

## **Title**

Re-Modelling the Organisation: Examples from the Local Enactment of the Career Services for Teachers Reform

## **Keywords**

School organisation, Career services for teachers, Curriculum implementation, Advanced skills teachers

## **Statement of theoretical and methodological framework**

The theoretical framework of this paper is founded in curriculum theory (Lundgren 1989, Englund 2005, Wahlström 2009, Sundberg 2012) and the "classical" so-called frame-factor theory with its different levels of analysis: the societal/ideological level, the curriculum level and the teaching and classroom level (cf. Lundgren 1989, Englund 2005). Such a framework is helpful for the understanding of educational reforms and it takes into consideration the intrinsic normative values, the sociopolitical and historical context, the processes and results of reforms, and critical analyses of social forces served by the reforms (Schwandt, 2003). In order to address the local enactment arena theoretically Lauren B. Resnick's (2010) concept of "nested learning systems" will be used. Resnick's model of the three intermediating layers in the school organisation – district, school and teaching level – where reforms are transferred, translated and negotiated – is helpful for understanding the organisation as well as communication and coordination between sub-systems – e.g. teams of teachers, the school management, district administrators – and their particular interests, strategies and meaning-making (Resnick 2010). Three methods are used for collecting empirical data for the study: a contextual analysis through document analysis and interviews; questionnaires; and semi-structured interviews.

## **The research questions focused upon**

The paper presents general results on the enactment of the Career services for teachers reform (CST) on local level by analysing the implementation process and its impact on the school organisation through a comparison between five Swedish municipalities. The research questions are:

- How do the municipalities implement the reform and what is the impact on the local school organisation?
- What are the main challenges and possibilities in the implementation process and what strategies are used?
- What similarities/differencies are there between the school organisations and how can these be understood from the perspective of "nested learning systems"?

## **The empirical materials explored**

The study is based on material from five municipalities (a span between 26,500 and 86,000 inhabitants). The contextual analysis is focused on the local school organisation and the role

and position of the first-teachers (förstelärare), policy and vision, leading and management structure, recruitment and the assignments of the first-teachers. The semi-structured deep interviews with representatives from the district level (N=15), principals (N=25) and first-teachers (N=36) – and questionnaires from first-teachers (N=48) and principals (N=26) – are focused on experiences from the implementation process, changes within the organisation, the role of first-teachers and the expectations on them, challenges, needs and strategies.

## **Preliminary findings of the study**

There are many similarities in how the CST reform has been played out in the five municipalities but in terms of impact the first-teachers represent a new sub-system and it is possible to identify two major "clusters" of organisations: 1) *A differentiated organisation* for first-teachers operating on different levels and stretching out over units/schools (district – school – teacher/teaching level) and some with specific affiliation to the district level; 2) *A decentralised organisation* with only school-based assignments for first-teachers without any close involvement from the district level. Regardless of organisation, the first-teachers call for common arenas or networks where experiences and ideas can be exchanged and there are signs that first-teachers form informal groups for collaboration. Coordination and communication present a challenge for all municipalities, but one has a networked-based organisation which seems to be a successful strategy for communication both horizontally and vertically for the nested sub-systems. An interesting result is that the introduction of first-teachers also tend to create an urgent need for principals to organise and work in collegial structures. Altogether, the municipalities are outlining strategies to improve communication between the sub-systems, e.g. to use the first-teachers for continuous professional development.

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