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Goal management & teacher competence development in schools

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Sociology of education

- What counts as effective educational practice?

Effectiveness of education depends on students' socio-economic background and other out-of school factors (?)

The organization of a school is the most critical factor for predicting educational effectiveness

- Schools as organizations that can 'make a difference'

(Angus, 1993)

Context

- Goal setting is seen as one of the most influential actions school management can do for organizational effectiveness. But schools often have **vague goals** ([Murphy & Torre, 2015](#))
- Main goal of a school = development of human resources
([Murphy et al 2001](#))
- School administration can either enable or constrain teacher professionalism ([Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994, p. 146](#))

Theoretical framework

- Goals as a central point of reference in organizations but also controversial. **Formalization** for guiding rational action and decisions ([Scott, 2003](#)).
- **Anomy:** a contradiction between the norms and goals of a social structure and individuals' ability to act according to them ([Merton, 1938](#))
- *Are the bigger goals of a school in line with the actual teacher competencies/abilities and resources given to them ?*

Research goal and research questions

- **Goal:** to investigate how the process of managing goals (formulation and attainment) is being carried out in Latvian schools
- **Research questions:**
 1. How does the school management team describe and interpret the main goals of their school?
 2. How is teacher professional learning managed?
 3. How does the setting and attainment of goals relate to teacher professional learning and overall competence development?

Methodology

- Qualitative structured interviews with school principals and middle management representatives (39 interviews)
- One large municipality in Latvia
- 10 schools (primary school, high school, evening school, dual language "stream" school)
- Period: January – March 2013

RESULTS

- How does the school management team describe and interpret the main goals of their school?
- School existence is interpreted as a basic demand from society
"if there are children then there is a need for a school"
- History, traditions, popularity = stability
"cultural centre from generation to generation"
- A school that offers something special (individual approach, convenient location, best teachers, extra curricula activities, creative environment)
"a small school, every child is noticed"; "we are creative"
- Schools function for socialization
"bringing up for the best norms of behaviour, a child comes into this world to live in society, the school helps to do it"
- Two answers mention professional learning for teachers
"we are ready to show our lessons to teachers from other schools"

2. How is teacher professional learning managed?

- **The kind of support that has been given:**
 - Courses
 - Lectures
 - IT courses and new technology in the classroom
 - Learning materials
 - Methodic support/collaboration
 - Lesson planning/analysis/observation
- **Formulation of answers is generally vague:**
 - “we come together when it’s needed”; “teacher retells to others what they heard in courses”; “critical thinking courses, ten years ago”

2. How is teacher professional learning managed?

- Most effective *form* of learning support would be:
- doing lesson observation

"We have suggested lesson observation where they can discuss their problems. It is inconvenient - time tables. But we as administration are ready to help"

- collaborate with other schools

"In one school you can't be effective. We already know what's going on here. Of course it's better to work with other schools"

- teacher collaboration within a subject group
- having an expert in the school
- individual help
- understanding for a need to change

2. How is teacher professional learning managed?

- In which *areas* do teachers need the most support:

Majority of interview content is too diverse to be put into categories

- IT
- Collaboration among teachers of the same grade
- Teacher collaboration with students
- Assessment methods
- Lesson observation and other forms of collaboration
- Curricula knowledge
- Planning skills
- Reflection skills

3. How does the setting and attainment of goals relate to teacher professional learning and overall competence development?

- School goal is to maintain traditions, offer something unique, provide education because it is “a basic demand from society” = **low level of formalization**
- Specific awareness of current teacher learning needs, very detailed answers, wide diversity of formats and actions
- Past actions for teacher professional development are fragmented and vague or happened outside the school / long time ago
- Past actions do not represent the current teacher professional learning needs (as explained by the school management team themselves)

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