



Skolelederforeningen

The Danish Association of School Leaders

The Danish Association of School Leaders is a trade union that represents Denmark's approximately 4500 school leaders in the public primary and lower secondary school, i.e. principals, head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of department and others with leadership responsibilities in and around the public school. Near to 100 % of the school leaders are member of the organisation.

The purpose of the Association is to promote the interests of school leaders and to improve their salary and working conditions.

Our vision is to strengthen the conditions for exercising leadership in the school and for developing successful personal and team-based leadership. We hope that this work will eventually result in innovation within the field of school leadership - making it both more attractive and manageable to be a school leader.

The president is elected for a period of two years.



Anders Balle
President
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The Attractiveness of School Leadership

The initiative was based on our 2007 'Code of good school leadership', the Association's eleven-point attempt at identifying the requirements of modern, good leadership in the public school.

In collaboration with institutions, organisations and companies, the Association tried to isolate the factors that make it exciting and meaningful to be a school leader – factors that support the code of good school leadership and help carrying the school forward towards greater success, greater academic standards and a good teaching and working environment. The general initiative is illustrated by an umbrella covering a number of activities – see figure.

The satisfaction rate of Danish school leaders is above the average of other public employees. However, even though many school leaders do say that they are fond of their jobs, they are also concerned that they might not be able to continue coping with the pressures.

And applicants are *not* queuing up to become school leaders in the Danish public school. The leader's competences are often vaguely described, and it is an exposed position that involves many working hours. These are the downsides of being a school leader.

Job satisfaction is an important factor in coping with the responsibilities of a school leader and for exercising good leadership. This, in turn, is essential for the general successfulness of the school - as surveys show leadership to be the most important single factor in safeguarding and improving school quality.

For this reason, providing school leaders with good conditions for exercising their leadership is an important independent aim. Being a school leader must be attractive, and the leaders themselves and their surroundings must see that they thrive on the job and have a reserve of strength.

Space, power and impact

As part of the general initiative, the Association invited four municipalities to participate in an intensive programme of analysis and development, intended to identify opportunities and preconditions for making school leadership an attractive option.

The programme had its starting point in the triangle of leadership power, leadership impact and leadership space.

- Leadership power: The power vested in the position. Leadership power is an assigned power, vested in the leader by virtue of laws, ministerial orders, agreements on the principles of leadership, decentralisation etc.

- Leadership impact: The way in which the leader/leadership rises to the occasion and assumes responsibility, sets the course, inspires, handles conflicts etc.
- Leadership space: The framework supporting the power vested in the leader's position as well as the actual impact of the individual leader. Within this space, the leader operates with whatever power and impact are available.

Other projects

Several other projects were launched under the initiative 'The attractiveness of school leadership' such as

- Investigation of the special needs within profession-related leadership,
- A survey of the strategic aspects of school leadership
- Investigation of the fact that school leaders, too, are subject to leadership.
- A knowledge/experience database of how to look into the actual working conditions in a certain community
- New courses focusing on the school leader's psychological working environment
- A series of articles with school leaders writing about their own personal thoughts and concerns about the job of being a school leader
- A book about good school leadership and finally
- A self evaluation tool which was developed in cooperation with the The Danish Evaluation Institute

The results were communicated to members, media, politicians, decision-makers and the public at the Association's annual meeting in 2010 and we are right now focused on disseminating the results and translating them into practice-related recommendations that will lead to concrete change.

The Association wishes to use this initiative for purposes of policy formation and to identify the Association's professional development targets and what needs to be done to improve the level of job satisfaction and the working conditions of school leaders. Furthermore, we intend to upgrade our services to members in terms of counselling and guidance.

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