organisational actions reflect values, interests, beliefs, and expectations that are relatively stable and persistent (March & Olsen, 1989). Over time, perceptions are also developed within the organisation regarding how various tasks should be solved and how good results can be achieved. The development of an institutional identity within an organisation could mean that some thoughts and actions are no longer questioned or debated but are more or less taken for granted by members of the organisation (Meyer & Scott, 1983). Institutionalised practices in organisations are adopted because they are seen as correct, legitimate, expected, and natural (March & Olsen, 2005; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Socially constructed values and rule systems are therefore salient as control systems within organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; March & Olsen, 1984; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). One result of this is that institutional practices make it easier for individuals within the organisation to know what is expected of them and thus make sense of a given situation. The expected way to act becomes the natural way and is, therefore, not questioned, which is supported by the fact that institutions tend to be relatively stable in nature. Organisational structures

and processes can be institutionalised in the sense that they are “infused with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (Selznick, 1984, p. 17).

The concept of an institution brings with it many approaches and various foci, and literature on institutions varies in relation to elements of interest. According to Coburn (2004), institutional theory is a cultural approach, emphasising how norms and cultural conceptions are constructed and reconstructed over time and carried out by individual and collective actors embedded within policy and governance structures. Institutional theory seeks to understand the persistence of or change in structures, norms, and patterns of social relationships in organisations by highlighting the ways in which they are linked to the organisations’ broader social and cultural environments (Coburn, 2004). Scott (1995) described institutions as consisting of regulative, normative, and cognitive structures that together with associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Scott (2001, p. 41) defined institutions “as multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources”. Further, institutions are transported by various carriers (e.g., culture, structure, and routines), and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction (Scott, 2008).

The three pillars of institution

Scott (2001) argued that the characteristics of institutional structures are formed by three different elements—regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive—referred to as the three pillars of institutions. The regulative pillar concerns aspects of institutions that refer to laws and rules that together regulate and constrain organisational behaviour. Regulatory processes involve the capacity to establish rules, inspect others’ conformity to them, and, as necessary, manipulate sanctions—rewards or punishments—in an attempt to influence future behaviour (Scott, 2014). The normative pillar comprises elements that constrain and empower behaviour through systems of values and norms. Scott declared that values are to be understood as conceptions of the preferred and the desirable. In turn, actions and interpretations can be compared and assessed according to these notions. Scott (2008) clarified the concept that norms “specify how things should be done; they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends” (p. 54). Thus, the normative pillar constrains organisational behaviour but also enables social actions and the balancing of responsibilities, privileges, duties, licenses, and mandates. The cultural-cognitive pillar involves

aspects that form shared conceptions of social reality and a frame through which meaning is made. Following Scott (2008), these thoughts and identifications are often deeply embedded in the life of organisations. Concerning legitimacy, Scott emphasised the power of cultural-cognitive elements because they primarily rest on preconscious and shared taken-for-granted understandings. However, even if shared cultural understandings tend to work in a homogenising direction (isomorphism), Scott also pointed out that it is important to recognise that cultural conceptions often vary and, consequently, could also have heterogenising effects.

Change depends on the values and behavioural reasoning from the institutional context—whether people have to change, ought to change, or want to change (Coburn, 2004). Policy messages shape patterns of action and beliefs through regulative ways, for example, when a formal school leader's assignment is changed and the school leaders are given strengthened responsibilities and rights to delegate specific management tasks (e.g., the Education Act SFS, 2010:800). Policy messages also shape patterns through normative ways, for example, when principals feel pressured to adopt certain approaches to maintain legitimacy (e.g., in this study, how the schools have chosen to work with external actors in the surrounding community). As for cognitive ways, policy messages shape patterns as conceptions of appropriate common-sense practice (Coburn, 2004). However, for organisational change to occur, it is not enough if only the formal structures or the regulative rules change and not the living organisation in the local school. If that is the case, the organisation is considered loosely coupled (Weick, 1976) or decoupled (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). To achieve isomorphic status, which is required for social legitimacy, schools can use decoupling strategies to separate the formal structures of the organisation from the daily activities. In this way, schools can still live up to expectations of change although no major changes are made. Decoupling (Meyer & Rowan 1977, 1978) has been a useful concept for understanding organisational responses to institutional change. In recent years, it has been implied that early ideas of decoupling need to be nuanced, not least due to the impacts on school governance and administration of the neoliberal accountability movements that have been seen in the education sector (Coburn, 2004; Hallet, 2010; Spillane & Burch, 2006). School leaders and teachers respond to institutional pressure by using a range of coupling strategies that go well beyond decoupling (Coburn, 2004, 2005; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Hallet, 2010). Coburn (2004) took this into account when studying teachers' responses to new instructions for teaching

reading, and she identified five different coupling mechanisms: *rejection*—dismissal of new ideas, *decoupling*—symbolic responses with no effect on the internal operations, *parallel structures*—parallel approaches that balance different pressures and priorities, *assimilation*—interpretation and transformation of policy messages to make them fit teachers’ pre-existing understanding, leading to superficial changes in organisational structures and routines, and *accommodation*—restructuring pre-existing understanding to accommodate new information in response to institutional pressure, leading to substantial changes in the core work of teachers. In sum, the three pillars of institutions guide the ways in which individual actors interpret and respond to changes in organisations. These pillars are used in this thesis to gain an understanding of how teachers and principals interpret and respond to changes in their organisations when they are working with beyond-school collaboration.

Sense-making

There is no single agreed-upon definition of *sense-making*. There is, though, an emergent consensus that sense-making refers generally to those processes by which people seek plausibly to understand ambiguous, equivocal, or confusing issues or events (Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) provided an understanding of development and change in organisations through the concept of sense-making. Weick (1995) and Weick et al. (2005) defined sense-making as a retrospective process by which people in organisations try to coordinate actions and enact order to understand themselves and their actions. Weick (1982, 1995) argued that organisations can be described as loosely or tightly coupled and that schools can be described as loosely coupled systems. A loosely coupled system has more processes that affect each other and are more difficult to control. Loosely coupled systems require even more sense-making and communication than tightly coupled systems (Weick, 1995). In schools with loosely coupled organisation, influences from the environment tend to be perceived in various ways (Weick, 1976). There is thus an increased need for shared understandings and an expanded leadership to keep the organisation together, especially when changes are to be implemented. Sense-making tends to arise when changes in the environment or in the organisation challenge the way people usually act. As Binder (2007) stated, “Organisations are not merely the instantiation of environment, institutional logics ‘out there’ . . . but are places where people and groups make sense of, and interpret, institutional vocabularies of

motive" (p. 547). For change to take place, the values embedded in the local organisation need to change along with the cognitive beliefs of organisational members. If it is only the formal structures or the regulative rules that change and not the living organisation, encompassing norms and cognitive aspects, the core and the periphery of the organisation are considered loosely coupled (Weick, 1976, p. 3) or decoupled (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 356).

To find out how to act in relation to a new situation, actors in organisations place new information into their pre-existing frameworks and construct understandings of them through the lens of their pre-existing practices. By using pre-existing frameworks, actors reduce complexity, which, according to Weick et al. (2005), is a way to prevent challenges to their own identity and thus hold on to earlier understandings. However, sense-making processes can also lead to a greater acceptance of changes. Weick (2001) claimed that when sense-making is shared, it can strengthen people's ability to face new situations. Sense-making is, therefore, not only an individual affair but rather is rooted in social interaction and negotiations. People make sense of situations through conversations and interactions with their colleagues. In these processes, shared understandings of organisational culture, beliefs, and routines are constructed. Sense-making is also social in the sense that it is situated in practice. It is the norms and routines of the organisation that provide the lens through which sense can be made of new information and that shape the range of appropriate responses and the conditions for sense-making by influencing the patterns of social interaction. Consequently, Weick et al. (2005) stressed that sense-making tends to appear when the expected state opposes the present state and no obvious way exists to participate and act. Accordingly, a distinct connection also exists between sense-making and educational change because old interpretations are to be challenged and transformed.

Leadership in schools differs from leadership in more coupled organisations, according to Weick (1982). In loosely coupled organisations, such as schools, people are more in need of finding a shared sense of direction for their work. If they are to have a shared sense of direction, governing objectives need to be expressed by the people in the organisation. People can also need assistance with translating objectives to understand their goals. Hence, leadership, like sense-making, must be a social and relational process situated in practice. Consequently, an essential

theoretical point of departure in this thesis is the premise that leadership is constructed in the relation between leaders, followers, and the situation.

Summing up

In summary, the points of departure in this thesis are that to understand the construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices in local schools when they are working with beyond-school collaboration, it is crucial to take into account that local schools are embedded in an institutional context. However, local schools have their own history, local conditions, and people working there, and interpretations and sense-making at the local level are core activities in the construction of leadership practices at that level. To understand the construction of principals' leadership practices, it is relevant to focus on the aspects that constitute the practice, such as organisational structures, as well as the actions and relations between leaders, followers, and the situations in practice. Overall, these points of departure are used when defining the methodology for capturing leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration.

4 Conducting the Study

In this part, the research rationales for the study will be presented. The chapter starts with an outline of the study’s research design followed by the process of data collection and the combination of research strategies, reflecting upon an institutional approach and the analytical work deployed from the empirical data. Finally, the research credibility is addressed by discussing the dependability and transferability of the results as well as issues concerning research ethics and reflections on the research process.

Case Study

The present study was developed into a multiple case study in which the design of the individual cases was based on Yin (2013) and Stake (1995, 2006). The choice of design was based on a number of different aspects, including that both Yin (2013) and Stake (1995) argued that case studies are suitable for studying education and school improvement. The multiple design thus provided the possibility of comparing empirical data, results, conclusions, and experiences in relation to an overall question or to what Stake (2006) termed “a quintain” (p. 6), an overall phenomenon. The individual cases included in this thesis are part of a multiple case study in which the principals’ leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration became “a quintain” (Stake, 2006, p. 6) for the overall case.

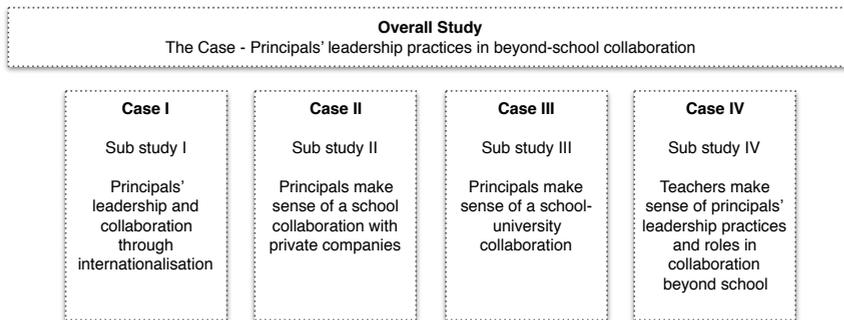


Figure 1. Multiple Case Study Design - Illustration of how the individual cases relate to the overall case.

The overall study consists of four cases, which are presented in four papers. In relation to Stakes (1995) concepts of *intrinsic case study* and *instrumental case study*, the overall study was developed into a study in which the individual cases could be examined individually (intrinsic) and together as instruments (instrumental) to understand the larger complete picture. The

overall study was developed in a form that could be called an emerging design (Simons, 2009, p. 31).

The multiple case study design was used in this study because complex social phenomena are to be understood in depth and it enables researchers to explore contemporary phenomena within their real-life context (Yin, 2013). Arguments in favour of a case study design, such as a research design in this study, are that case studies can be defined as a holistic description and analysis of a single entity or phenomenon and a case study as a research strategy is based in wanting to explore an area in depth. Other arguments for a case study design are that in case studies, the context is also taken into account for creating a better understanding of why something happens the way it does (Stake, 2006) and that case studies are appropriate for investigating what happens here and now (Yin, 2007). Another strength of the case study as research design is that it allows for using different methods to highlight the complexity of the case or cases (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin 2007). As the interest in this study is to examine principals' leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration from an institutional perspective, a multiple case study design (Yin, 2013) was deemed to be appropriate. This study used a multiple case study design (Yin, 2013) in which the three schools included had participated in a school improvement and research project. For the overall study, the principals' leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration are the object of study as a whole, but the different conducted papers used different objects of study (Figure 1). Three of the papers are different examples of beyond-school collaboration but with a focus on principals' leadership practices, and the fourth paper focuses on teachers' sense-making of principals' leadership practices in the processes of leading beyond-school collaboration. A multiple case study contains both strengths and weaknesses, but the evidence and results of multiple cases are often considered persuasive, so a multiple case study design can therefore be considered more robust (Yin, 2013).

Selection of Participants

The choice of the principals and the schools, for what was developed into the overall study, was not a choice in terms of sampling or a free selection, but more a consequence of participating as a PhD candidate in a research and school improvement project. The overall study and the substudies in this thesis were completed within the framework of the above-mentioned project, the key criteria being that the schools were involved in beyond-

school collaboration. Within the framework of the larger project, choices of methodological characters for this specific study had to be made, as exemplified next. The selection in the overall study was based on Stake's (1995) arguments about the selection of cases; that is, the selection should enable a variation in the understanding of each individual case, which in turn can enable a variation in the understanding of the overall case and its purpose. The selection of activities and participants in in-depth case studies I–IV consistently built on a “purposeful sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The selection would allow for maximum understanding of the individual case and, ultimately, the overall case.

The three case schools were all part of a research and school improvement project. The schools were chosen to be a part of the project through an application process at the responsible university. The three schools are two public compulsory schools and one public upper secondary school. For this thesis, the formal school leaders and the teachers in each school were chosen to be a part of the study. A sample of teachers was chosen to participate in the interviews, and all teachers were chosen to participate in the questionnaire.

The Schools

The *Sea School* is a compulsory school with classes from preschool to ninth grade located about 20 km southwest of the city centre, in a smaller community close to industry. The school has about 340 pupils and employs about 50 teachers. The school is led and managed by two principals, one responsible for preschool–fifth grade and leisure activities and the other responsible for sixth–ninth grades. They strive towards a shared leadership. The principals have worked at the school between one and one and a half years. The school is still in a construction phase after a merger 4 years ago combined two units into one. There are no formal team leaders at the school because there are no functional teacher teams. During the project, one of the principals left after a period of sick leave, at which time the remaining principal was responsible for the entire school. The remaining principal, originally responsible for preschool–fifth grade, was partially or fully on sick leave at times, and at the end of this study's timeframe, she left her mission. The overall leadership focus at the school is very much about the work organisation and creating a functioning school day, but there is a desire to be more of a learning organisation.

The *Lake School* is a compulsory school with classes from preschool to fifth grade located about eight km southeast of the main town, in a small

community close to industry. The school has about 150 pupils and employs about 25 teachers. The management of the school consists of one principal, but for support, the principal works with the school's teachers for special needs education, and together they constitute an educational management team for the school. Two principal changes have taken place at the school during the project. The school is organised with one teacher team, a preschool class, school, and a leisure centre. The employees work in three departments. The school has gone from using age-integrated classes in large part to working in a more age-homogeneous way.

The *Mountain School* is an upper secondary school located in a sparsely populated municipality in the inlands of northern Sweden. This upper secondary school is rather new (1996) and provides six different national programs and also organises nationally approved training in different sports. The school is small, has about 120 pupils, and employs about 25 teachers. The management of the school consists of one principal, and the school is organised as one teacher team. At the end of this study period, the school experienced a change of principal.

Context of the Case

The overall case needs to be understood in its context (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2007); therefore, the project, the various forms of collaboration, and the schools are presented in more detail next.

The Project

This thesis is a part of a 3-year research and school improvement project (2012–2015). The project involved five senior researchers and one PhD candidate. The project also included representatives from private and public sectors in the region. The project included the development of practical school activities, the leadership in the schools, and research on leadership, change, and development. The three previously described schools (Sea School, Lake School, and Mountain School) were selected to be part of the project and judged to have good research opportunities to develop and thus would become good role models for other schools, even after the project period. Each school was connected to one private company during the project period with the intention for them to collaborate in different ways, primarily focusing on the school's improvement needs. The private companies were, for that reason, labelled *mentor companies* in the project.

The overall project aimed to improve student-learning outcomes by starting from the schools' local needs and developing the schools as PLCs. The more specific project goals were to develop the leadership in the schools and to develop the schools' ability to manage and lead improvement processes, with the overall aim to strengthen the schools' improvement capacity. Based on previous research in educational leadership and school improvement, the aim was also to link the competences of local schools with external collaborative partners. The improvement project was run within the framework of a partnership between one university, private companies in the region, and three schools. A research team from the university collaborated with the involved schools, and three individuals from the team were responsible for the contact with each school. Each school was coupled with one private company for three years with the intention being to collaborate in areas of leadership and improvement processes in the school, primarily focusing on the school's improvement needs.

Private Companies

The project was an initiative of the Middle Northern Education Group, a nonprofit association of organisations and companies in education and business in the mid region with a common interest in education and the development of the region. The three companies selected for collaboration with the schools were part of this association, and the selection was made through dialogue with the principals of each school based on their needs. The three private companies are major companies/industries operating in one region of Sweden but in different sectors: tourism, energy, and pulp and paper/hygiene products. One of the companies is a multinational company, one company operates in Sweden and Norway, and one company operates locally in one region of Sweden. Worth mentioning is that the collaboration between the schools and the companies was created in different ways, at different times, and with different preconditions in each school context.

The Middle Northern Education Group wants to contribute to the continued development of new linkages between businesses, schools, institutes, the university, and other public services in the region. The reason for their engagement is that they believe that a good education system from preschool through primary and secondary schools to university and graduate education is crucial for a good society. It is important not only from a regional perspective but also within a national and international

context. The project initiative is in the light of the situation prevailing in the studied region of Sweden in terms of the following: From a national perspective, the region in question has few well educated people, pupils show low results on national tests (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014a, 2014b), too few students at the university live in the region, too few students stay in the region after completing their university studies, and too many well-educated people leave the region (Statistics Sweden, 2014). Altogether, these were crucial factors for this project involving the collaboration of three companies, one university, and three schools in the region to try to help keep this region of Sweden alive by linking the schools, university, and companies to strengthen the schools' internal capacity for school improvement and to support a common good for the whole region. Next, some examples of how the schools collaborated within this partnership are presented.

Collaboration forms

A number of activities within the framework of collaboration were similar and conducted at all three schools. For example, during the collaboration, the researchers from the university regularly conducted school visits to the three schools to not only evaluate different areas and issues within the collaboration but also conduct research at the schools. The involved researchers hosted several lectures and presentations of recent research based on the respective school's needs. For instance, they held lectures on peer observations for teachers, principal leadership, teacher leadership, internal improvement capacity, reading, and good learning environments. Conferences on both practice and research were held each year for the involved schools, the university, and the private companies. The participating researchers from the university acted as advisors, or a sounding board, to give feedback and as "critical friends" (Costa & Kallick, 1993) to the principals and teachers in their improvement efforts during the collaboration.

At the *Sea School*, the main foci of the collaboration with the university were coaching the two principals regarding leadership, based on their own needs, and supporting the building of a new organisation of teacher teams at the school. The collaboration with the mentor company (the pulp and paper industry) accelerated in the latter part of the project and focused on teachers' leadership and on student-centred activities. The mentor company provided an opportunity for teachers to attend a training day on leadership for managers at the mentor company, and a group of teachers

continuously met at the mentor company to discuss how collaboration between the school and the mentor company could develop. This resulted in a plan for collaboration during the academic year with joint activities for pupils at the school. Researchers from the university also conducted various lectures for the staff at the school.

At the *Lake School*, the school's improvement needs and focus in the project were primarily increasing teachers' leadership in the classroom and creating familiarity for pupils, teachers, and parents with the pedagogical tool "the goal tree," developed at the school by two teachers to visualise and communicate the curriculum goals better to the pupils. The school, together with the university and the mentor company (the energy company), worked on the teachers' leadership and their leadership development through peer observations and a joint training day with the mentor company's middle managers. In collaboration with one researcher from the university, the school conducted peer observations on several occasions, and as a basis for the observations, research-based literature on teacher leadership was used. The focus of the observations was classroom leadership from different perspectives. The collaboration between the school and the mentor company also consisted of creating a theme day on energy for which fifth-grade pupils were invited to the mentor company. This theme day was intended to be a recurring element of the collaboration. Researchers from the university also conducted various lectures for the staff at the school.

The *Mountain School* works actively to support entrepreneurship and collaboration with the surrounding community. The school also encourages pupils to bring in new ideas and cultures, among other things, through international study trips and international collaboration. School leaders have actively worked to encourage international questions and international collaboration since 2002. Based on that, the school's improvement needs and focus in the project were to get pedagogical support for the internationalisation work and to increase the teachers' leadership by encouraging them to be entrepreneurs in their own field. The researchers supported the school in its internationalisation work and joined one of the school's study trips abroad as participating researchers. All teachers ran their own mini-project during the project period, also with support from the researchers. The collaboration with the mentor company (the tourism company) was partly established when the project started but increased, broadened, and deepened during the project and comprised places for pupils to do workplace-based learning, training, marketing, and

various events in sports activities. Researchers from the university also conducted various lectures for the staff at the school.

Qualitative Data

To illuminate the complexity of the case, different methods and data sources were used (Simons 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin 2007). Through a voluminous description of a case, qualitative research can give the reader an idea of what the experience would have provided (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). The intention was to use different data collection methods (various forms of interviews, observations, field notes, document analysis, and project meeting notes), with the ambition to provide what Geertz (1973) would have strived for in a “thick description” of the case. Using different methods in the study was also a way to increase the credibility of the study (Watt Boolsen, 2009). To describe and analyse principals’ leadership practices in beyond-school collaboration, the following qualitative methods were used: individual semistructured interviews, semistructured group interviews, part of a teacher questionnaire, observations with field notes, and text-based analysis of local documents (see Table 1). A process-oriented perspective was used with data collected during 3 years (in the beginning, middle, and end of the project period): October–December 2012, March–May 2014, September–November 2014, and April–June 2015.

Interviews

Semistructured interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) were used as the main data source for this case study to get a deeper understanding about the object of knowledge in the three case schools. In each school, all formal school leaders were interviewed. A sample of teachers in each school was also interviewed. The selection of teachers for the interviews was made with regard to gender, age, teaching group/subject, and teacher team. Altogether, 51 interviews were conducted with principals and teachers. All participants were contacted in person or by email to inform them about the study, provide them with the interview guide (see Appendices), and seek a suitable date and time for the interview. The interviews were recorded. The interviews were conducted in secluded rooms at each school. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. All participants were asked to review the transcribed interviews they had been part of and were given the opportunity to make adjustments, changes, or additions. Examples of interview guides can be found in the Appendix.

Observations

In the framework of the school improvement and research project, the three involved schools were studied and followed for research during a 3-year period (2012–2015). This meant continuous school visits, field observations, field notes, local documents, and formal and informal conversations with teachers and principals. This created a deep and broad contextual understanding of the studied cases. Observations were also used as one of several research methods in Paper I. Observations were conducted during one school's study trip abroad (to China). The conducted observations were made in the role of "observer as participant" according to Creswell (2014); i.e., the role of the researcher was known. Observations were made as a way of reaching a greater understanding of the case (Stake, 1995). The pupils, teachers, and principal were observed in all of the activities that took place throughout the trip.

Questionnaire

Part of a questionnaire for participating teachers distributed at the end of the collaboration was also used in the study (three questions and 375 coded units). The part of the questionnaire used in this study included open-response questions about the beyond-school collaboration, the leadership and management in these collaborations, and the teachers' sense-making efforts. All present teachers responded to the questionnaire digitally during the time the researchers from the university conducted school visits. This meant that information about the questionnaire and its purpose could be communicated during the time the researchers were present. It also meant that they could provide technical support and answer questions that arose during the time the teachers answered the questionnaire.

Table 1

Interviews, observations, and a teacher questionnaire conducted in the three case schools

School	Semistructured individual interviews	Semistructured group interviews	Part of a teacher questionnaire	Observations
Lake School	1 principal (5 interviews) 6 teachers (6 interviews)	Principal & teachers (1 interview) Teachers (2 interviews)	10 teachers	Field observations and written field notes
Sea School	2 principals (7 interviews) 12 teachers (12 interviews)	Principal & teachers (1 interview) Teachers (2 interviews)	37 teachers	Field observations and written field notes
Mountain School	1 principal (7 interviews) 3 teachers (3 interviews)	Principal & teachers (1 interview) Teachers (4 interviews)	24 teachers	Observations and written field notes during study trip abroad for 10 days

Overview of included papers and the empirical data used in each paper

In Paper I, the specific empirical data used was collected at the Mountain School during 2014. The data consisted of two individual interviews with the school's principal and four individual interviews with two teachers, three group interviews with nine teachers, observations, and written field notes during a study trip to China. The school was studied and followed by researchers during a 3-year period (2012–2015) within the framework of the school improvement and research project. This meant continuous school visits, field observations, field notes, local documents, formal and informal conversations with teachers and the principal, individual interviews (with teachers and the principal), and group interviews (with teachers).

In Paper II, the empirical data was collected during 3 years (2012–2015) and consisted mainly of 16 semistructured individual interviews with the school principals. Project meeting notes, field observations, field notes, and document analysis were also used to create the context of the case. The

interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the collaboration.

In Paper III, the empirical data was collected over a period of 3 years, from 2012 to 2015, and consisted mainly of 16 semistructured individual interviews with the school principals. Project meeting notes, field observations, field notes, and document analysis were also used to create the context of the case. A process-oriented perspective was used in this study, and the interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the collaboration.

In Paper IV, the empirical data was collected over 3 years, from 2012 to 2015, and consisted of semistructured individual and group interviews with teachers at the schools. Project meeting notes, field observations, field notes, and document analysis were also used to create the context of the case. A process-oriented perspective was used in this study, with interviews conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the collaboration. In total, 33 interviews (24 individual and nine group interviews) were conducted with teachers from the schools. Part of a questionnaire for teachers distributed at the end of the collaboration was also used in this study (three questions and 375 coded units).

Table 2 provides an overview of the four papers included in the thesis. Column 1 presents the titles of the four papers, Column 2 shows the research questions in the four papers, Column 3 shows the theoretical frameworks in the four papers, and Colum 4 shows the empirical data for the analysis.

Table 2

Overview of titles, research questions, theoretical frameworks, and empirical data in the four papers

Titles	Research questions	Theoretical framework	Empirical data
<p>Paper I Internationalisation as an Internal Capacity Builder for School Improvement: A Case Study</p>	<p>Can a school's work with internationalisation be an internal process that builds internal capacities for school improvement, and if so, how can these internal capacities be depicted?</p> <p>How can the meaning of the principal's leadership be understood regarding a school's work process with internationalisation?</p>	<p>The perspectives of capacity building (Stoll, 2010) and internal capacities for school improvement (Björkman, 2008)</p>	<p>Individual interviews with the principal and teachers</p> <p>Group interviews with teachers</p> <p>Observations and field notes</p>
<p>Paper II Collaboration With Private Companies as a Vehicle for School Improvement—Principals' Experience and Sense-Making</p>	<p>How do principals experience and make sense of a school collaboration with private companies?</p> <p>How can the principal's role in the process of the school collaboration with private companies be understood?</p>	<p>Sense-making theory (Weick, 1995)</p>	<p>Individual interviews with the principals</p> <p>Field observations and field notes</p>
<p>Paper III Making Sense of External Partnerships: Principals' Experiences of School-University Collaborations</p>	<p>What kind of sense do principals make of a school-university collaboration in school improvement processes in local schools in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects?</p>	<p>Sense-making theory (Weick, 1995)</p> <p>Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)</p>	<p>Individual interviews with the principals</p> <p>Field observations and field notes</p>
<p>Paper IV Teachers Making Sense of Principals' Leadership in Beyond-School Collaboration</p>	<p>How do teachers make sense of principals' leadership at the local school level in the processes of beyond-school collaboration?</p>	<p>Sense-making theory (Weick)</p> <p>Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)</p>	<p>Individual interviews with teachers</p> <p>Group interviews with teachers</p> <p>Part of a teacher questionnaire</p> <p>Field observations and field notes</p>

Coding and Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Qualitative data analysis concerns how researchers move from the data to understanding, explaining, and interpreting the phenomenon in question. It includes “organizing, describing, understanding, accounting for and explaining data, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definition of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 183). The analytic process can be described as a combination of inductive and deductive analysis (Miles et al., 2014). The aim of the study defined the outer frame and the initial analytical concepts for the analysis. Gradually, as the three research questions became more explicit, additional analytical concepts were introduced that eventually allowed for development of the analysis. The first analytical concepts used in the study were based on the sense-making theory (Weick, 1995) and the seven properties of sense-making (identity and identification; retrospection; enactment of the environment; social; ongoing; focused on and by extracted cues from the context; and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy). The sense-making theory provided an understanding of how principals and teachers made sense of principals’ leadership practices in the processes of beyond-school collaboration. During the process, the need emerged for an institutional perspective, which enables comprehension of the more general and structural aspects that benefit change. Institutional theory and the three pillars of institutions (Scott, 2008)—described as consisting of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive structures—were used to deepen the analysis of the study.

The process of analysis was divided into three levels: *descriptive*, *thematic*, and *analytical* (Richards, 2009). The descriptive level focuses on descriptions of findings in the material, while the thematic focuses on themes. The third level includes the analytical work, in which interpretation and abstraction of analytical concepts are the central foci. In the analytical process, the interviews, the part of the teacher questionnaire, and the observations were read several times to obtain a sense of the whole. This reading, in combination with reading literature in the field, inspired new thoughts and reflective notes that grew the input for further analysis. After getting a sense of the whole, a more systematic approach was applied. In this study, qualitative content analysis was chosen as the analysis method (Cohen et al., 2018; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Qualitative

content analysis involves a way to organise data and a way to gain knowledge about a particular phenomenon through the analysis process (Downe-Wambold, 1992). The analysis process reveals patterns in the text which create codes and categories (Miles et al., 2014), in which both pre-existing categories and emergent themes are used to cross-examine texts and analyses and reduce them to summary form. Finally, the coding process is completed as conclusions are drawn from the text and from relations between the different patterns that emerge (Cohen et al., 2010; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Continuous discussions and reflections with supervisors, coauthors, and other researchers have also been an important part of the analytical work of the overall study. To provide further insight into the coding process, an example of the different steps used to analyse the empirical material for the third paper are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Example of the analysis process in paper III

Category	Subcategory	Meaning unit
Need-based development	Receive support from the university	"We were two new principals, and I had a very strong idea of a shared leadership and that we could get help and support from the university."
Collective commitment	Joint responsibility through mini-projects	"My idea was to let teachers lead and run their own development projects, the so-called 'mini projects.' If I analyse that work, I think we are heading for a completely different way today. "
Using evidence-based knowledge	To see the value of research	"When we began to read about this, there were several studies that showed that it was one of the biggest detectable links with school development and the pupils' learning opportunities. It was a great confirmation to see that research really is important, as it is formulated in the Education Act 'shall be based on research and proven experience.'"

Credibility, Dependability, and Transferability

This section describes the analyses and interpretations that have been carried out within and between the cases and how these analyses and interpretations have become part of the overall study. The quality criteria for scientific studies used in this thesis were selected on the basis that the overall study is essentially a qualitative multiple case study and is largely based on interpretations of institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2008) and sense-making theory (Weick, 1995). Miles et al. (2014) suggested application of concepts linked to the qualitative tradition when reporting findings of studies using qualitative content analysis. The choice of quality criteria in this study was based on the use of criteria adapted to qualitative interpretive studies (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gray, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002). The criteria used were credibility, dependability, and transferability, and they can be understood as a way of strengthening the trustworthiness of the overall study. The aspects of trustworthiness are separated, but they should be viewed as intertwined and interrelated. All concepts are central throughout the research process, and in order to assess this study's trustworthiness, a detailed description of the methodological considerations is presented and discussed next (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Miles et al., 2014; Polit & Beck, 2010; Whitemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

The concept of credibility can be related to internal validity and concerns the degree to which the researcher ensured the study was conducted in a scientific manner and was communicated in the text in an understandable way to those who were studied. To enhance the credibility of the study, triangulation was used. The overall study combined interviews, observations, a part of a questionnaire, and contextual data. By doing so, it was possible to examine the relationship between different data and, in that way, enhance the credibility of the overall study. The amount of data necessary to answer a research question in a credible way varied depending on the complexity of the phenomena under study and the data quality (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The collected empirical data for this study (see Table 1) were considered sufficient to ensure the credibility of the overall study based on the following arguments. First, choosing participants with various experiences increased the possibility of shedding light on the research questions from a variety of aspects, and various perspectives contributed to a richer variation of the phenomena under study. Second, the individual interviews and group interviews with teachers provided different views and experiences of the principals'

leadership practices. Third, to validate the study, all teachers in the three schools also responded to a questionnaire with open-ended responses about the beyond-school collaboration and the principals' leadership practices. Apart from triangulation, the schools were studied during a process of three years, which can be considered a relatively long time.

Credibility can be related to dependability and the extent to which the researcher created an accessible and complete description of the different steps in the research process, from the formulation of the research problem to analysis and findings. As case studies are conducted in real life, dependability is problematic because a single reality available to be studied for a second time does not exist. Human behaviour is never static. Instead, dependability in case studies is more about whether the researcher's findings are consistent with what actually happened in the original context under research (Cohen et al., 2010). It was the intention to fulfil this. The text that follows describes how this was handled in the overall study.

Based on Stake (2006), the individual cases can be seen as part of the overall case, the principals' leadership practices in collaboration that go beyond school. The individual cases share some common features, including all focus on beyond-school collaboration and the principals' leadership in those processes, and they can be understood from theories of institutional theory and sense-making theory. Together, the individual cases were able to contribute to what Stake calls *the quintan*, where the overall case was expressed in an overall purpose for this thesis.

Dependability is about the degree to which the data changes over time and how the researchers' decisions change during the analysis process. For large data sets, and when data collection takes place over a long period, there is a risk that inconsistencies arise during data collection, for example, that researchers do not focus on the same topics for all interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). The interview guides looked about the same during the course of the study, which was a way of keeping the focus on the topic in the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, which meant it was possible to ask follow-up questions, if needed, as a way of ensuring dependability in the study (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher's role and status within the site is also of importance to make transparent. The researcher, as emphasised by Cohen et al. (2018), is always a part of the world being researched and can, therefore, never be completely objective. In this study, the role of being an evaluator and researcher meant a relatively distant role to the schools, but relationships were still created with teachers and principals during the three-year study period.

Researchers bring their experiences to the research sites and should concede they are part of the research. Therefore, researchers should be aware of and try to understand how they affect the research. It is impossible to preclude the *researcher effect*, which occurs from the researcher being part of the world being researched. However, being aware of his or her influence as a highly reflexive researcher is preferred (Cohen et al., 2018; Miles et al., 2014). The relationships created over time between researchers and respondents in this study became clear, for example, in the interviews. When the respondents felt that the school context was familiar to the researcher, the respondents assumed the researcher would also understand what they meant and intended in their answers. In order to understand the respondents' perspectives and get more complete answers, new questions were asked to give the respondents a chance to develop the responses. For the results to be considered reliable, the researcher can choose to exemplify quotes proving the results (Miles et al., 2014), which has been done throughout this study. Other researchers may also be invited in the work with analysis and results to test the validity of the category against the empirical data. With accuracy means both the planning and implementation of the study, but also the analysis procedure and reporting of results. In this study the ongoing work, the findings, and the analysis were discussed with co-authors, and papers were presented at different Nordic and international conferences.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results can be transferred to other groups and other contexts. First, the possibilities for the generalisation of the findings are limited because of the small number of cases in this multiple case study, as well as the specific social context. Second, the study was not independently selected, and the findings and analyses were linked to national and local context, which can be seen as a limitation and a strength. Nevertheless, this study provides in-depth information about the principals' and teachers' experiences and their constructions of meaning in the context of different beyond-school collaborations in their schools. Finally, although the sample of the schools was small, the findings provided useful insights and examples of how principals and teachers understand and interpret principals' leadership practices in the context of leading collaborations that go beyond the schools in school improvement processes in a Swedish context. Most of the international research regarding principal leadership and beyond-school collaboration has been limited to the Anglo-Saxon context (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2018; Muijs et al., 2011; Stoll & Louis, 2007). Another argument

is that policy cultures are closely related to the socio-historical context of a country, and that is why mere policy borrowing does not work easily (Devos & Schratz, 2012). Therefore, research conducted in a different structural, as well as cultural, context could make an important contribution to the field.

Ethical considerations

In carrying out the empirical studies, the ethical rules and guidelines for research provided by the Swedish Research Council (2012) were followed. Four demands were followed: information requirement, consent requirement, confidentiality requirement, and use requirement. All respondents were promised their personal views and data would not be identifiable in written reports regarding the research. This means that the participants were informed about the aims of the research and their participation was voluntary.

Some considerations regarding the research process

This is a retrospective description of the research process for this thesis. Writing a thesis is an individual knowledge journey. Writing papers throughout the process has provided an awareness of how the starting points and the concepts used become more nuanced and how one's knowledge increases. One example is the theoretical starting points. Paper I was based on a school improvement perspective and was problematised with the support of capacity building and internal capacities for school improvement. Paper II was problematised with the help of sense-making theory. These first two problematisations combined with sense-making theory created the need for one more theory, institutional theory, to be able to problematise Paper III and IV.

As a PhD candidate, one assignment was to follow and evaluate the ongoing school improvement projects in the three schools. A case study design was considered for the evaluation, but it was also an ambition to use the empirical data of the case study for the thesis. The case study methodology needed to be adapted as a scientific approach in relation to the thesis, and the work with the evaluation raised many questions. A methodological paper presented at a Nordic conference (Sahlin, 2015) clarified the different roles and logics—that is, how a scientific approach, choice of perspective, and concepts for analysis could be combined with a more practical role of conducting an evaluation. Given the premise to carry out an evaluation and conduct research, the empirical data (see Table 1) for

this thesis was collected. However, at the end of the project, the situation changed in terms of evaluation of the project and who should implement it. The overall focus became solely research for the doctoral thesis. Therefore, the collected empirical data was used only in the thesis. Several decisions had to be made initially (e. g., data gathering). These decisions were based on different premises, such as the framework of the project, the assignment as an evaluator of the project, and the role of a PhD candidate with the intention of examining principals' leadership practices in the three involved schools. It has also been a knowledge journey to participate in the project from the beginning—to understand what the project would mean, what the role of the PhD candidate and evaluator meant, and how the study for the thesis could be carried out within the framework of the project. After the end of the project, the distancing became clearer, and there was a stronger focus on the research study for the thesis. Two other things are important to highlight. First, the funding came from a very normative formation, where something would be better and the financiers, in their ideology, wanted to eventually get something out of the project (e.g., more students to the university and more labour and competence in the region). Second, there were many different stakeholders in this process, which can be seen as institutional pressure in the researcher role (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987).

Principal leadership is both a practiced and experienced phenomenon in school (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). Therefore, not only principals but also teachers were important informants in this study. The gathering of data from teachers—not exclusively from principals—is considerably important because principals may tend to overestimate their own accomplishments (Mulford et al., 2007). Teachers are more likely to have the most authentic information and experiences of their principals' leadership practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). It is important to note that the focus is not the behaviour of the principals but teachers' perceptions of how their principals behave (Wahlstrom & Seashore Louis, 2008). In addition, contextual data about principals, teachers, and schools were used to create contextual depth in the overall case. After consideration, a multiple case study design was chosen for the thesis based on the aim of the study and that the included sub-studies were carried out as case studies.

In the role of a PhD candidate, the undertaken research and the findings in this thesis have continuously been presented at research conferences in Sweden and abroad, which meant widened horizons, provisions of critique, valuable comments, and suggestions on the

conducted research. There have also been possibilities to discuss this research, in general and concerning specific details, with recognised professors in the field of educational leadership.

Other written papers could have been included or used within the framework of this thesis but were not prioritised when the object of knowledge for the overall study became more explicit. During the progress of the project, the data gathering and the PhD candidate's postgraduate courses shaped the knowledge object and study object, and the delimitation was decided to deal with beyond-school collaboration and the principal's leadership practices of these processes. Arguments for these choices are that this is a scarce area of research in the Swedish context but also of importance in today's society with rapid change where the formal school leaders have crucial roles in leading their schools (Leithwood et al., 2017; Murphy, 2017). The four included papers have been written in the order as they are presented in this thesis. Each paper has contributed to further deepening the understanding of principals' leadership practices in the processes of leading beyond-school collaboration and in that sense complemented each other.

5 Summary of the Papers

In this section a brief summary of each of the four papers, which are included in this thesis, will be presented. The focus is on the main findings and discussions in the papers, as the overarching theoretical and methodological considerations have been described in the previous chapters. After the summary, the papers are presented as they were published. All papers are published with permission from the publisher.

To write these papers and this introductory part is and has been a more parallel than linear process. New questions have emerged during the research and analysis of the empirical material, and new research questions have been formulated. However, it is a progression in the analysis and the results, and the papers are presented in the order they were written to communicate this process to the reader.

Paper I

Internationalization as an internal capacity builder for school improvement: a case study

The first paper of the thesis examines how the work with internationalisation at one Swedish upper secondary school could be understood from a school improvement perspective. More precisely to examine how internationalisation at this school could be understood in relation to building internal capacities for school improvement, and examine the meaning of the principal's leadership in relation to the work with internationalisation. This paper used a case study methodology in which aspects of capacity building and internal capacities for school improvement constituted the theoretical point of departure. Data consisted of interviews with the principal and teachers, observations, and field notes. The article argues that internationalisation at the upper secondary school supported capacity building, and it is evident that internationalisation is an internal capacity. It is also apparent that the principal's leadership is distributed and vital to the school's success in terms of internationalisation and school improvement. Above all, internationalisation serves not only as an external form of collaboration but also as an internal measurement at the school for leadership, professional development, and internal collaboration. It is evident that these internal capacities are intertwined.

To conclude, the school's work with internationalisation not only served as an external collaboration form but also contributed to the internal process of strengthening leadership, staff development, and overall

internal collaboration. The school's work with internationalisation as a form of external collaboration contributed and increased the collective ability to handle the internal school improvement process. The principal's leadership and distribution of leadership in this process also seemed to be vital.

Published as:

Sahlin, S. & Styf, M. (2019), Internationalization as an internal capacity builder for school improvement: a case study, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1591511

Paper II

Collaboration with private companies as a vehicle for school improvement: Principals' experiences and sensemaking

The second paper examines principals' experiences and sense-making of collaborations with private companies, focussing on leadership and school improvement. This paper is set against the backdrop of a project where three public Swedish schools collaborated with private companies within their communities. Data were collected over three years and consisted of semi-structured interviews, meeting notes, field observations, field notes, and document analyses. A qualitative content analysis was performed using the Atlas.ti 6.2 software tool. The study shows that important sense-making by the principals in these collaborations is related to the sense of collective responsibility and involvement, improvement culture development, trust between key actors, and common improvement initiatives based on mutual interests. Challenges in the collaboration are related to principal changes, a lack of implementation, and no clear vision of the external collaboration in two out of three schools. In terms of possibilities, the collaboration was based on the needs of the school, a collaborative culture was developed, and the development activities were undertaken between the involved schools and private companies during the process.

This study contributes with in-depth information about how beyond-school collaborations with private companies are practised, as well as how involved principals made sense of the collaborations from the perspective of school improvement. The originality is the collaboration between schools and private companies. The paper contributes new knowledge about how principals experience and understood these collaborations as vehicles for school improvement.

To conclude, this study highlights that important sense-making for the principals in collaborations with the private companies was related to the sense of collective responsibility and involvement between the participating actors, where the role of the university as “change poets” (Weick, 2011) and the formalised project were especially emphasised by the principals as crucial aspects in the collaborations. Another important aspect was the value of collective and joint activities through different forms of collaboration. The principals also created meaning for the culture and trust that developed between the key actors during the course of the collaborations. Last but not least, the principals’ sense-making were that these improvement initiatives were common and based on mutual interests between the schools and private companies, and there was a longer improvement perspective in the collaboration.

Published as:

Sahlin, S. (2018), Collaboration with private companies as a vehicle for school improvement: Principals’ experiences and sensemaking, *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, volume 4, pp. 15-35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-03-2018-0013>

Paper III

Making Sense of External Partnerships: Principals’ Experiences of School-University Collaboration

The third paper examines principals’ sense-making of a school–university collaboration by taking an institutional perspective on organisational change. The study’s context involves three schools in a collaboration focusing on leadership and school improvement with one university. The study draws on findings from a qualitative case study that examined principals’ sense-making of this type of school–university collaboration. Data were collected over three years and consisted of semistructured interviews, meeting notes, field observations, field notes, and document analyses. A qualitative content analysis was performed using the Atlas.ti 6.2 software tool. The findings showed that important sense-making for the principals in this collaboration was related to the cultivation of collective participation and responsibility, the development of trust and culture improvement among actors, and the sense of moving towards research-based and collaborative learning-oriented practices in their schools. The study provides in-depth information about the principals’ experiences and constructions of meaning as they helped lead a school–university

collaboration in their schools. The findings provided useful insights and examples of how principals understand and interpret school–university partnerships in their schools’ improvement processes, and the findings provided an elaborated illustration of how intentional efforts to collaborate and develop the schools in a school-university partnership may affect the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects in schools.

To conclude, the challenges that became visible and important in this partnership included the following: difficulties with priorities in relation to everything else occurring in the school, including finding time for teachers to use for collaboration; staff problems; ongoing internal conflicts in the schools; and different cultures within the schools (e.g., Nelson et al., 2015). Perhaps, the principal changes and sick leaves also played roles in the outcome of this partnership.

Submitted as:

Sahlin, S. (2019). Making sense of external partnerships: Principals’ experiences of school-university collaborations. Submitted for publication.

Paper IV

Teachers Making Sense of Principals’ Leadership in Collaboration Beyond School

The fourth paper focuses on teachers’ sense-making of collaboration beyond school with a focus on principal leadership and how such processes reshape regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive structures. This paper is set against the backdrop of a partnership where schools collaborate with external partners within their communities. Data were collected over three years and consisted of semi-structured individual and group interviews with teachers and a part of a teacher questionnaire. A qualitative content analysis, guided by an institutional perspective on organisations and sense-making theory, was performed, and the analysis revealed important sense-making was related to the leadership practices and the formal leader. Furthermore, the findings showed that important sense-making for the teachers is related to the need of a formal leader, the principals’ organisation of collaborative and leadership structures, lack of principal leadership and management, lack of a permanent principal, turnover of principals, lack of teacher participation, and teacher responsibility and leadership. This paper’s originality lies in its focus on teachers’ sense-making of beyond-school collaborations with a focus on principals’ leadership, as research in this area is scarce. This paper

contributes new knowledge about how teachers understand principals' leadership in beyond-school collaborations.

To conclude, the findings provided an elaborated illustration of how intentional efforts to collaborate and develop the schools in various beyond-school collaborations may affect the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of schools. This study's main contribution is to highlight the importance of including the teachers' sense-making about leadership in collaboration to deepen the knowledge about how leadership is enacted in beyond-school collaborations. The concluding remark is that a focus on beyond-school collaboration led change and development towards a changed practice in which school leadership became a collective rather than an individual concern.

Submitted as:

Sahlin, S. (2019). Teachers' Making Sense of Principals' Leadership in Collaboration Beyond School. Submitted for publication.

6 Discussion

The previous section presented four papers and the findings in each. In this part, the findings from the four papers are discussed. The aim of this thesis, from an institutional perspective, has been to deepen the understanding of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of school leaders' practices in beyond-school collaboration at the local school level within the Swedish context. The regulative aspect refers to structure; the normative aspect refers to values, norms, and how leadership should be performed; and the cultural-cognitive aspect refers to how meanings regarding leadership are constructed when the schools are working in beyond-school collaborations. The following research questions are addressed to the four papers:

- How are principals' leadership practices constructed and characterised in school collaboration that goes beyond the local school?
- What kind of sense do principals and teachers make of beyond-school collaboration in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects?
- In what ways do the various collaboration forms beyond school enable or restrain a principal's and thus also a school's leadership practices?

Below, a summary and elaboration on some of the key results in the four papers are presented. Through the discussion the intention is to answer the aim and research questions of this study.

The construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices in school collaboration that goes beyond local schools

The first research question posed was: How are principals' leadership practices constructed and characterised in school collaboration that goes beyond the school? The findings in the four papers of this thesis provide insights into construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices in collaboration that goes beyond local schools.

The construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices in beyond-school collaborations

The principals have been active co-creators of the various beyond-school collaborations from the start. The starting points were the needs of the schools. The principals developed and defined the collaborations with the other actors and the environments and received support in the processes from the involved researchers (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). By using institutional theory, it is possible to interpret that these school leaders expressed a distinct agency as they acted in accordance with their pre-existing frameworks and understandings, but also when they altered these frames and reinterpreted the institutional pressures in order to improve their local practices by taking action and being an active part of different beyond-school collaborations. Based on Coburns' (2004) five identified coupling mechanisms, it is possible to understand the principals' coupling mechanisms as *accommodation*, meaning a restructuring of pre-existing understanding to accommodate new information in response to institutional pressure, which led to substantial changes in the schools' improvement processes. This meant the principals' had the power and influence to shape leadership practices in their schools. From the perspective of construction and characterisation of leadership practices, one interpretation is that the principals have had the possibility to build professional capacity in their schools, create supportive organisations for learning, and connect with different external partners as a result of these beyond-school collaborations (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

It is possible to see both challenges and possibilities regarding the principals' roles in the process of leading the various beyond-school collaborations. One challenge relates to principals' lack of vision regarding collaborations with the surrounding communities for their schools. This was visible in the two schools without clear visions, where there was almost no cooperation with the surrounding communities before the start of these collaborations (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted). If the formal principal, in the role responsible for leading and managing the school, has no vision or direction (Day and Leithwood, 2007; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, 2019) for school improvement and collaboration, it is difficult to focus and prioritise amongst the other things going on in the school, such as governing inspections, community-wide projects, and different initiatives for the teachers' professional development at the individual, school, municipal, and state levels. This result relates to Hitt and Tucker's (2016) unified model for effective leader practices, where an essential domain of

leadership practice emerged as 'establishing and conveying the vision', emphasizing the creation, stewarding of the shared mission and vision, implementation of the vision, and broadly communicating the state of the vision. One major possibility relates to the building of a collaborative culture that developed during the progress of collaboration between the schools and the private companies (Sahlin, 2018). In her role, the principal was responsible for communicating the school's needs and interest in the collaboration and, therefore, also involved in contributing to this collaborative culture of improvement. The school and the private companies saw each other's assets and were open and willing to collaborate, which must be seen as a strength, and this relates well to previous research (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Wenger, 1998). This result is in line with the third study too (Sahlin, 2019a, submitted), where the findings show the development of trust and improvement culture among involved actors were important sense-making for the principals. However, Murphy (2017) argued that gaps still remain in the research on communities of professional practice, and there is a need to examine how school leaders can overcome cultural and structural barriers in the building of such professional communities. Based on the findings in this study, one possible answer is for schools and leaders to work more with external actors and engage the community in collaborative processes (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

The principals had support for their thoughts on leadership work and school improvement, which meant that they were strengthened, confirmed, and challenged in their roles as principals (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). It is apparent the principals widened their views on educational leadership through the research-based approach and gained a qualitatively different way of reasoning about school development issues and leadership questions. From an institutional perspective this implies the principals felt pressure from the different external actors as critical friends, and the external actors were a part of the construction and characterisation of the principals' leadership practices during the course of collaboration.

The key function of the formal leader in school collaboration

In the national Swedish curricula (Skolverket, 2011, 2018), the principal has a key role. It includes conducting pedagogical leadership and enacting school improvements where the principal is ultimately responsible for improving the schools in accordance with the national Education Act (SFS

2010:800). In prior research, it was evident the formal leader is crucial and has a central role (e.g., Day et al., 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Moos et al., 2011; Timperley, 2011).

Analyses of the empirical material in this thesis show formal leaders play an important part in the construction of leadership practices in their schools (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). The findings also show that teachers' important sense-making of principals' leadership in beyond-school collaborations are related to those of their formal leaders (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted). The teachers agreed a formal leader is necessary when collaborating with external actors, as teachers are busy with other tasks. Teachers also expressed the importance of having a pedagogical leader with the capacity to lead collective learning. This is reflected in a recent study of Forssten Seiser (2017), where the principals' leadership appeared as situation oriented, but it was also described as a leadership that largely dealt with the conditions for teachers' collegial learning. However, it was defined as an indirect leadership in which the principal focused on arranging the conditions for the teachers but still had a clear commitment towards student learning and development. From the perspective of the principal's role in beyond-school collaboration, it was evident one challenge in the various collaborations was related to principal turnovers in all three schools and to the recurring and long sick leave of the principals at the sea school (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted). For the principal, in the role as the responsible leader, it is difficult to work with and focus on development processes when either the management or work organisation is not in place as it should be, which was evident at the Sea School. In conclusion, there were several principal turnovers in each school during the time of the study. This affected the principals in their formal roles as responsible for school improvements, as well as the ongoing various beyond-school collaborations in two of the schools (the Sea School and the Lake School). This is in line with the teachers' sense-making, where it was also evident that the lack of a present principal and the turnover of principals affected both ongoing development work and everyday work in two out of the three schools (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted). By the end of this study, all three principals had or were leaving their positions in the schools. One principal was redirected to another school as a result of a municipality-wide strategy for relocating school leaders, and the other two principals chose to move on to new principal assignments at other schools. This is important to stress in light of principal leadership for improvement processes and creating

sustainability and capacity in improvement work, as well as managing and leading relationships with the surrounding communities (Moos et al., 2011). It is also possible to relate it to the study of Leithwood and Seashore Louis (2012), who concluded leadership that matters is higher where principal turnover is lower.

The principals' roles as sensemakers

The findings show (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted) that challenges in the beyond-school collaboration related to the implementation of the collaborations, where it was expressed by all three principals that the processes started without the influence and participation of the teachers. The teachers did not get a chance to jointly define the key issues, which would have created common ground and a sense of common identity. Not properly anchoring the collaboration with the teachers can be understood as a deficiency in the principal's role and leadership, which research has emphasised is crucial for success in professional collaborations (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Indeed, failure to involve teachers in a change makes its substantially more vulnerable to principal turnover.

This study suggests, in line with previous research (Coburn, 2005), that the principals are also sense-makers. As the principals discuss approaches with the other involved actors and as they shape the opportunities for collaboration and teacher learning, the principals draw on their own perceptions of what the collaborations involve and make decisions about what to bring in and emphasise. The principals reflect and understand their own roles and assignments as principals and about their responsibilities as leaders to create preconditions and build relationships with the surrounding communities. However, the principals do not reflect on how they communicated with the teachers or about the teachers' ability to understand the various beyond-school collaborations (Sahlin, 2018). One assumption is that the teachers may need more time to translate and understand the change. The principals also expressed that not all teachers were as involved as expected throughout the collaborations. These findings are confirmed in the fourth study (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted), where it is evident the teachers engaged in these various beyond-school collaborations to varying degrees and with different extents of involvement. Based on the teachers' sense-making about the insufficient involvement of teachers in the implementation of the partnerships, one assumption is that the teachers may need more time to translate and understand change. Some of the teachers also expressed that not all felt involved in the collaboration

processes. In this work, the principals were crucial as leaders (Louis et al., 2010) and might have worked more as sense-givers (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) and with collective sense-making, and enabled more participation, mutual engagement, direction in the development work, and distributed more responsibility to include everyone. In school improvement processes, establishing and conveying the vision is well known as one important part in the principal's leadership practices (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008, 2019). However, the next step, to implement the vision by setting goals and performance expectations are also essential in development work and to broadly communicate the state of the vision (Leithwood, 2012; Supovitz et al., 2010; Ärlestig, 2008). From an institutional perspective (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1978; Weick, 1995), it is possible to interpret that the teachers were in more need of the principal as the coupling agent, interpreting the policy messages from the environment through the pre-existing frameworks and practices, and translating it to the local context where values and deeply held beliefs are embedded in the local context (Liljenberg, 2015b). This is also reinforced by Weick (1982), who argued that people in loosely coupled organisations, such as schools, are in more need of finding a shared sense of direction for their work. Weick emphasised that people may need assistance with translating the governing objectives in order to understand their goals.

Principals and teachers sense-making of beyond-school collaboration in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects

The second research question asked was: What kind of sense do principals and teachers make of collaboration beyond school in terms of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects? The findings of the overall study are possible to interpret in an institutional perspective by using the three pillars of institutions as the focus (Scott, 2008). The findings from the four included studies (Sahlin & Styf, 2019; Sahlin, 2018; Sahlin, 2019a, submitted, Sahlin, 2019b, submitted) indicate that the beyond-school collaboration seems to influence and affect the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars (Scott, 2008) that exist in the participating schools. However, it is important to remember that few studies empirically manage to distinguish these three pillars, and the most common approach instead is to speak of a "composed institutional profile" (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 15). In the following section, the principals and teachers' sense-making of

beyond-school collaborations are discussed using the three pillars of institutions.

Regulative aspects

The national documents, such as the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), and the curricula (Skolverket, 2011a, 2011b) regulate what the principal should and is entitled to do, and stipulates the principal must lead the educational work and work to develop the education. From 2010, there was increased regulation of the principal's responsibility (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013). The principal's responsibility for proper school development was strengthened (SFS 2010:800), but also included the right to delegate specific management tasks. This could be understood as policy messages that shape the principals' patterns of actions and beliefs through regulative means (Coburn, 2004). Apart from the already obvious regulatory laws and regulations for schools in Sweden, there are ongoing regulatory processes that influence principals' leadership practices and the schools. Regulatory processes involve the capacity to establish rules, inspect others' conformity to them, and, as necessary, manipulate sanctions—rewards or punishments—in an attempt to influence future behaviour (Scott, 2014). This study can be seen in the light of ongoing regulatory processes, such as the Swedish government (SOU 2017:35), the Swedish Agency for Education (2011), the School Inspectorate (2010; 2012) and the OECD (e.g., OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015), where the policy messages are that an emphasis on collaboration with the surrounding society is a way of improving schools.

In terms of beyond-school collaboration, restructuring necessitates an organisational reshaping of the cognitive and normative structures, including values and norms, as well as an understanding of how such a collaboration should be conducted. The school improvement and research projects that the schools participated in for three years can be seen in the light of coherent outside support, which results are shown in the study. Within the frameworks of the formalised projects, the collaborations were designed and developed based on the needs of the schools but with outer frameworks and mutual goals. It is evident that the principals, as the formal leaders, embraced the plans and carried through with the collaborations in their respective schools (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). From an institutional perspective, these beyond-school collaborations may be understood as regulative and regulatory pressures on schools and their principals. Next, the principals and teachers' sense-making of the different beyond-school collaborations are discussed.

In the first paper that focused on one beyond-school collaboration of a school's work with internationalisation, the findings show that the internationalisation work not only served as an external collaboration form but also contributed to the internal process of strengthening the overall leadership, continuous professional development, and internal collaboration. The school's work with internationalisation as an external collaboration form contributed and increased the collective ability to handle the internal school improvement process (Sahlin & Styf, 2019). The school's work with internationalisation was an institutionalised part of the school's goals that was an expressed profile run jointly by the school's staff and principal.

In the second study, the principals clearly expressed that the formalised projects were of importance for the schools' abilities to create and build relationships with participating companies and were a prerequisite for conducting collaborations with private companies (Sahlin, 2018). One way of understanding this result is that the overall school improvement project, which was coordinated by the university, may be seen in the light of a changed structure, having contributed momentum, clear goals, and support for the principals in their roles as responsible for leading school improvement processes in their schools. The findings also show that possibilities between involved schools and private companies are related to the actual practice and development of activities undertaken during collaboration, as well as the forward-looking planning made for long-term collaboration. The fact that the partnership was based on the needs of the schools, where companies and schools could meet with mutual interests in an interorganisational context and work towards the same goals to improve students' learning, created meaningful collaborations. In other words, the school wanted to create good conditions for the students' futures, and the companies wanted to trust the future workforce (Sahlin, 2018). However, from an institutional perspective, it could be understood as a mechanism of normative external pressure with social obligation and binding expectation (Scott, 2014). One interesting and unexpected finding was that one of the private companies got very interested in how the school worked with policy documents, as well as the school's work with diversity, and drew parallels to their own business. This is one positive example that could be related to Ainscow's (2016) argument of 'moving knowledge around', and it consisted of both the experience and competence transfer for both organisations.

The study also suggests the principals have 'raised their eyes' above their own schools (Sahlin, 2018). The principals reflect on the ongoing collaborations and about the importance of collaborating with the surrounding communities to a greater extent and reflect on the meaning of that for the schools and students. One way of understanding the result is that the collaborations have created awareness amongst the principals and also demonstrated the practical possibilities of such beyond-school collaborations and working with the surrounding communities more.

The third study shows that a change in the structure, through collaboration with the university, can facilitate changes in schools' practices. The university, as an external actor collaborating with mutual goals and interests based on the schools' needs, seems to be a powerful way of furthering the practice within schools (Sahlin, 2019a, submitted). The outside support of the university in developing common goals, the support in developing collective forms of collaboration with focuses on learning, and the actual support in practice have been important to the schools for a long time. The various collaboration forms developed organically during the collaboration processes and an orientation towards more collective development processes emerged for two out of the three schools (Sahlin, 2019a, submitted).

The findings in the four studies (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a submitted, 2019b, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019) showed that there were challenges that became visible and important in the various beyond-school collaborations. There were difficulties with priorities in relation to everything else occurring in the schools, including finding time for teachers to use for collaboration. Staff problems, ongoing internal conflicts, and different cultures within the schools affected the beyond-school collaborations (e.g., Nehez, 2015; Nelson et al., 2015; Walsh & Backe, 2013). Based on the regulative aspect of institutions, the interpretation of this study is that the principals' patterns of actions and beliefs are shaped by the regulative and regulatory aspects of institutions, such as the regulated and strengthened assignments for principals with more responsibilities (SFS 2010:800), and the ongoing regulatory processes in the Swedish context (e.g., SOU 2017:35; OECD, 2013; OECD, 2015). However, the principals in this study seem to have interpreted the policy messages and institutional pressures (Coburn, 2004) and transformed them to the local context, which can be understood as the coupling strategy of accommodation. The principals expressed a clear agency in reinterpreting the institutional pressures in their local

practices by deciding and taking part in the different beyond-school collaborations.

Normative aspects

From the normative aspect, it is possible to interpret that the change of the structures in the schools (i.e., the different collaboration forms) also seems to have affected the normative dimensions in the schools. The development of collective commitments to guide collaboration, engagement in collaborative work, an increase in shared responsibility for work, and the fostering of learning-oriented collaboration and research-based knowledge construction are examples of norms and values that seem to have started to move during the various beyond-school collaborations (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted, 2019b, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). This result is in line with a study by Muijs (2010), where clear goals and changes in cultures, attitudes, structures, and incentives were emphasised as requirements for collaborative strategies to work. The development of trust and improvement cultures between actors cannot be underestimated in these beyond-school collaborations either (Ainscow, 2016; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Jarl et al., 2017). However, regarding the teachers' sense-making of beyond-school collaborations, there is a clearer movement in the norms of collaboration than in the norms regarding the principals' leadership and management (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted).

In the first paper, important sense-making for the principal and the teachers was related to normative aspects in the work with internationalisation. The principals and teachers expressed that the internationalisation work challenged the perceptions of what could be a good or bad education or teacher, and it contributed to the discussions among teachers and students about global issues, both inside and outside the classroom. It challenged norms and values that are often only confirmed in their own contexts (Sahlin & Styf, 2019). The findings also showed there seems to be a collaborative culture and tendency for increased collaboration between teachers at the school as a result of the internationalisation work (Sahlin & Styf, 2019). These results confirmed previous research (Björkman, 2008; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011).

From the outlook of the normative aspect, it is evident the principals created meaning regarding the opportunities and values of working with the surrounding communities during the process of beyond-school collaborations (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted; Sahlin & Styf, 2019). On the

one hand, this does not mean that they will certainly create and maintain collaborations that go beyond the schools in the future or lead relationships with the surrounding communities. On the other hand, it seems to be a good foundation to build on for the future, to be able to see the value of working with the surrounding communities as a support in school improvement processes.

The principals' predominantly positive views about the various beyond-school collaborations throughout the results of the study are important to take in to account. (Sahlin, 2018, 2019a, submitted). From a critical perspective, one way of understanding it is the schools chose to apply and then were selected to participate in these collaborations. In this way, they received a lot of external support and input in several ways through various external actors in their respective school improvement processes. Another important aspect of it is that, within the framework of the projects, the collaborations were primarily based on the schools' improvement needs. The principals had both influence and power in the collaborations. During the course of the collaborations, the principals created closer professional relations with the participating researchers and representatives from the private companies, which may have affected some answers from the interviews, for example. From the normative aspect, it is possible to interpret, for the principal, it could be about meeting social and professional expectations in his or her role (Scott, 2008). Scott (2008, 2014) stresses normative systems are typically viewed as imposing constraints on social behaviour, but at the same time, they empower and enable social action. The principals' scopes of action as individual actors may be understood as actively influencing and changing the normative system, more or less consciously, through the choices and decisions of participating in the different beyond-school collaborations.

Cultural-cognitive aspects

The cultural-cognitive pillar involves aspects that form shared conceptions of social reality and a frame through which meaning is made. Following Scott (2008), these thoughts and identifications are often deeply embedded in the life of organisations. Concerning legitimacy, Scott (2008) emphasises the power from cultural-cognitive elements because these primarily rest on preconscious and shared taken-for-granted understandings. However, even if shared cultural understandings tend to work in a homogenising direction (isomorphism), Scott also noted it is important to recognise that cultural conceptions often vary and, consequently, could also have

heterogeneous effects. In this study, the interpretation is that aspects of cultural-cognitive elements appear more or less in the included studies.

In the first study (Sahlin & Styf, 2019), the beyond-school collaboration, in terms of internationalisation work, had been a part of the school's work for more than 10 years and was an internalised part of the school's goals and an expressed profile. To a larger amount, the teachers had a shared cultural understanding about the internationalisation work at the school, however there were also tendencies of heterogeneous effects.

The third study (Sahlin, 2019a, submitted), revealed that a change in the school's structure, through collaboration with the university, also seemed to more or less affect the cultural-cognitive aspect. From the cultural-cognitive aspect, it is clear that the principals interpreted and understood the value of collaboration with the university in different ways. First, the principals themselves had support in their thoughts and work with leadership and school improvement, which meant that they were strengthened, confirmed, and challenged in their roles as principals. Second, it is apparent the principals widened their views on educational leadership through the research-based approach and gained a qualitatively different way of reasoning about school development issues. Third, the outside support of the university in developing common goals, the support in developing collective forms of collaboration with a focus on learning, and the actual support in practice were important to the schools for a long time. The principals changed their understanding, either through confirmation or challenge, more or less consciously (Scott, 2008).

The results of the fourth study (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted) revealed a change in the structure as a result of beyond-school collaborations that seemed to affect the cultural-cognitive aspect somewhat. With regard to this aspect, the teachers' clearly interpreted and understood their formal leaders' importance to the school improvement processes. First, it makes sense to the teachers that a formal leader is necessary when collaborating with external actors, as teachers are busy with other tasks. Second, teachers also express the importance of having a pedagogical leader with the capacity to lead collective learning. Third, it is evident that the lack of a present principal and the turnover of principals affected both ongoing development work and the everyday work in two out of the three schools based on the teachers' sense-making.

From the perspective of the principals' sense-making, school-university collaboration appears to be a valid way of working with school improvement issues, given the limitations that exist in this case. Reasonably,

it may not be a method of working with school improvement for every school but only in the specific cases where these conditions exist; to some extent the collaboration seems to influence and affect the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars (Scott, 2008) of the participating schools.

How the various collaboration forms beyond school enable or restrain the principal's and, thus also, the school's leadership practices

Local organisations are strongly influenced by their environment, by "the logic of appropriateness," and by organisational legitimacy (March & Olsen, 2005; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This togetherness of norms and values forms the basis of what is considered the appropriate and natural way of organising practice. With the third research question, "In what ways do the various collaboration forms beyond school enable or restrain the principal's and, thus also, the school's leadership practices?" the focus is on how the various collaboration forms within the beyond-school collaboration enabled or restrained the principal's and thus the school's leadership practices.

The distribution of responsibility to the teachers and the development of the teachers' leadership in these collaborations seem to have affected the schools' structures and the normative aspects to some extent. A focus on collaboration beyond school led to change and development within the school towards a changed practice in which school leadership to some extent becomes a collective concern rather than an individual. In the distribution of school leadership, it is evident that the formal leader is vital. Next, some examples from the different conducted sub-studies within this thesis are presented.

The principal's leadership and distribution of leadership in the process of working with internationalisation as an external collaboration form seem to be vital (Sahlin & Styf, 2019). The principal had extensive experience in managing improvement and internationalisation work at the school, and she was aware of the importance of her involvement and of distributed leadership to succeed in the work with internationalisation. The principal distributed leadership at the school, both in terms of distributing responsibility in different formal functions at the school but also in how he created participation for and shared influence with the school staff (Harris, 2014). The principal involved all employees, travelling or not, in the internationalisation process to create sustainability in the work (Hargreaves, 2007). Another example of distributed leadership is the

formal function one teacher holds in order to become responsible for the school's internationalisation work. The teacher at the school is responsible for internationalisation, as her job can be viewed as a part of the school's distributed leadership. This study confirms that the principal's leadership is important in the school and for managing and pursuing internationalisation, distributing leadership, creating conditions for staff, and creating a culture of collaboration (Sahlin & Styf, 2019).

In the second study (Sahlin, 2018), the principal's role in developing collaboration forms, conducting activities with the private company by creating prerequisites for teacher participation, and involving more teachers during the course of collaboration can be seen as vital. This required a distribution of leadership and responsibility, from the principal to the teachers, and the findings show that the collaboration became more vigorous, and more activities were initiated when the teachers became more involved in the work and received more responsibility from the principal. The collaboration was contextual and practice and school driven (Harris & Jones, 2017), as well as intentional in content, purpose, and goals (Ainscow, 2016; Campbell et al., 2016). There were also traces of a shared leadership practice (Spillane, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006) and a longer improvement perspective, which are all essential ingredients for building PLCs.

In the third study (Sahlin, 2019a, submitted), it is possible to trace several ways in which the school–university collaboration and the various collaboration forms seem to have contributed to the possibility of distributing school leadership and involving more teachers in leadership practices in their schools. However, it is important to stress that the formal leader is still essential in this work (Harris & Jones, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2007; Louis et al., 2010). The beyond-school collaboration and the collaboration forms can be seen as structures supporting the schools based on their improvement needs, but from an institutional perspective, they are instead seen as institutional pressure on the schools (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Zucker, 1987). As stated earlier, the principals might have worked more with the distribution of leadership in the beginning in order to include everyone. The principals' sense-making of the collective commitment in the collaboration could also be understood as distribution of responsibility. The shared responsibility for work, the common goals, and different forums for professional learning and school development at each school meant that many took joint responsibility for school development. At the Mountain School, the principal believed that

having all staff members run their mini projects contributed to increased leadership and mandates for their area. The principal believed that it would be permanent for some to run projects. The mini projects will remain in some form, even in the future. At the Sea School, the principal (preschool-fifth grade) decided that several development activities should be available for all teachers with the goal of working more collectively among the staff, and at the Lake School, they worked with peer observations as one way of including everyone and taking joint responsibility for school development. The various forms of collaboration created for collective learning promoted the development of forums for professional learning where all staff participate and are involved in each school. This can be seen as the development of fostering collaborative learning. The Lake School had recurring pedagogical conferences with different content, such as working with pedagogical leadership in different ways: practical exercises, efforts with peer observations and working with feedback, and establishing different forms of collegial learning. The partnership meant that the principals involved more formal teachers, and it also meant fostering collaborative learning through different forms of collaboration.

In the fourth study (Sahlin, 2019b, submitted), some of the previously mentioned findings (Sahlin & Styf, 2019; Sahlin, 2018; Sahlin, 2019a, submitted) are validated. From the teacher's sense-making, it is possible to interpret that various beyond-school collaboration and different collaboration forms have contributed to the distribution of school leadership in their schools. Teachers at Mountain School created meaning using various forms of collaboration to allow everyone to take responsibility for the school's development. For example, teachers had significant responsibility for and leadership in the mini projects, as each teacher was responsible for leading his or her own project. At Lake School, the use of peer observations provided the teachers with active influence and participation. This in turn meant more responsibility. Their collective work towards a common goal (developing teacher leadership) was fruitful and helped the staff to discuss leadership and goal achievement. At Sea School, one teacher expressed confidence in having the principal's full support when taking responsibility and leading school development. However, according to the analysis, the teachers did not clearly take specific responsibility or shoulder leadership in the collaborative processes related to the project. The principal did include some teachers in collaboration with the private company during the progress of collaboration, and this had an impact. Based on the teachers' sense-making,

it seems that joint responsibility, active participation, and learning-oriented development work are important. The lack of formal leadership has also meant that the teachers at Sea School have engaged in a pragmatic distribution of leadership, in which the teachers themselves have informally taken responsibility for various activities through necessity; this can be seen as the construction of a distributed practice. To conclude, the distribution of responsibility to the teachers and the development of the teachers' leadership in these collaborations seem to have affected the schools' normative structures to some extent.

7 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this thesis has been to, from an institutional perspective, form a deeper understanding of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive aspects of school leaders' practices in collaboration beyond school at the local school level, and thereby contribute to the wider discussion of leadership within the educational field.

From the perspective of construction and characterisation of principals' leadership practices, the principals' have had the possibility to build professional capacity in their schools, create a supportive organisation for learning, and connect with different external partners as a result of these beyond-school collaborations (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The fact that the principals have been active co-creators of the various beyond-school collaborations from the start, that the starting point was actually based on the needs of schools, and that there were mutual goals in the collaboration is undoubtedly a considerable finding in this study. The principals were responsible for communicating the school's needs and interest in the collaboration; therefore, they were also involved in contributing to this development of trust and improvement culture.

The principal's role is to communicate the vision, goals, and expectations, as the formal sense-maker (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) is essential in development work in the local school organisation. The findings show that one challenge in the beyond-school collaboration relates to the implementation of the collaboration when it started, where it was expressed by both principals and teachers that it was done with a lack of influence and participation from the teachers. The teachers did not get a chance to jointly define the key issue, as well as create a common ground and a sense of common identity. In this work, the principals could have worked more as sense-givers, worked with collective sense-making, enabled more participation, ensured collegial engagement, provided direction in the development work, and distributed more responsibility in order to include everyone..

The principals themselves had support in their thoughts and work with leadership and school improvement, which meant they were strengthened, confirmed, and challenged in their role as the principal. It is apparent that the principals widened their views on educational leadership through the research-based approach and gained a qualitatively different way of reasoning about school development issues and leadership questions. This means that the outside perspective, through different

external actors as critical friends, was also a part of the construction and characterisation of the principals' leadership practices during the course of collaboration. The support to the principal, through external actors in the beyond school collaboration, becomes important. This can be seen as a way to strengthen the principal in her leadership practices, her role as the formal leader, and in the professional practice (Forssten Seiser, 2017).

The findings show that the beyond-school collaboration influences and affects the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars that exist in the participating school to some extent. The change in the schools' structure, through the different beyond-school collaborations, facilitated a change in schools' practice. One important contribution to this change was the overall research and school improvement project. The university coordinated the project and may be seen in the light of a changed structure—that is, contributing momentum and clear goals, as well as supporting the principals in their responsibility for leading school improvement processes in their schools. The outside support of the university, in terms of the researchers, in developing common goals; the support in developing collective forms of collaboration with a focus on learning; and the actual support in practice, have been important to the schools. Beyond-school collaboration and outside support affect the schools' practice.

From the normative aspect, the interpretation in this study is that the beyond-school collaboration also affected the normative dimension in the schools. The development of collective commitments to guide collaboration, engage in collaborative work, increase in shared responsibility for work, and foster learning-oriented collaboration and research-based knowledge construction are examples of norms and values that seem to have moved during the various beyond-school collaborations.

From the cultural-cognitive aspect, the study shows that aspects of this dimension appear more or less in the schools. The principals have interpreted and made sense of the value of beyond school collaboration in different ways. The cultural-cognitive aspect seems to affect the teachers somewhat, as they make sense of the importance of the formal leader in beyond-school collaboration. They also emphasise the importance of having a pedagogical leader.

The findings showed there were challenges that became visible in the various beyond-school collaboration and that became important, including the following: There were difficulties with priorities in relation to everything else occurring in the school, including finding time for teachers to use for collaboration. Staff problems, some ongoing internal conflicts in

the schools, and different cultures within the schools affected the beyond-school collaboration. Last but not least, the lack of a present principal and turnovers of principals affected both ongoing development work and everyday work in two out of three schools. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges, as well as to broaden professional learning communities through collaboration that goes beyond the school. These all seem to support the principals in their leadership practices at the local school level, as well as support development in the school's practices.

The findings of the study also show that the various collaboration forms beyond school supported the distribution of leadership in schools. The various collaboration forms seem to have contributed to the possibility of distributing school leadership and to involve more teachers in leadership practices in their schools. The shared responsibility for work, common goals, and different forums for professional learning and school development at each school meant that many took joint responsibility for school development. A focus on collaboration beyond school led to change and development within the school towards a changed practice in which school leadership to some extent becomes a collective concern rather than an individual. In the distribution of school leadership, it is evident that the formal leader is vital. One concluding remark and understanding of the findings of the study, from a distributed perspective on leadership practices, is that the different actors in the beyond-school collaboration also became a part of the schools' overall distributed leadership practices (Spillane, 2013).

Further Research

The research carried out in this thesis has provided insightful answers but also introduced new questions. In this time of rapid change and globalisation, research on principals' leadership and school improvement is extensive. International research in the field of educational leadership is thorough, but Swedish research is still relatively sparse (Ärlestig, Johansson & Nihlfors, 2016; Johansson, 2011). Further, as most of the international research is conducted within an Anglo-Saxon context (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2018; Muijs et al., 2011; Stoll & Louis, 2007), it is not unproblematic to transfer its results to the Swedish context, as each educational system has its history and specific conditions. Finally, in a critical review of educational leadership research, Muijs (2011) emphasised that there is a need for more robust theoretical frameworks and methods to develop the knowledge in the field. Muijs found that the predominant

modes of research in the field are case study and survey research methods and only 4.5% used a mixed-methods design.

This thesis has answered the research questions posed in this case study with three schools. From this knowledge base, it would be interesting to scale up this study and thus widen the empirical material and explore the phenomenon in a larger number of schools. In a larger study, it would also be of great interest to do a comparison between schools with different socio-economic status. A qualitative research design supported with quantitative data would strengthen the possibilities of capturing nuances and more subtle differences. Perhaps even a larger study based on a longitudinal approach with a mixed methods research design from an organisational perspective would contribute value to school leadership research in Sweden.

Leadership practices can be seen as a result of organisational structures and the involvement of the people involved in these structures. From an institutional perspective on organisations, it is clear that institutional pressure in local schools affects both schools and their teachers and principals. In Sweden, it is up to the principal to decide and organise the internal organisation of the school (SFS 2010:800). How principals use this room for manoeuvring, as well as use organisational structures to create opportunities for teacher learning to improve practice, is another research project that would be interesting to conduct. It would be of particular interest to study principals and schools that show variations in practices for collaboration within, between, and beyond school. Few prior studies have taken an organisational perspective on school leadership and school improvement (Ärlestig et al., 2016), which makes this a particularly interesting question for research. Arguments in favour of researching principals' leadership practices in collaborative contexts are to be found in Leithwood et al. (2019). Based on a recent study revisiting seven strong claims about successful school leadership, they stress that the next stage of research on school leadership needs to extend what is known to explore how school leaders enact certain practices, what those practices are, and their resulting impact.

Swedish Summary

Den här avhandlingen om rektors ledarskapspraktiker är skriven i en tid när fokus på ledarskap och utveckling är stort. Skolledarskap och skolutveckling lyfts fram av politiska företrädare, forskare och praktiker som viktigt om skolan ska kunna möta framtida krav och ge alla barn och ungdomar möjlighet att utvecklas och uppnå läroplanens mål. Under de senaste åren har det blivit ökad uppmärksamhet på samarbete och nätverk som viktiga strategier för skolförbättring i ett antal länder (Ainscow, 2016; Azorin, 2018; Brown & Poortman, 2018; Day & Smetham, 2010; Muijs, Ainscow, Chapman & West, 2011). Samarbete med externa aktörer och partnerskap mellan skolor och lokalsamhället är inte lika utbrett i Sverige som i andra länder, till exempel i USA och England, där skolor är mer beroende av samarbete på grund av hur utbildningssystemen finansieras (Muijs et al., 2011). I Sverige är utbildningssystemet baserat på offentlig finansiering och är därför inte beroende av externt samarbete på samma sätt. Det finns ingen lång tradition av att arbeta med partnerskap och externa aktörer för skolförbättring i svenska skolor, men idag finns det initiativ där skolor samarbetar med omgivningen på olika sätt. Exempelvis rapporteras samarbete mellan universitet och skolor som en strategi för skolförbättring, både genom kontinuerlig professionell utveckling och samarbete (Håkansson & Sundberg, 2016). Det finns några initiativ som sker i samma riktning när det gäller externt samarbete (t.ex. internationellt samarbete, samarbete med föräldrar och lokalsamhället) men det är inte så vanligt och ett utforskat område inom forskning i en svensk kontext. Å ena sidan kan ett ökat fokus på samarbete och nätverk i skolförbättringsprocesser ses som förändringar i förståelsen av lärande och särskilt upplevda fördelar med kollaborativt lärande (Muijs et al., 2011; Senge, 1990; Stoll et al., 2006). Å andra sidan kan det ses i ljuset av ett institutionellt tryck på skolor (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987) från staten och andra reglerande organisationer. Med utgångspunkt i ovan nämnda förändringar studeras i den här avhandlingen rektors ledarskapspraktiker när lokala skolor samarbetar med aktörer i det omgivande samhället.

Studien som genomförs i denna avhandling är en del av ett större forsknings- och skolförbättringsprojekt. Det är en longitudinell studie som bygger på data från en kvalitativ fallstudie av tre skolor som genomförts under tre år. Kvalitativa data inkluderande semistrukturerade intervjuer, en del av en enkät till deltagande lärare och observationer användes.

Ytterligare kontextuella data, såsom fältanteckningar, dokumentanalys och mötesanteckningar från projektet användes också. Det teoretiska ramverket bygger på ett institutionellt perspektiv på organisationer och meningsskapande teori, som används för att ge en förståelse för hur rektorer och lärare skapar mening av rektors ledarskapspraktiker. Syftet med denna avhandling är att ur ett institutionellt perspektiv djupare förstå skolledares praktiker i regulativa, normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva aspekter när lokala skolor samarbetar bortom skolan med olika externa aktörer. Följande forskningsfrågor riktas till de fyra artiklarna:

- Hur konstrueras och karaktäriseras rektors ledarskapspraktiker i samarbeten bortom den lokala skolan?
- Vilken mening skapar rektorer och lärare av samarbete bortom skolan när det gäller regulativa, normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva aspekter?
- På vilka sätt möjliggör eller begränsar de olika samarbetsformerna bortom skolan rektors och därmed också skolans ledarskapspraktiker?

Avhandlingen består av fyra artiklar som behandlar rektors ledarskapspraktiker i olika samarbeten bortom skolan samt en övergripande kapp. Två av dessa är publicerade i internationella tidskrifter medan två artiklar är inskickade till två andra tidskrifter. I kappan presenteras de teoretiska utgångspunkterna; ett institutionellt perspektiv på organisation och meningsskapande teori. Svensk och internationell forskning om rektors ledarskapspraktiker och skolförbättring presenteras tillsammans med tidigare forskning om samarbete bortom skolan och gemensamt lärande. I kappan presenteras också fallstudiedesign och metodologiska överväganden för insamling och analys av det empiriska datamaterialet. I denna svenska sammanfattning presenteras översiktligt avhandlingens ingående artiklar samt slutsatser.

Artikel I

I den första artikeln studeras hur arbetet med internationalisering på en gymnasieskola kan förstås ur ett skolförbättringsperspektiv. Mer precist studeras hur internationalisering på gymnasieskolan kan förstås i relation till att bygga intern kapacitet för skolförbättring men även att undersöka betydelsen av rektors ledarskap i relation till arbetet med

internationalisering. Studien bygger på en fallstudiemetodik där kapacitetsbyggande och interna kapaciteter för skolförbättring utgjorde de teoretiska utgångspunkterna. Det empiriska materialet består av intervjuer med rektor och lärare, observationer och fältanteckningar. Artikeln argumenterar för att internationalisering på gymnasieskolan stöttar kapacitetsbyggande och att det är tydligt att internationalisering är en intern förbättringskapacitet. Det är också tydligt att rektors ledarskap är distribuerat och avgörande för skolans framgång i termer av internationalisering och skolförbättring. Framför allt är internationalisering inte bara en extern samarbetsform utan också en intern kapacitet vid skolan för ledarskap, professionellt lärande och internt samarbete. Det är tydligt att dessa interna kapaciteter är sammanflätade. Avslutningsvis var skolans arbete med internationalisering inte bara en extern samarbetsform utan den har också bidragit till den interna processen att stärka ledarskap, professionellt lärande och internt samarbete övergripande. Skolans arbete med internationalisering som en extern samarbetsform tycks bidra till och öka den kollektiva förmågan att hantera den interna skolförbättringsprocessen. Rektors ledarskap och distribuering av ledarskap i denna process verkar också vara avgörande.

Artikel II

I den andra artikeln analyseras rektors erfarenhet och meningsskapande av samarbete med privata företag, med fokus på ledarskap och skolförbättring. Denna artikel är mot bakgrund av ett projekt där tre svenska skolor samarbetade med privata företag i det omgivande samhället. Data samlades in under tre år och bestod av semistrukturerade intervjuer, mötesanteckningar, fältobservationer, fältanteckningar och dokumentanalys. En kvalitativ innehållsanalys genomfördes. Studien visar att betydelsefullt meningsskapande för rektorerna i detta samarbete mellan skolor och privata företag är relaterat till meningen av kollektivt ansvar och engagemang, utveckling av förbättringskultur och förtroende mellan nyckelaktörer och gemensamma förbättringsinitiativ baserade på ömsesidigt intresse. Utmaningar i samarbetet är relaterade till rektorsbyten, brist på implementering av samarbetet och att det inte fanns någon tydlig vision om externt samarbete i två av tre skolor. När det gäller möjligheterna var samarbetet baserat på skolans behov, en samverkande kultur utvecklades och utvecklingen/aktiviteterna genomfördes mellan involverade skolor och privata företag under samarbetet. Denna studie bidrar med djupgående information om hur ett utbildningssamarbete med

privata företag praktiseras liksom hur involverade rektorer lade känslan av samarbetet ur skolförbättringsperspektiv. Originaliteten i studien är samarbetet mellan skolor och privata företag. Artikeln bidrar med ny kunskap om hur rektorer skapar mening av och förstår detta samarbete som ett medel för skolförbättring. Sammanfattningsvis understryker denna studie att betydelsefullt meningsskapande för rektorerna i detta samarbete med de privata företagen är relaterad till känslan av kollektivt ansvar och engagemang mellan de deltagande aktörerna, där universitetets roll som "förändringspoeter" (Weick, 2011) och det formaliserade projektet betonas särskilt av rektorerna som avgörande aspekter i samarbetet. En annan viktig aspekt är värdet av kollektiva och gemensamma aktiviteter genom olika former av samarbete. Rektorerna skapade också mening av betydelsen av kulturen och förtroendet som utvecklades mellan nyckelaktörerna under samarbetet. Sist men inte minst var rektorernas meningsskapande att dessa förbättringsinitiativ var gemensamma och baserade på ömsesidiga intressen mellan skolorna och de privata företagen, och det fanns ett längre förbättringsperspektiv i samarbetet.

Artikel III

I den tredje artikeln analyseras rektorernas meningsskapande av ett samarbete mellan skolan och universitetet med ett institutionellt perspektiv på organisatorisk förändring. Studiens sammanhang involverar tre skolor i ett samarbete med fokus på ledarskap och skolförbättring med ett universitet. Studien bygger på resultat från en kvalitativ fallstudie som undersökte rektors meningsskapande av denna typ av samarbete mellan skolor och universitet. Data samlades in under tre år och bestod av semistrukturerade intervjuer, mötesanteckningar, fältobservationer, fältanteckningar och dokumentanalys. En kvalitativ innehållsanalys utfördes. Resultaten visade att betydelsefullt meningsskapande för rektorerna i detta samarbete är relaterade till utvecklingen av kollektivt deltagande och ansvar, utvecklingen av förtroende och förbättringskultur bland aktörer, och känslan av att gå mot forskningsbaserad och samarbetsinriktad inlärningsorienterad praktik i sina skolor. Studien ger djupgående information om rektors erfarenheter och meningsskapande när de hjälpte till att leda ett samarbete mellan skolor och universitet i sina skolor. Resultaten gav användbar insikt i och exempel på hur rektorer förstår och tolkar ett partnerskap mellan skola – universitet i sina skolors förbättringsprocesser och gav en utarbetad illustration av hur avsiktliga ansträngningar att samarbeta och utveckla skolorna i ett partnerskap

mellan skola-universitet kan påverka reglerande, normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva aspekter i skolorna. Avslutningsvis inkluderade utmaningarna som blev synliga i detta partnerskap och som blev viktiga följande: Det fanns svårigheter med prioriteringar i förhållande till allt annat som inträffade i skolan, inklusive att hitta tid för lärarna att använda för samarbete. Personalproblem, några pågående interna konflikter i skolorna och olika kulturer inom skolorna påverkade samarbetet (t.ex. Nelson et al., 2015). Kanske spelade rektorsbyten och sjukskrivningar också en roll i resultatet av detta partnerskap.

Artikel IV

I den fjärde artikeln analyseras lärares meningsskapande av samarbete bortom skolan med fokus på rektors ledarskap och hur sådana processer omformar regulativa, normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva strukturer. Detta papper är mot bakgrund av ett partnerskap där skolor samarbetar med externa partners i det omgivande samhället. Data samlades in under tre år och bestod av semistrukturerade individuella och gruppintervjuer med lärare och en del av en enkät till lärare. En kvalitativ innehållsanalys, styrd av ett institutionellt perspektiv på organisationer och meningsskapande teori genomfördes och analysen avslöjade att betydelsefullt meningsskapande var relaterade till ledarskapspraktiker och den formella ledaren. Dessutom visade resultaten att viktigt meningsskapande för lärarna är relaterat till behovet av en formell ledare, rektorer som organiserar samarbetsstrukturer och ledarskapsstrukturer, brist på rektors ledarskap och ledning, brist på en permanent rektor och omsättningar av rektorer, avsaknad av lärares deltagande, lärares ansvar och ledarskap. Denna artikels originalitet ligger i dess fokus på lärarnas meningsskapande av samarbete bortom skolan med fokus på rektors ledarskap, eftersom forskning på detta område är knapp. Denna artikel bidrar med ny kunskap om hur lärare skapar mening av rektors ledarskap i samarbeten bortom skolan. Avslutningsvis gav resultatet en detaljerad bild av hur avsiktliga ansträngningar för att samarbeta och utveckla skolorna i olika samarbeten utöver skolan kan påverka de regulativa, normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva aspekterna i skolorna. Studiens huvudsakliga bidrag är att lyfta fram vikten av att inkludera lärarnas meningsskapande om ledarskap i samarbete för att fördjupa kunskapen om hur ledarskap genomförs i samarbeten bortom skolan. Den avslutande slutsatsen är att ett fokus på samarbete bortom skolan ledde förändringar och utveckling inom skolan

mot en förändrad praktik där skolledarskap blir ett kollektivt intresse snarare än en individuell.

Slutsatser

Avhandlingens samlade kunskapsbidrag är att rektorerna har haft möjlighet att bygga professionell kapacitet i sina skolor, skapa en stödjande organisation för lärande och samarbete med olika externa aktörer som ett resultat av dessa samarbeten bortom skolan. De olika aktörerna i dessa samarbeten blev också en del av skolornas övergripande distribuerade ledarskapspraktiker. Resultaten visar att dessa samarbeten bortom skolan influerar och påverkar de normativa och kulturellt-kognitiva aspekterna som finns i de deltagande skolorna till viss del. Utvecklingen av kollektiva åtaganden för att leda samarbete, engagemang i kollaborativt arbete, en ökning av delat ansvar för arbetet och främjande av ett lärandeorienterat samarbete samt forskningsbaserad kunskapsuppbyggnad är exempel på normer och värderingar som verkar ha börjat röra på sig under dessa samarbeten bortom skolan. Från den kulturellt-kognitiva aspekten visar studien att aspekter av denna dimension förekommer mer eller mindre i skolorna. Rektorerna har tolkat och förstått värdet av att samarbete utanför skolan på olika sätt. Den kulturellt-kognitiva aspekten verkar påverka lärarna något också, där de skapar mening av och understryker vikten av den formella ledaren i samarbeten bortom skolan. De betonar också vikten av att ha en pedagogisk ledare. Resultaten visar att det fanns utmaningar som blev synliga i dessa samarbeten bortom skolan. Att vara medveten om utmaningarna, breddade professionella lärandemiljöer genom samarbete som går längre än skolan verkar sammantaget stötta rektorerna i deras ledarskapspraktiker på lokal skolnivå och stödjer också utvecklingen i skolans praktiker.

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Appendix

Interview Guides

Example of interview guide with school leader

- 1) Beskriv hur ni organiserar arbetet på skolan.
(organisation, ansvarsfördelning, arbetsfördelning, samarbetsformer (både ledning och lärarkår).
- 2) Hur arbetar ni med skolutveckling/skolförbättring på skolan idag?
Hur?
 - a. Vilket stöd finns från skolledningen?
 - b. Vilka krav finns från skolledningen?
- 3) Pågår utvecklingsarbete på skolan idag och vilka är i så fall skälen till dessa projekt?
 - a. Vilka är de vanligaste områdena, om några, för utvecklingsprojekt på
 - b. skolan?
 - b. Vilka tycker du är de viktigaste områdena för utvecklingsinsatser?
 - c. Hur initieras utvecklingsprojekt på skolan?
- 4) Hur tycker du att skolan fungerar i
 - a) allmänhet och
 - b) vad avser utvecklingsinsatser?
- 5) Hur skulle skolan kunna förbättras ytterligare i
 - a) allmänhet och b) vad avser utvecklingsinsatser?
- 6) Hur initierades projektet VBRUS?
 - a. Vilka har haft inflytande över ansökan om deltagande i projektet?
 - b. Vilket inflytande har lärarna haft?
- 7) Beskriv hur ni arbetar på er skola med projektet som helhet (arbetssätt och arbetsformer, former för pedagogisk utveckling och kollegialt arbete) och hur långt ni har kommit idag.
 - a. Hur har arbetet fördelats/prioriterats?

b. Hur är de här projekttinnehållen kopplade till det pedagogiska arbetet med barn/ungdomar?

8) Hur fungerar skolans hela ledarskap idag? Hur arbetar ni för att utveckla hela skolans ledarskap inom ramen för projektet VBRUS? (rektor, lärare, elever m fl)? (ledarskapskriteriet)

9) Hur arbetar er skola idag inom ramen för projektet för att uppnå kunskapsmålen, samt med att förbättra elevernas resultat och utveckla mätningen av elevresultaten? (måluppfyllelse/resultatkriteriet)

10) Hur arbetar ni idag med att ge eleverna goda förutsättningar för att möta ett kommande yrkesliv och socialt liv i en värld av ökande globalisering? (omvärldskriteriet)

11) Hur ser ert samarbete med det företag som ni samverkar med inom ramen för projektet ut? Hur ser er skolas samverkan med det omgivande samhället ut i övrigt?

12) Hur ser ert samarbete i projektet ut med de involverade forskarna från Mittuniversitetet? Vilken betydelse tror ni det har för er verksamhet i stort och specifikt i projektet?

13) Vad menar du vara er skolas primära möjligheter och problem för utvecklingsinsatser av den typ vi nu initierar i projektet?

14) Saknas resurser (i vid mening; lokaler, kunskap, pengar, kontakter/nätverk, handlings-beredskap, intresse osv) för initiering eller hantering av insatser av utvecklingskaraktär?

15) Hur tänker ni att er skolas förbättringsåtgärder, som startar inom ramen för projektet, ska kunna fungera uthålligt och utan tillskott av extra ekonomiska resurser efter projekttidens slut? (uthållighetskriteriet)

16) Ställer utvecklingsprojekt några särskilda krav på skolledarskap skild från annan verksamhet? (fråga enbart till skolledare)

17) Sker det någon utvärdering/uppföljning av ditt arbete/verksamheten på er skola? Sker någon uppföljning/utvärdering av utvecklingsprojekt?

18) Sker någon kunskapsöverföring mellan er och skolledningen/andra anställda?

19) Hur redovisar er skola utvecklingen och resultaten av projektet idag under projekttiden och vid projektets slut om tre år? (redovisningskriteriet)

20) Vilken betydelse tror du att er medverkan i projektet har?

Vi har nu diskuterat en hel del frågor. Finns det någon fråga du hade förväntat dig att vi skulle ta upp, eller någon fråga vi varit inne på där du

vill säga något mer, eller något allmänt runt området för intervjun som du vill kommentera? Tack!

Example of interview guide with teacher

1) Beskriv hur ni organiserar arbetet på skolan.

(organisation, ansvarsfördelning, arbetsfördelning, samarbetsformer (både ledning och lärarkår).

2) Hur arbetar ni med skolutveckling/skolförbättring på skolan idag?
Hur?

a. Vilket stöd finns från skolledningen?

b. Vilka krav finns från skolledningen?

3) Pågår utvecklingsarbete på skolan idag och vilka är i så fall skälen till

dessa projekt?

a. Vilka är de vanligaste områdena, om några, för utvecklingsprojekt på

skolan?

b. Vilka tycker du är de viktigaste områdena för utvecklingsinsatser?

c. Hur initieras utvecklingsprojekt på skolan?

4) Hur tycker du att skolan fungerar i

a) allmänhet och b) vad avser utvecklingsinsatser?

5) Hur skulle skolan kunna förbättras ytterligare i

a) allmänhet och b) vad avser utvecklingsinsatser?

6) Hur initierades projektet VBRUS?

a. Vilka har haft inflytande över ansökan om deltagande i projektet?

b. Vilket inflytande har lärarna haft?

7) Beskriv hur ni arbetar på er skola med projektet som helhet

(arbetssätt och arbetsformer, former för pedagogisk utveckling och

kollegialt arbete) och hur långt ni har kommit idag.

a. Hur har arbetet fördelats/prioriterats?

b. Hur är de här projekttinnehållen kopplade till det pedagogiska arbetet

med barn/ungdomar?

8) Hur fungerar skolans hela ledarskap idag? Hur arbetar ni för att utveckla hela skolans ledarskap inom ramen för projektet VBRUS? (rektor, lärare,

elever m fl)? (ledarskapskriteriet)

9) Hur arbetar er skola idag inom ramen för projektet för att uppnå kunskapsmålen, samt med att förbättra elevernas resultat och utveckla mätningen av elevresultaten? (måluppfyllelse/resultatkriteriet)

10) Hur arbetar ni idag med att ge eleverna goda förutsättningar för att möta ett kommande yrkesliv och socialt liv i en värld av ökande globalisering? (omvärldskriteriet)

11) Hur ser ert samarbete med det företag som ni samverkar med inom ramen för projektet ut? Hur ser er skolas samverkan med det omgivande samhället ut i övrigt?

12) Hur ser ert samarbete i projektet ut med de involverade forskarna från Mittuniversitetet? Vilken betydelse tror ni det har för er verksamhet i stort och specifikt i projektet?

13) Vad menar du vara er skolas primära möjligheter och problem för utvecklingsinsatser av den typ vi nu initierar i projektet?

14) Saknas resurser (i vid mening; lokaler, kunskap, pengar, kontakter/nätverk, handlings-beredskap, intresse osv) för initiering eller hantering av insatser av utvecklingskaraktär?

15) Hur tänker ni att er skolas förbättringsåtgärder, som startar inom ramen för projektet, ska kunna fungera uthålligt och utan tillskott av extra ekonomiska resurser efter projekttidens slut? (uthållighetskriteriet)

16) Ställer utvecklingsprojekt några särskilda krav på skolledarskap skild från annan verksamhet? (fråga enbart till skolledare)

17) Sker det någon utvärdering/uppföljning av ditt arbete/verksamheten på er skola? Sker någon uppföljning/utvärdering av utvecklingsprojekt?

18) Sker någon kunskapsöverföring mellan er och skolledningen/andra anställda?

19) Hur redovisar er skola utvecklingen och resultaten av projektet idag under projekttiden och vid projektets slut om tre år? (redovisningskriteriet)

Vi har nu diskuterat en hel del frågor. Finns det någon fråga du hade förväntat dig att vi skulle ta upp, eller någon fråga vi varit inne på där du vill säga något mer, eller något allmänt runt området för intervjun som du vill kommentera? Tack!