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The Key Role of the School Principal's Leadership in the Schooling of Newly Arrived Immigrant Pupils in Sweden

—Experiences from an Interactive Action Research Project

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Abstract

When newly immigrated children and young people begin school in Sweden, certain challenges arise. These may result from weak Swedish-language skills and different schooling backgrounds, as well as organizational and pedagogical limitations in the schools. This generates demands on school leaders to lead and develop the organization and teachers competences to meet these pupils' needs. This situation was behind the initiation of the project "New Immigrants and Learning—Competence Development for Teachers and School Principals." The project ran in schools in four Swedish municipalities, its aim was to develop leadership, organizational and pedagogical skills that would facilitate the schooling and integration of newly arrived pupils. This article aims to describe and discuss a Participant Action Research (PAR) based on a think tank and research circles, drawing special attention to the role of the school leaders. It will also examine whether the research circles and the project overall served to develop educational and intercultural leadership, organizational conditions, collegial learning, pedagogical methods and competence in terms of schooling for this pupil group.

Keywords

1. Introduction

The world we live in is an unsettled one, marked by wars, conflicts and social unrest. As a result, an ever-increasing number of refugees are forced to break out and seek a new home and a new life elsewhere. For decades, Sweden has had a generous migration policy. As a consequence, in the end of 2014 twenty-one percent of Sweden's population were of foreign origin[1] (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015). As a part of the migration, since summer 2006 the number of unaccompanied minors[2], mostly boys in the age of 13 - 17, in its majority from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia, has continuously increased (Ibid.). The large number of newly arrived children and young people has impacted schools in such a way that they currently face major challenges, dilemmas and problems that they find hard to deal with. One big challenge comes as a result of the newly arrived pupils' different schooling backgrounds, and the fact that both the newly arrived pupils[3] and their parents have limited Swedish-language skills. Also, their experience with how the society they have arrived in functions is markedly limited, which creates difficulties relating their learning in school to that which they are familiar with. Furthermore, a number of such pupils have had little or inadequate schooling. These factors demand school leaders to develop new pedagogical framework, while creating conditions that will enable school staff to develop relevant, partly new skills and competencies.

The Swedish school system is goal- and result oriented. It brings responsibility and provides opportunities on the local level for the individual school, principal, teacher and other staff members to, within the national guidelines, develop an organization and pedagogy according to local conditions and requirements. This opens the way for school leaders and teachers to systematically work with development in the everyday running of their schools. Currently, many schools have chosen collegial learning as an effective means of meeting the challenges that schools are facing in the goal and result orientation, as advocated by among others-Hattie (see for example Hattie, 2009).

In 2013, the Swedish government decided to make efforts towards integration within the school system (Regeringsbeslut 2013-02-21, Dnr U2013/1101/S). The National Agency for Education (Skolverket) was given the task of implementing measures to increase the academic success of newly arrived pupils. The task also included the organization of professional development for teachers and principals in primary/lower-secondary schools and equivalent school forms as well as in upper-secondary schools and upper-secondary level special needs schools.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate followed up the reform by conducting a review of how a selection of schools deal with newly arrived pupils using the following questions:

- Is teaching planned, conducted and adapted with the newly arrived pupils' needs and backgrounds in mind?
- Does the school work towards trusting the pupil to have his or her own ability, motivation and influence? (Skolinspektionen, 2014: p. 6)

The review revealed wide variations between schools. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate also pointed out a number of factors that can be seen to facilitate the newly arrived pupil's schooling. Fundamental to success, indicates the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, is consensus in terms of approach—that all staff within a school take responsibility, and that all teachers have the skills and competencies required for the education of newly arrived immigrant pupils.

This article aims to describe and discuss the role school leaders have when leading the processes that were initiated in the project. It will also examine whether these served to develop educational leadership, organization, collegial learning, pedagogical methods, and competence in terms of schooling for this pupil group.

2. Project Background

The project "The Education of Newly Arrived Immigrant Pupils" commenced in early autumn 2013 and concluded in late autumn 2014. Four municipalities, with different geographical and population structures as well as different experiences with newly arrived pupils, were involved in the project, each with one school. At these schools, professional development was offered in the form of a research circle, a think tank for principals, and

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[1]A person with a foreign background is defined as a person who is foreign born, or Swedish born with two foreign-born parents (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015).

[2]An unaccompanied minor is a person under the age of 18 who has come to Sweden without his or her parents or other legal custodial parent (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015).

[3]Newly arrived pupils (*nyanländaelever*) is an actual term used by municipal and government bodies to describe pupils who have recently immigrated to Sweden and who are subject to different forms of school introductions. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) uses the term for pupils who were born outside Scandinavia and the European Union, and puts a time limit of four years for how long pupils are to be regarded as newly arrived (*nyanlända*) (Lahdenperä, 2015).

lectures for the entire school staff.

The National School Leadership Training program carried out in cooperation between Örebro University, Mälardalen University and Dalarna University, one of six actors running the obligatory state-financed educational programmes for principals in Sweden, were assigned the task of running the project "Nyanländas lärande"[4]. The project was commissioned by the national Agency of Education. The project aimed at organizational and educational development as a means of improving schooling and integration for newly arrived children and young people. It also aimed to build further knowledge and understanding how the organization can provide the best conditions for the language, reading, writing and knowledge development of newly arrived pupils. According to the description of the aim, the project had the following content and orientation:

• Increased knowledge and understanding about how the school leader can provide the best organization and conditions for both newly arrived pupils and pupils who do not have Swedish as their first language to develop good language, reading, writing and knowledge skills.

2.1. Design for Learning—Theoretical, Methodological and Organizational Considerations

Forming the basis of the project "The Education of Newly Arrived Pupils" were the educational challenges faced by principals and teachers when they receive newly arrived pupils and when old, tested methods for shaping the organization and teaching prove themselves not to work particularly well. One means of approaching this issue was to investigate whether the collective learning of school staff in the form of so-called research circles and a think tank could be a successful way to describe, analyse, understand and deal with the problem. We chose to have an intercultural focus in the learning processes that were initiated in the project because the pupils that were behind the organizational development were newly arrived pupils with refugee backgrounds who needed to integrate at school.

2.2. Intercultural Learning Environments and Processes

The aims and questions that were formulated in the project to a great extent concerned the schooling of newly arrived pupils and their learning, with requirements on increased integration and equal treatment without discrimination. The focus of the project work was, through research circles and think tanks, to create an intercultural learning environment with theoretical input that was about intercultural relations and learning processes as well as multilingualism and an approach that allowed for language development.

Interculturality is often referred both as a medium and as a competency of school staff in general and school management, in particular as a way to reduce segregation and to work towards integration, as well as, to increase equality in terms of results within the education sector (Banks, 1992; Leeman, 2003; Lahdenperä, 2014, 2015). In an OECD report from 2009, de Nusche (2009) summarises aspects that according to earlier research serve to work towards improved school results among children with immigrant backgrounds. Among the most important factors intercultural instruction was stressed.

Interculturality can be regarded as a starting point and a working approach when it comes to developing schools with diversity in mind (Lahdenperä, 2008). This development applies to management, teaching, parental cooperation, school development, and the intercultural competences of staff. Those goals were also interpreted to be essential for the project in question. It was therefore important for the project to develop arenas for intercultural learning. An important element of intercultural teaching is working towards eliminating obstacles and resistance to learning and development that are based on one's own upbringing and experiences, one's sense of group belonging and one's cultural values (Lahdenperä, 2009). The key question is about being put in contrast to another way of seeing and understanding different phenomena and alternative cultural expressions, such as can be offered, the hope is, through participation in a research circle and a think tank. As such, the project participants—of the research circles, think tanks and teaching team—with their professional experience, personal experiences, feelings, thoughts, misgivings, and dilemmas were central for the achievement of intercultural learning processes.

2.3. Collegial Learning

In many Swedish schools, and in those municipalities directly included in the project, there is a great deal of experience on working with pupils who have a non-Swedish background when it comes to integration, sec-

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[4]The Education of Newly Arrived Pupils.

ond-language acquisition, and learning. There are staff members who have many years of experience within the area of immigration and who have sound theoretical knowledge and valuable, proven experiences. Set against this background, the thought with the project was to make good use of these and organize in such a way to allow for collegial learning, in which experiences and knowledge were developed and shared not only with participants within the research circles but also with other members of staff in the respective schools, as well as, between the participating municipalities.

2.4. The Research Circle as Interactive Action Research

The research circle (see, for example, Lundgren 2000, 2003; Lahdenperä 2014a) as a form of collegial and collective learning fits well into a school where instruction has a scientific basis and proven experience (Skollagen, 2010: 800, 1 kap. 5 §). The research circle opens the invitation to "pedagogical dialogues" that can create common frames of reference concerning the exchange and testing of arguments (Lahdenperä, 2014a). Participants are transformed at the same time from being consumers of knowledge to producers of applicable, relevant knowledge.

The research circle (see, for example, Holmstrand & Härnsten, 2003) is seen as a means of researching within participant-oriented action research, because there exists a will towards equal collaboration between the researcher and the practitioners. The academic world and the world in practice meet. The purpose of the research circles is to highlight questions or problems from the everyday of the participants from different perspectives. Mutual increase in knowledge is the focus. Lundgren, von Schantz Lundgren, Nytell and Svärdhagen (2013) argue that a research circle has the further purpose of suggesting and trying out alternative solutions. A research circle can, in this case, be described as a micro-world as described by Senge (1990) since it initiates processes of change in one's everyday work, and can be studied and altered at the same time as these processes are taking place. The research circles can also be seen on the one hand as a working form that can contribute to research results being shared and used in society at large and on the other as a method that can initiate research and new research questions (Holmstrand & Härnsten, 2003; Lahdenperä, 2014a).

2.5. "Think Tank"

The think tank can be seen as a form of research circle focused on reflection and learning. Elden and Levin (1991) argue for "co-generative learning", a form of interactive learning process that assists participants in three ways: a) through the creation of insight, understanding, and opportunities that the participants discover in their social world, b) through their learning on how to learn more, and c) through their learning on how to create new ways in which to act. A think tank is by definition a place for participation and is based on the leaders' practices; as such, participants are "forced", within an environment that allows for it, to analyse and examine their own perceptions, values and competencies as leaders. Similar to the work in the research circle, the think tank also includes input on theoretical models, research results and alternative approaches such as instruments for analysis and for more in-depth thought and learning in connection mainly with their role of leader. Common measures in the form of small investigative tasks and reading of literature serve to increase understanding of those phenomena and experiences on which the think tank focuses, with the goal to develop intercultural competence at the management level.

The motive for inviting the principals to take part in the *think tank* was about creating an arena for principals, along with other school management figures, to reflect on their role as leaders and on those challenges that newly arrived immigrant pupils present. The purpose was also to involve school management and to find connection within the day-to-day of schools. We wanted to avoid so-called project effects, where a temporary organization has effects throughout the project but where at its conclusion, it has not led to any change in the day-to-day activities of the schools (see for example Lundgren & von Schantz Lundgren, 2015).

2.6. Project Design

The project began with a planning and development meeting for educators/researchers, with whom there was an agreement on designing the project with an interactive action research using research circles as the method. The interactive component comprised the integration of various activities and the presentation of these to all staff members. This presentation let minimize the risk that only those who took part in the research circles increased

their understanding about the issues that are involved with newly arrived pupils. It was important to create a synergy effect between different actions and theoretical contributions. We agreed that the project should include the following components (**Figure 1**):

2.7. Research Circles and a Think Tank Were Set up

Each school organized a group of six to eight staff members who worked with newly arrived pupils. They took part in the research circles along with their principal once a month. Each circle had one or two leaders from two different universities: they contributed with their professional knowledge and led the work meanwhile the participants carried out their own smaller studies related to organizational and educational areas of development, good practices, and teaching issues that they faced while working with newly arrived immigrant pupils. Between meetings, participants read books and material that were then discussed at the research-circle meetings and that were also used as inspiration for those "research tasks" that were completed. The acquired knowledge was then tested in practice within the organizations for the purpose of improving the school. Those members of school management who took part in the research circles were given the chance to take part in a think tank for school leaders.

2.8. Lectures and Seminars

All staff and principals at the four schools took part in the lectures that served to introduce the project and to increase understanding for those issues that the project was about. The lectures were entitled as follows: *Intercultural Education*; *A School Culture for an Inclusive Approach*; and *Educational Leadership for Newly Arrived Pupils.* There were also three video lectures entitled as follows: *Multilingual Development*; *Written Language Development and Multilingualism*; and *Multilingualism and Learning.* The principals of the schools were responsible for organizing the work at their respective school.

Colleagues of the research participants at the respective school were involved through their attendance at lectures and presentations given by lecturers and the research circle participants. The results were also presented at two regional conferences to interested parties who, in a way or another, were involved at a professional level in meeting newly arrived immigrant pupils. In addition, at a closing seminar, participants from the four research circles presented their experiences to each other.
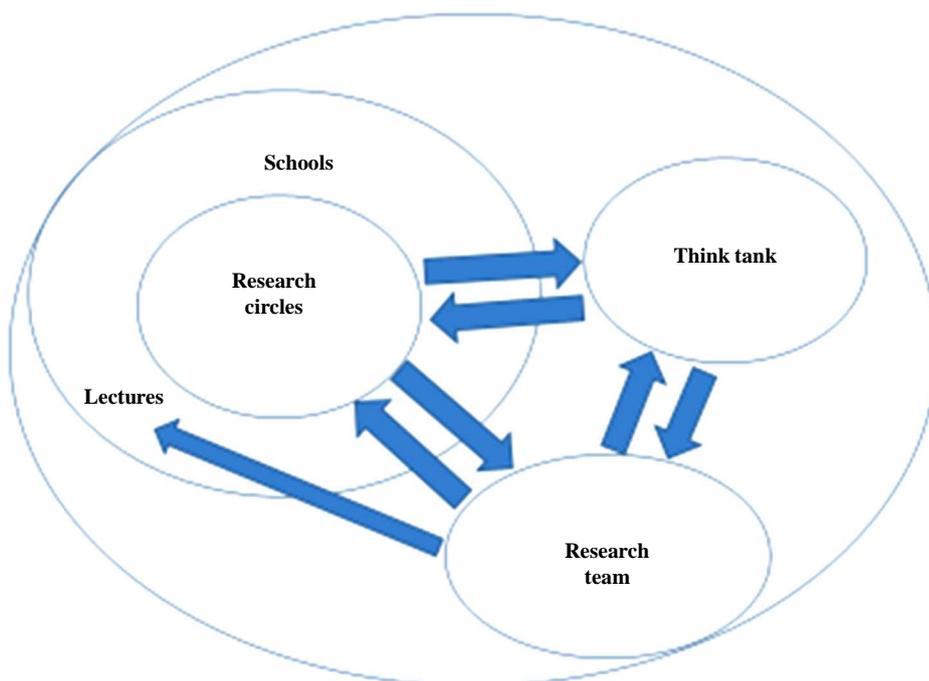

Figure 1. The project "The Education of Newly Arrived Immigrant Pupils" and its components.

2.9. The Research Team

The research team, leading the research circles and the think tank, consisted of five established researchers, all with deep knowledge within the intercultural field. All except one, had previous experience working with research circles. One of the researchers, a professor with intercultural education and intercultural leadership as research focus, served as a scientific leader. Also, a professor of Swedish as a Second Language was affiliated with the project, contributing with specialist knowledge and competences both in planning and completing a series of lectures. An administrative project leader worked as "facilitator" by organizing practical details such as meeting places, travel arrangements and other bookings, as well as, maintaining contact with the National Agency for Education.

The research team held four meetings under the direction of the scientific leader. These meetings were important for mutual planning, discussions, exchanges of experiences, theoretical specialization and meta-guidance. The teaching team's intercultural learning processes within the project formed a basis for synergy effects which represented an important part of the design for learning in which the project was based.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

This study is a descriptive case study (see, for example, Merriam, 1994) from a Participant Action Research (PAR) project (Atweh, Kemmis & Weeks, 1998). Merriam (1994) describes the case study as a research design characterized by an intensive, holistically directed description and analysis of one or more specifically defined cases being studied. The aim is that it will lead to a "thick" description (Geertz, 1973) of factors that can increase understanding of the phenomenon that has been studied rather than a verification and falsification of hypotheses. A case study is felt to be most usable when the researcher tries, in a thorough and multi-faceted manner (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), to find answers to questions about why and how something occurs (see, for example, Yin, 2003). In such a way it is possible to capture individual occurrences and relate them to a complex context (Stake, 1995), while also finding patterns of repetitive occurrences (Trost, 1997) so as to contribute to an increased understanding of various phenomena by placing them in contexts that are meaningful (Bauman & May, 2004). Stake (1994) distinguished between three types of case studies: 1) The intrinsic case study aims to learn as much as possible about a certain unique and special case. 2) The instrumental case study aims to understand as much as possible about a certain phenomenon so that knowledge can be acquired and tested in other case studies. In the long-term, this can be interpreted as an effort to generate knowledge for the long-term with a certain general validity. 3) The multiple case study aims to compare a number of cases. Here, there is an instrumental aim—that is to say, the aim is to increase understanding and knowledge of a certain specific phenomenon.

Data were collected by triangulating several methods (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Background information on the different schools was used to develop a picture of the size of the school, the number of pupils, the proportion of newly arrived immigrant students, the organisation, the organisational structure, etc. For case study A, data were collected by way of participatory observations from one of the two researchers acting as research circle leader. Observations made were documented in both the form of a diary that summarised what happened on those occasions that the research circle met and also in the form of notes on events that were felt to be interesting in relation to the purpose of the research circle. In addition, the reports authored by the research circle participants were used as a basis for describing the different mini research projects that the participants worked with.

Ahead of a concluding seminar in which research circle participants were to inform participants in the other research circles, a conversational interview documented in the form of minutes, was conducted in conjunction with the planning of the seminar. The presentation that was then given at this seminar was recorded and used to complement the data that had been collected when the action research project was being conducted. Just over six months after the research circle had come to an end, an interview (that was recorded) was conducted with the schools' principals and vice principals for the purpose of following up on whether there had been any long-term effects. Case study B, Think Tanks, was documented by the person in charge using ongoing minutes from meetings, which were then presented at the next meeting so that participants could complement the information and come with further reflections.

Interpretation of the results from the case study needs to be characterized by tolerance in terms of the ambiguous and possible interpretations, as well as by sensitivity for the significance of the context (Merriam, 1994).

A summary and analysis of data were, on this basis, then completed by way of a hermeneutic interpretation (Ödman, 2007) through a summary and categorisation of the collected data, and a subsequent relating of these to a broader context and to the theoretical starting points of the study. This came to clarify the processes that had been initiated in the various parts of the action research project. Both case studies (A and B) came while the participants' work progressed, to clarify pedagogically complicated and new types of teaching and leadership situations that teachers and principals meet in their daily work, which are presented and discussed in the results section.

4. Results and Experiences

Results and experiences from the project "Nyanländaslärande" are presented in this article in two case studies in which the project's think tank and one research circle are briefly described and discussed.

4.1. Case A: Intercultural Leadership

The academic research leader offered school leaders participating in the project and research circles the opportunity to take part in the *think tank* leaders. The group met a total of four times.

At the first meeting, the challenges facing management were laid out in the form of problems, dilemmas, and difficulties. The purpose of the first meeting was also to form the think tank in terms of approach and relations. Prior to the first meeting, participants responded to a questionnaire on the challenges they saw in regards to their leadership *vis-à-vis* newly arrived immigrant pupils. At the first meeting, these questions were developed in the form of focus-group interviews. The theoretical development involved an analysis of the culture of the school organization when it came to monoculturalism or interculturalism. The thought was that participants would learn how to analyse the culture of the organization in terms of diversity and possibly develop it in this regard. This meeting resulted in mutual commitments to visit or to conduct classroom studies of the teaching of newly arrived immigrant pupils. At the same time, they would examine the problems teachers had in teaching this pupil group or the pedagogical approaches that had positive results. Discussion on pedagogical competence began.

The second meeting involved discussions in regards to the level at which these principals were involved in the teaching situation of newly arrived immigrants and the way in which they were involved. The theoretical focus took up integration, interculturality and intercultural conflict resolution as well as school difficulties. A mind-map of the teaching difficulties and the good educational approaches that the participants had observed during their classroom visits was developed. Commitments of subsequent meetings involved a review of the tools the principals possessed for professional development of their staff.

On the third occasion, the focus was on the problems teachers had in their teaching and the problems principals experienced in their leadership, as well as, the different means used by leaders in the professional development of their staff. Reflections on lectures that were held at the respective schools and the developmental needs of schools were useful for finding synergy for the various activities.

The fourth meeting focused on what the participating principals do to move their schools from having a mono-cultural to an intercultural organizational culture, the lessons that could be taken and the conclusions that could be drawn from the project work. In addition, new questions raised during the project, were discussed. This occasion included professional guidance (reflection team) so that principals can use the method to perform their work.

According to the participants, the think tank was the only place they have been able to talk openly and raise their questions and queries without the worry of doing or saying something wrong: "An indispensable opportunity for reflection and support in the role as principal" and "You leave the meetings feeling stronger and having new insight".

Being able to talk to others who somewhat share the same challenges and who understand what others do is very interesting. Your think tank provides a long-term understanding of the subject. Both parts are important, but the long-term understanding is more attainable through meetings that are headed by somebody who has the task of getting participants to be more aware. Without the leader, it becomes too easy simply to focus on solutions for the here and now, and that is not good enough (School leader).

To summarise, the think tank with the school leaders represented an important component of the interactive school and management development project, and enabled the problematic of the project to be established at the management level within the organization. It became quite clear that those leaders who had taken part in the

think tank felt a greater responsibility for the newly arrived immigrant pupils and dismantled the "Mother Teresa—Syndrome"—that is to say, that a teacher "privatizes the issues" and takes complete managerial responsibility for newly arrived immigrant pupils. The leaders grew in their intercultural management role and gained increased understanding of the framework that both limits and opens up opportunities for them as leaders. The fact the school leaders worked in four different municipalities with the same type of newly arrived immigrant pupils opened up for opportunities to compare the political and systematic conditions of their leadership. At the same time, it was valuable in terms of research to gain more knowledge and understanding at the school level of the reality that school leaders face in regards to intercultural school development.

4.2. Case B: Interactive Educational Leadership—Experience from a Research Circle

The school in the industrial municipality is a grade 1 to 6 school with 350 pupils, of whom 80 percent do not have Swedish as their first language. This creates, in a radical way, new conditions for both school leaders in their role as pedagogical leaders and teachers in their planning, organizing and teaching methods. The research circle in this case comprised the principal, the vice principal, five teachers and a study counsellor. The participants met a total of eight times over a period of just over one year. During this time, they identified and carried out significant new pedagogical challenges in the multi-language speaking class room. The principal and vice principal had the role of organizing for the research circle work in such a way that would free up time for the teachers to take part, prepare, study, find information, etc. and also to test out their ideas in their own teaching integrated into the day-to-day organization. The task was also to stimulate and encourage the teachers. This also shows how collegial learning in action research can be used in practice.

The role of the two researchers was to organize the work in the research circle and also to contribute with proposals on how the participants would be able to conduct "mini research projects". These were organized in an attempt to find solutions to problems the teachers had not encountered earlier in their careers. For example, two of the teachers and a study counsellor had noticed that newly arrived immigrant students often had too little time to be able to develop their Swedish language skills during school hours. With this in mind, they compiled examples of activities that teachers could use to increase the level of pupil cooperation, which also later on found place among other teachers. Another example includes the teacher who saw the importance for the students to understand the broader cultural context and national school discourse. It is probable that newly arrived immigrant students may have difficulties dealing with this, and, therefore have difficulties assimilating new knowledge. This teacher began, on this basis, by trying to make new texts that the pupils came across in their learning comprehensible, terming the idea "unpacking" a text. A third example is of two teachers who worried about the difficulties of communicating in the classroom as many of the students had insufficient knowledge of Swedish. Many students also spoke a number of different languages among themselves. In one classroom, there were as many as fourteen different languages represented. To make it easier to communicate, these teachers tried to use language apps for developing pupils' language skills as well as their subject knowledge.

The principal wanted to know which languages were spoken in the different classrooms and raised this as strength and something that the pupils could be proud of. On the other hand, this demonstrated the linguistic diversity that existed at this school and revealed a complicated pedagogical problem. The school's vice principal began by looking at the important role that contact with pupils' parents plays, not least when many of the parents had limited Swedish, and the way in which this affected the interaction the school had with these parents.

However, in a follow-up interview with the school's leaders and the vice principal just over six months in, it became clear that all the "mini research projects" had been granted a continuation and that a number of the research participants in informal ways were working further on their "research tasks". One important lesson is that the work in a research circle has to last for a long period of time, maybe up to at least two years. For the school's leaders, the research circle gave an opportunity to create a forum in which to organize peer learning. Experiences could then be shared both inside and outside the school, in formal meetings and informal conversations, and in collaboration with other teachers. As the leaders both actively participated in the research circle, they gained good insight into what the teachers had identified and how they had tried to find new solutions.

In summary, the research circle served as an important part of the school's development work and the "mini research projects" showed tangible and concrete pedagogical issues that the research circle participants needed to learn more about. In order to make this happen, principals have to take their responsibility and exercise the pedagogical leadership that the National Agency of Education highlights as essential, and in which limitations

have been drawn attention to by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this article has been to describe and discuss the role school leader play in the leading of processes that are initiated by way of interactive action research in which methods such as research circles and a think tank are used with the aim to develop collegial learning; new pedagogical work forms; organizational conditions; and intercultural competences with regards to the school situation of newly arrived pupils.

An overall conclusion that can be drawn from the work in the project is that the research circles and the think tank proved to be valuable as they provided an opportunity for individuals from different professional groups to meet for dialogue, collegial learning and collaboration. Although all school leaders were involved in work with newly arrived pupils, for several of them the research circle was the first organized time they sat down and talked about their joint mission. Worth highlighting is the positive significance of the research circle as a forum for meetings between the leaders and staff on a deliberative democratic foundation with the opportunity for every participant to voice one's opinion and to be listened to. An important aspect of this is that the participating leaders gained valuable insights and knowledge by listening and learning from their experienced staff, which contributed to their understanding of the assignment and responsibility for the task. This, in turn, led to the focus in the circle to be directed toward organizational aspects, and to improve the teaching quality with the aim that *all* teachers should take responsibility, improving their teaching as to work with language development and integration. As an important dimension in this, the research circle served to support the participating principals setting aside time for work with pedagogical leadership in the school's every day activities.

So, a conclusion that can be drawn when it comes to the participation of the school leaders is that the leaning towards teaching quality and organizational development, that came to be main focus of the work in the circle, along with both leaders' participation in the think tank, contributed to the leaders' understanding of the assignment, responsibility for the task and the importance of an active pedagogical leadership.

The research study "Rektorn—En stark länkistyrningenavskolan"[5] (Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013) highlights the central significance of the school leaders in running a school. By way of analogy with the metaphor of the leaders as a link is the summarizing experience from the initial work in the project that when it comes to work with newly arrived immigrant pupils, the leaders appeared to be weak links. In light of the understanding of and the responsibility for the assignment (Oxenswärdh, 2011) related to newly arrived pupils leaders can, at the introductory stage of the project, be expected to have relatively little understanding of and responsibility for the assignment. It became apparent that they mainly cultivated an *administrative leadership* (Berg, 2011) and only to a certain extent a *pedagogical leadership* (Skolverket, 2015). The leaders relied greatly on their colleagues. Those working with newly arrived immigrant pupils were in many cases engaged, knowledgeable teachers and study counsellors. It can be understood as an expression of how the leaders trust their colleagues, and delegates and give them responsibility and space in which to act. At the same time, this can be problematized as poor educational leadership. Since the principal has the mandate to steer organizational aspects and the budget, limited frames of reference related to *intercultural leadership* (Lahdenperä, 2008, 2014b, 2015) can result in the organization for newly arrived immigrants not receiving the support from management and the economic resources that may be needed for good quality and for goals to be met.

School leaders have an important function and responsibility for the development of the school's interculturality. As we stressed earlier, interculturality requires communication and interaction between different actors and their actions. It is important that the leader creates an arena for intercultural meetings, where opportunity is given to learn from one another but also to reflect. This is not simple since the whole school organization must be involved in organizational learning (see for e.g. Senge, 1990) to develop an intercultural learning environment (Lahdenperä, 2009).

To reach the goal to create an intercultural learning environment, different project elements—research circles, lectures, think tanks and researcher' meetings—must be coordinated to allow for synergy effects and for views towards continued quality development. In light of the collected documentation, experiences and feedback from the schools, this proved to be a good design. Throughout the collaboration between researchers and practitioners, new knowledge and understanding were developed; these can be used in educational contexts and future research. Of particular significance are two to each other related aspects. The first is the importance that teachers

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[5]The Principal—A Strong Link in the Running of a School.

and other school staff are given opportunities to come together in collegial learning processes to develop their cooperation and teaching related to the schooling of newly arrived pupils. The second is the importance of the principal's active pedagogical and intercultural leadership, based on a quest to continuously develop an intercultural organizational culture. We see the opportunity to follow up the effects of the project at the level of the pupil as a particularly interesting continuation and what role the school leaders play in this, not at least how to develop strategies to facilitate communication in the multi-language class-room.

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