The Swedish Principal: Leadership Style, Decision-Making Style, and Motivation Profile

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ABSTRACT: The Swedish schools have been under pressure for change for several decades. How leaders behave can be of vital importance in times of change. The principal is responsible for both the educational program and for the school budget. Two hundred Swedish principals (male and female) responded to questionnaires concerning their leadership style, decision-making style and motivation profile. The results show that 49% of the principals have a change centered leadership style, 38% were primarily intuitive when making decisions, and 44% were achievement motivated. No significant gender differences were found. The results indicate that many principals have fair prospects of leading their schools successfully in times of change.

The Swedish schools have been under pressure for change for several decades. How leaders behave can be of vital importance in times of change. In this article we map the behavior of Swedish school leaders and discuss their ability to implement change in their schools.

School leadership is considered to be a key element in effective schools and has attracted researchers around the globe. There is a widespread belief that leadership matters (Bass, 1990), that school leadership can influence the effectiveness of schools (see Early & Weindling, 2004; Gold & Evans, 1998; Hall, Mackay, & Morgan, 1986; Harris, 2005) and has a central role for developing schools (Huber, 2004b). There is also a common understanding that school leadership can be learned (see Fauske, 2002; Hansson & Gamage, 2005; Huber, 2004a, 2004b; Su, Gamage, & Mininberg, 2003). Many authors give research based recommendations on the "how" of school leadership (see Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Early & Weindling, 2004; Gold & Evans, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2001). Barker (2001) studied poor performers and effective principals and suggests that effective leaders motivate staff and students. McGinn (2005) suggests the need for social and political acumen in school leadership. Bogler (2001) found that principals' transformational leadership affected teachers' job satisfaction. Leithwood (2005) summarizes research on successful principalship the following way: " school leadership research has yet to devote much energy to the study of leaders' internal lives" (p. 622). Research is lacking on the behavior and internal lives of school leaders. This article aims to fill this gap and investigate the leadership behavior of principals in Swedish schools. The objective of this investigation is; therefore, to examine the behavior of Swedish principals in terms of leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile as well as give an indication of their ability to implement change in their schools.

The Swedish schools have been under strain for several decades and the school system is almost always on the political agenda. The economic resources allotted to the schools have been decreasing since the 1990s, which has led to a reduction of the number of employees. The principal is responsible for both the educational program at his/her school and for keeping the budget of the school. Research on Swedish schools has indicated that the Swedish principal is under pressure from different directions: There are different interests and expectations between administration and education, state and local authorities (the municipality), curriculum and local traditions, between the responsible authorities and the profession (Berg, 2003; Nestor, 1991; Nytell, 1994; Scherp, 1998; Stålhammar, 1984; Svedberg, 2000; Wahlström, 2002; Wingård, 1998).

Research on managers (formal leaders) in different settings suggest that leadership style, managerial decision-making style, and motivation are important factors for managerial effectiveness (Bass, 1990). This article investigates the three important dimensions of managerial behavior: (1) Leadership style describes the behavior of the leader by task orientation, relationship orientation, and change orientation; (2) Managerial decision-making style describes the

typical way in which managers solve problems and make decisions. Four functions are used to describe behavior: sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling; (3) Motivation profile. Three needs are used to denote the motivation profile of leaders: achievement motivation, affiliation motivation, and power motivation.

These factors tap into some important orientations and aspirations of managers, which lead to specific behavioral patterns. Table 1 gives an overview of the dimensions and factors of the model.

Table 1. *Dimensions and factors of leadership behavior.*

Leadership style	Decision-making style	Motivation profile
Relationship style	Sensing type	Achievement motivation
Structure, task style	Intuition type	Affiliation motivation
Change, development style	Thinking type	Power motivation
	Feeling type	

Leadership behavior theories

The dimensions applied aim to isolate the behavioral pattern that guides leaders' actual behavior. Theories on leadership style, decision-making as well as motivation profile all describe leader behavior. They explain why the behavior occurs and predicts the outcome (in terms of organizational effectiveness) of the behavior or behavioral pattern described.

Leadership style

The leadership style theories describe the behavioral pattern of leaders as well as the consequences of various styles in terms of effectiveness. The Ohio State University Leadership Studies established the existence of two behavioral factors in leadership namely, consideration and initiating structure (Fleishman & Harris, 1962). Concern for people, employee-centeredness, concern for production, production centeredness, and task orientation are other terms used. These factors are found simultaneously in the behavior of leaders, but in varying degrees. This statement is profoundly established, both theoretically and empirically.

Ekvall and Arvonen (1991) investigated leadership styles based on the concepts and methods of the Ohio State Studies. When analyzing behavioral data from managers in Sweden, Finland, and the USA, they found that a third factor emerged. This was called the change-centered leadership style. The style depicts a supervisor who creates visions, accepts new ideas, makes quick decisions and encourages co-operation, who is not overcautious and who does not stress that plans must be followed. The factor may have developed in today's companies as a consequence of the accelerating change in many areas, which affects both products and processes (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991).

Decision-making style

Jung's (1921/1971) typology has also influenced management research. Jung claimed that humans are guided by one of four functions when solving problems. These functions are: sensing which is a perception through our senses; thinking which gives us meaning and understanding; feeling which judges and assesses, and intuition which tells us about the possibilities in the future (Jung, 1976).

Most humans have one function which is applied the most – the dominant function. The opposite of the dominant function (which is the strength of that person) is the inferior function (which is the weakness of that person). If, for instance, the dominant function is thinking the weakest function will be feeling. If the dominant function is intuition, the inferior function will be sensing.

There are, according to Jung, two ways in which we can perceive problems, namely by the use of sensing and

intuition. There are only two ways to solve the problem that is by use of the thinking and feeling functions. The combination of the perceiving and judging functions are called the decision-making style. Keegan (1984) adopted the theory and applied it to management. He claims that Jung's typology gives a genuine insight into the question as to why individuals succeed or fail in their decision-making.

Motivation profile

McClelland (1961, 1990) has performed extensive research into the relationship between motivation related behavior in managers and organizational effectiveness. He claims that every individual has, to varying degrees, a need for achievement, power, and affiliation. The term "need profile" denotes the relative strength of the three needs. Three motivation profiles are used in this research tradition based on which of the three "needs" is the "strongest," namely achievement motivation profile, affiliation motivated profile, and power motivated profile.

McClelland's conclusion from several studies is as follows: When the need for power in managers is stronger than the need for affiliation it is an indication of effectiveness. What is crucial is not the strength of any specific need but rather the relative strength of the needs – the motivation profile. The need for power is defined as the desire to control other people, to influence their behavior or to be responsible for other people and their work. McClelland explains why managers with a strong need for power behave in a way that causes effectiveness in organizations. A review of five investigations supports McClelland's thesis (Andersen, 1999).

Principals in Swedish schools

The main tasks of the principal in the Swedish schools are defined in the Swedish Education Act and in the curriculum (Curriculum, 1994). The National Agency for Education (2004) describes the school system in the following way: "Within the objectives and framework established by Government and Parliament, the individual municipality may determine how its schools are to be run. A local school plan describing the funding, organization, development, and evaluation of school activities shall be adopted. Using the approved curriculum, national objectives and the local school plan, the principal of each school draws up a local work plan. This shall be done in consultation with the school's teachers and other personnel (Curriculum, 1994).

According to the curriculum the principal is responsible for the educational (pedagogical) work in the school. She/he is at the same time the manager for the school. The tasks are described in detail (Curriculum, 1994). Research has revealed that the principals generally consider themselves mainly as managers and that both teachers and principals find the role as educational leader difficult. In short, one can state that the principals are formal leaders responsible for producing results (the educational leadership) and responsible for personnel (Ekholm, Blossing, Kåräng, Lindvall, & Scherp, 2000; Ekholm & Kull, 1996).

According to The Swedish National Agency for Education approximately 64% of principals and vice principals in the compulsory nine-year schools are women. Almost 39% of principals and vice principals in the senior high school (upper secondary school) are women. In total 59% of principals and vice principals in Swedish schools are women (National Agency, 2004).

Method and instrument

Samples and data collection

In 2003 a questionnaire was sent to 300 randomly selected principals and vice principals in Swedish schools, members of two unions for principals. According to Linde and Lundberg (2003) the total number of principals and vice principals was 8,122 persons during the fall of 2002. Approximately 8,000 principals were member of the unions and our sample comprised 3.75% of the whole population. However, as there had not been regular up-dates of the databases, it was discovered that the actual number of recipients was 265 as the others had already left service. Altogether 184 questionnaires were returned with data. Some questionnaires were not filled in properly and could not be used. The report thus relies on data from 176 persons yielding a response rate of 66%. The figure is low but can be explained by the fact that The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement sent a questionnaire to all

principals and vice principals in the spring 2003. However, the distribution of answers is equal to the whole population related to gender. It may be reasonable to consider the answers typical of the whole population.

The instrument for measuring leadership styles

Ekvall and Arvonen (1991) developed and tested an instrument which captures the leadership style factors of the CPE-model being change-centered style, production-centered style and employee-centered style. The instrument contains 30 items (10 items for each factor). The results show that the CPE-questionnaire contains the qualities required by the research instrument (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991). Skogstad and Einarsen (1999) found substantial support for a distinct change-centered leadership style. The instrument has been applied in research by Ekvall and Arvonen (1991, 1994), Arvonen and Ekvall (1996), and Ekvall and Ryhammar (1998).

In previous research, the subordinates of the managers have filled in the CPE-instrument. In this study a self-reporting version has been applied. The original questionnaire applies a Likert scale from 1-4 while the self-reporting version has a scale from 1-6. The self-reporting version has previously been used in research (Andersen, 2000a; Hansson & Andersen, 2001).

The instrument for measuring decision-making style

Two different instruments were available to collect data on managerial decision making behavioral variables according to Jung's typology: The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers & McCaully, 1985) and The Keegan Type Indicator Form B (KTI) (Keegan, 1980, 1982). According to Stoknes the MBTI has almost lost its roots in Jungian theory (1992). The KTI was chosen. The instrument contains 32 items (compared with 132 items in the MBTI). Of the 32 items, 24 are bipolar statements and 8 items on statements to be ranked on a scale from 1 to 4. The instrument collects only variables relevant for the study. The instrument has acceptable face and content validity and is based explicitly on Jung's typology. It must be stressed that the MBTI is a general test of the typology and the KTI is a test for managers measuring decision-making styles based on Jung's theory (Andersen, 2000b).

The instrument for measuring motivation profile

The questionnaire applied here – The Andersen Motivation Profile Indicator (AMPI) – is a forced-choice instrument with 24 pair of questions with 8 pairs of items for each of the variables. It is explicitly developed to measure the motives according to McClelland's theory and definitions. The AMPI measures the relative strength of the three needs, that is, the motivation profile. The instrument, which is masked, is tested for reliability and validity (Andersen, 1991). The AMPI has been applied in research (Andersen, 1994, 1999, 2000a, 2005).

Table 2. Instruments used

Behavioral dimension	Variables	Instrument
Leadership style	Structure	CPE, Ekvall and Arvonen (1991)
	Relation	
	Change	
Decision style	Sensing	KTI, Keegan (1982)
	Thinking	
	Feeling	
	Intuition	
Motivation profile	Achievement	AMPI, Andersen (1991)
	Affiliation	
	Power	

Results

The background of the respondents is presented in Table 3 and 4 and in Figure 1. Women constitute about 58% of the respondents, which is equal to the whole population. Just 67% of the respondents work in the nine-year compulsory school, which is lower than expected (82% of the whole population). About 58% of the respondents hold positions as principals compared to 65% in the whole population. Some indicated "other" position, generally a lower position taking part in the management of the school (e.g., director of studies). A majority of the principals have been in charge between 5 and 14 years (Table 3). One would have expected more women with a very long experience, but this is explained by the fact that women have become principals to a larger extent in recent years. There are no significant gender differences in position, as c2 (1, N = 171) = 2.4, p>.05. There is no reason to believe that the respondents differ from the whole population.
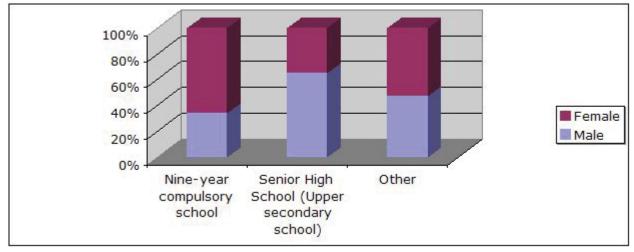
Table 3. Years as principal

	Total n	Total %	Male n	Male %	Female n	Female %
Years as principal						
1-4 years	53	31	23	32	30	30
5-9 years	57	33	22	31	35	35
10-14 years	35	20	9	13	26	26
> 15 years	26	15	18	25	8	8
Total	171	99	72	101	99	99

Table 4. Position

Position	Total n	Total %	Male n	Male %	Female n	Female %
Principal	99	58	37	51	62	63
Vice principal	41	24	19	26	22	22
Other	31	18	16	22	15	15
Total	171	100	72	99	99	100

Women work more often as principals in nine-year compulsory schools and men more often in senior high (upper secondary) schools (Figure 1). The difference is significant, namely c_2 (2, N= 171) = 11.2, p <.05. This can be considered as a reflection of the situation in the Swedish society at whole with men in more well paid and prestigious positions. On the other hand it can be argued that the reason that the majority of heads of Swedish schools are women is a result of aspiration for equality.

Figure 1. Type of School. Gender Distribution

Analysis

Leadership style

Twenty-one (12%) of the 176 principals investigated had no distinct leadership style. The distribution of the 155 principals with distinctive leadership behavioral styles shows that 73 principals (47%) had the relationship style, 6 principals (4%) hade the structure task style and 76 principals (49%) had the change/development style (Table 5). There is no significant difference between male and female principals, as c_2 (2, N=155) = 1.510, p>.05.

Table 5. Leadership style

Leadership style	All principals		Male principals		Female principals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Relationship style	73	47	26	41	47	51
Structure task style	6	4	3	5	3	3
Change development style	76	49	34	54	42	46
Total	155	100	63	100	92	100

Decision-making style

Four principals (2%) did not have a distinct decision-making style. The distribution of data of decisions functions is based on data from 172 principals and shows that 23 (13%) were of the sensing type, 66 (38%) were intuitive, 33 (19%) belonged to the thinking type and 50 (29%) were feeling types (Table 6). The intuitive type is dominant among the principals. There is no significant gender differences, namely $c2 (3, N=172) = 6.289, p>.05$.

Table 6. Decision-making style

Decision-making style	All principals		Male principals		Female principals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sensing type	23	13	10	14	13	13
Intuitive type	66	38	27	38	39	39
Thinking type	33	19	19	27	14	14
Feeling type	50	29	15	21	35	35
Total	172	99	71	100	101	101

Motivation profile

Twenty-four (14%) of the principals investigated had no distinct motivation profile. The distribution of the 152 principals with a distinct motivation profiles shows that 67 (44%) were achievement motivated, 39 (26%) were affiliation motivated and 46 (30%) were power motivated (Table 7). There are no significant differences between male and female principals, as $c2 (2, N=152) = .260, p>.05$.

Table 7. Motivation profile

Motivation profile	All principals		Male principals		Female principals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Achievement motivation	67	44	26	44	41	44
Affiliation motivation	39	26	14	24	25	27
Power motivation	46	30	19	32	27	29
Total	152	100	59	100	93	100

Discussion

The demands on the principals are diversified globally. The Swedish principals are supposed to act like managers and to be able to develop the school organization and improve education standards in accordance to state and municipal decisions. They are also supposed to work as "democratic" managers and to involve the employees and the pupils in the decision-making process. Some of the behavioral patterns appear to be more favorable for such demands than others.

Leadership style

The leadership style, which best fulfils the requirements on the Swedish principal of school improvement and change is the change-development style. Bogler (2001) argues that teachers report greater satisfaction in their work when the head shares information and keeps open channels of communication with the teachers. This is a leadership style very similar to the change-development style. It is interesting to notice that almost half of the respondents have this style. Very few have the structure task style and about 47% the relationship style. According to previous research (Andersen, 2005) the principals, by comparison with other managers, score relatively high on the change-development style and low on the relationship style. According to Andersen (2005) and Hansson and Andersen (2001) managers in other organizations generally score more than 60% on relation-oriented style and less than 30% on the change-development style.

The Scandinavian management style generally is seen as relationship-oriented. It is therefore not surprising that 47% of the principals have this style. It is, however, as mentioned above, lower than among other groups of managers. It is difficult to find any explanation to this result. The pressure for change in the schools might be a factor that has induced many people with the change-development style to apply for the position as principal and subsequently being appointed.

Decision-making style

Managers with the intuition decision-making style are likely to be more effective in organizations under pressure for change (Andersen, 2000b; Hansson & Andersen, 2001). Almost 40% of the principals belong to the intuitive type. They are more likely than other managers to be able to make decisions in times of change. According to Andersen (2005) managers in other organizations score lower on intuition (roughly 17-32% in different groups).

Motivation profile

The motivation profile instrument measures the relative strength of different motivations for the work as a manager. The dominant profile (44%) among the principals is the achievement motivation. This means the principals' motivation is basically in achieving results. Power motivation (the will to influence others and work through others) appears to be the most effective profile (McClelland, 1990; Andersen, 1991, 2000c; Hansson & Andersen, 2001). This is supported

by Barker (2001) in his research on head teachers: "These successful leaders displayed a high need for power and interest in influencing others" (pp.74-75). About one-third (30%) of the principals have this style. The principals score lower on the affiliation profile than other managers (especially when compared with rectors/vicars in the Church of Sweden) and higher on the achievement profile (Andersen, 2005; Hansson & Andersen, 2001). Table 8 summarized the behavioral pattern of the principals investigated.

Table 8. Summary of behavioral pattern of principals.

Change-centered leadership style	Intuitive decision-making style	Achievement motivated behavior
Offers ideas about new and different ways of doing things; pushes for growth; initiates new projects; experiments with new ways of doing things; gives thoughts and plans about the future.	Seeks to exploit the possibilities; oriented towards the future; tries to discover new possibilities and find new solutions; uses imagination; gets carried away with new ideas and possibilities and ignores practical realities.	Desires to outperform someone else, meet or surpass some self-imposed standard of excellence, do something unique, be involved over long term in doing something well.
Arvonen & Ekvall (1999: 5)	Jung (1971, 1976)	McClelland & Steele, (1972: 34)

Gender differences

Interestingly enough no significant differences were found between male and female principals. Marshall argues that "Early studies on women in management often set out to establish women's similarities to men in terms of leadership behavior, motivation and the like" (Marshall, 1995, p. 57). However, it should be observed that women dominate the Swedish schools as places of work. Approximately 65% of all teachers are women (in secondary schools 73.5% and in upper secondary schools 48.1%). For the last 10 years there have been more female principals than male principals. Therefore it does not seem appropriate to argue that women have adapted to a male culture or male leadership style as is argued for many other organizations (Collinson & Hearn, 1990). Marshall argues: "it is sometimes appropriate to think of men and women as the same" (1995, p. 58). It is also possible to argue that all teachers (and most of the principals are former teachers) have been influenced by the same school culture during many years and taken part in the same discourse of leadership (Ford, 2006). This would result in the same pattern of leadership style, decision-making style, and motivation profile among the principals.

Managers who have the change-oriented leadership style and who are intuitive when making decision, and are power motivated are categorized by Andersen (2005), as having change potential in regard to initiating and implemented organizational changes. The relative distribution of the change-oriented leadership style, intuition and power motivation of the Swedish principals investigated here) indicate that they (as a group) have a fairly high degree of change potential.

Conclusions

The results show that 49% of the principals have a change centered leadership style. Concerning managerial decision-making style, a distinct group of 38% of the principals has intuition as their decision-making style. Forty-four percent of the principals were classified as having the achievement motivation profile. If these results where applied on the leadership propensity model suggested by Andersen (2005) the Swedish principals as a group appear to have good prospects of initiating and implementing changes in their schools.

No significant differences between male and female principals were found. In the future, a comparison between school principals and other groups of Swedish managers may enhance our understanding of the behavior of Swedish principals. An international study, comparing principals in different countries, may also enhance our understanding of the principal as a manager.

The implications of this study relate to training and leadership development of school principals. In leadership development programs the importance of self-knowledge regarding managers' own behavior is often emphasized. By reflecting upon their behaviors school managers may modify or adjust their behavior in order to enhance attainment of organizational goals. In order to successfully initiate and implement organizational and pedagogical changes in school managers' actions and behaviors are crucial.

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