

S26.P7.EL: Symposium

Time: 11/Jan/2024: 4:00pm-5:30pm · Location: Davis Theatre

Soft Governance – experiences from three municipalities

Chair(s): **Tore Skandsen** (The IMTEC Foundation)

The overarching theme for the symposium, based on the conference sub-theme is “Policy and practice learning to support teacher and school leader development.”

The responsibility for quality and competence development in Norway lies with local authorities, but when municipalities and county councils cannot achieve the desired development on their own, they receive support and follow-up from the government, so they can achieve the goals set for the training (Udir). This framework explains the main principles of this type of soft governance and clarifies expectations and responsibilities for those who participate.

The aim for us is to clarify when this policy can work with tailoring to a municipality's unique challenge. When does it work and what are the conditions for it to work well?

All three parts of the presentation will focus on what we have done so far and what are the result and findings in each municipality and end up in a common presentation from all three municipalities about the future for this soft governance policy.

We will facilitate processes where the participants can contribute through methods such as round table discussions and the use of technology.

Presentations of the Symposium

Municipality A

Ann Margareth Gustavsén

Innland Norway University of applied sciences

: Municipality A has 1,268 inhabitants, with 77 students and 21 staff covering from 1st grade to 10th grade, aged 6-16.

The improvement work has taken place over three years and should have contributed to the municipalities quality development so that they can achieve the goals set for the training.

Participants have been district leadership, school leaders and teachers. An important local partner in this improvement is the Educational Psychological Service. They are as well as a system player, adviser for children with additional learning needs. After the period of training with the external advisors and expertise, they have had the role advising the staff for developing their next practice.

This municipality have chosen the same external advisors throughout all three years, in addition to a professional environment for skills development of teachers in school and teacher and other staff in kindergartens. The two external advisors present the work and the results here today.

The first year is called the preliminary phase and in this phase the municipality carried out an analysis of its results on a chosen indicator and selected areas of effort for improvement. The areas chosen for effort were:

- Reading as a basic skill
- Leadership development and professional learning communities

In this municipality, childhood (kindergarten) has taken part in the work that has been done to improve language skills for the youngest residents, from year two.

At the same time as this work has been going on, the municipality has also participated in a regional networking together with other municipalities in the region, on the management of school-based competence development and the establishment of support systems in schools.

As external advisors, we have used different theories and knowledge about organisations, management and teachers' learning in leadership development and professional learning communities, and among the theories we have used is Robinson's (2011) work with student-centred management.

(Robinson, 2011)

This model operationalizes the school leaders' actions in five leadership dimensions and three leadership skills. The dimensions have effect sizes of respectively $d=0.42$, $d=0.31$, $d=0.42$, $d=0.84$ and $d=0.27$ (Robinson, 2011). Although the last dimension has the lowest effect size, Robinson points out that if this dimension is not in place, this is where you need to start. Robinson is clear that the five dimensions are strongly interdependent and cannot be seen in isolation.

Leading teachers' learning and development have a strong influence on teaching and learning quality. In this work, leaders must develop and maintain professional learning communities and collaborative cultures, which build the school's collective capacity.

The results so far shows that the municipality is on their way to building capacity, but there is still work left to put everything into a good enough system.

The first part of the presentation will focus on what we have done so far and what the results and findings are after three years.

The last part will deal with the next step in the future, will be made as a joint presentation from all three municipalities.

Municipality B

Jane Iren Johansen and Tore Skandsen

¹The IMTEC foundation, ²Innland Norway University of applied sciences

Municipality B has 7863 inhabitants and have five schools; four Primary and one Lower Secondary School.

The improvement work has taken place over three years and should have contributed to the municipalities quality development so that they can achieve the goals set for the training.

Participants have been district leadership, school leaders and teachers. From year two the leaders in kindergarten attended the leader development. An important local partner in this improvement is the Educational Psychological Service. They are as well as a system player, adviser for children with additional learning needs. After the period of training with the external advisors and expertise, they have had the role advising the staff for developing their next practice.

The municipality chose the same external advisors throughout all three years, in addition to a professional environment for skills development of teachers in school. The two external advisors present the work and the results here today.

In the preliminary phase, the municipalities worked on analysing several different indicator areas, and identified five areas of effort for improvement. The areas were:

- Reading as a basic skill.
- Leadership development and collective capacity.
- The learning outcome and the students' expectations of their own mastery.
- Strengthen a data-informed practice.
- Cooperation between home and school.

Besides professionals and district managers, the politicians have also had an active role in the process at a strategic level with activities such as:

- Meeting for understanding the field of education.
- Creating a vision of the future "The future we want" with parents, students, teachers, managers, trade unions, other employees, the municipality's voluntary organization and business and other stakeholders.
- Meeting in the local parliament with topics such as school results, school structure and more.

This municipality does not participate in any regional network on a regular basis.

In addition to Robinson (2011) presented in part one, we have also used the research from Louis et al. (2010). "Everything is connected with everything" is often seen as an explanatory model. Within the education sector, there have been many meta-studies that attempt to look at these relationships. The most coherent meta-study is "Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning" (Louis et al., 2010).

This is a report which, among other things, looks at the importance of different levels in an analysis of the entire value chain from government policy to the students' learning outcomes. The relationships that can be demonstrated based on empirical findings are presented in the model.

(Louise et al., p. 6, 2010)

In this municipality the result so far shows that the municipality in some areas have succeed building capacity, but for some of them they must train and exercise, so they build capacity over time.

The first part of the presentation will focus on what we have done so far and what the results and findings are after three years.

The last part will deal with the next step in the future, will be made as a joint presentation from all three municipalities.

Municipality C

Jane Iren Johansen and Tommy Seigerud

¹The IMTEC foundation, ²Innland Norway University of applied sciences

Part 3: Municipality C has 4,600 inhabitants, with 350 students and 60 staff covering grades 1 to 10, aged 6-16.

The improvement work has taken place over three years and should have contributed to the municipalities quality development so that they can achieve the goals set for the training.

Participants have been district leadership and school leaders and teachers. An important local partner in this improvement is the Educational Psychological Service. They are as well as a system player, adviser for children with additional learning

needs. After the period of training with the external advisors and expertise, they have had the role advising the staff for developing their next practice.

The municipality have chosen the same external advisors throughout all three years, in addition to a professional environment for skills development of teachers in school and teacher. The two external advisors present the work and the results here today.

In the preliminary phase the municipality identified five areas of effort for the improvement. The areas were:

- Reading as a basic skill
- Leadership development
- School culture
- The school's support system
- Cooperation between home and school

This municipality participates in a regional network with other municipalities, where the region works together to establish support systems in schools.

In addition to Robinson (2011) and Louise et al. (2010) we have used knowledge about teachers' collective efficacy in this work. If we are to achieve the improvements we want, the leaders must believe in the teachers, and the teacher must believe in the students. If we build a collective belief that we can make it happen together, the chances of success are even greater. Collective teacher efficacy has an effect size of $d=1.57$ and is at the top of Hattie's latest overview (<https://visible-learning.org/>). Collective efficacy can be defined as the teachers' shared belief in their own ability to master. The teachers with a strong collective efficacy are characterized by the fact that they have a common conviction that together they can raise the students' learning outcomes both academically and socially. Collective efficacy has a markedly greater effect on students' learning than e.g. parents' level of education.

When we looked at the sources of this power, this was described by many educational researchers. One of the first was Bandura (1977) who talked about self-efficacy. More recently, Donohoo (2017) and Donohoo, Eells og Hattie (2018) described the sources for teacher's collective efficacy which we have used in this work.

The result so far shows that the municipality have succeed in building capacity in school, and permanent structures for leadership and support systems for students who have additional learning needs in reading.

The first part of the presentation will focus on what we have done so far and what the results and findings are after three years.

The last part will deal with the next step in the future, will be made as a joint presentation from all three municipalities.