

Principals Cooperating to Assess Classroom Practice

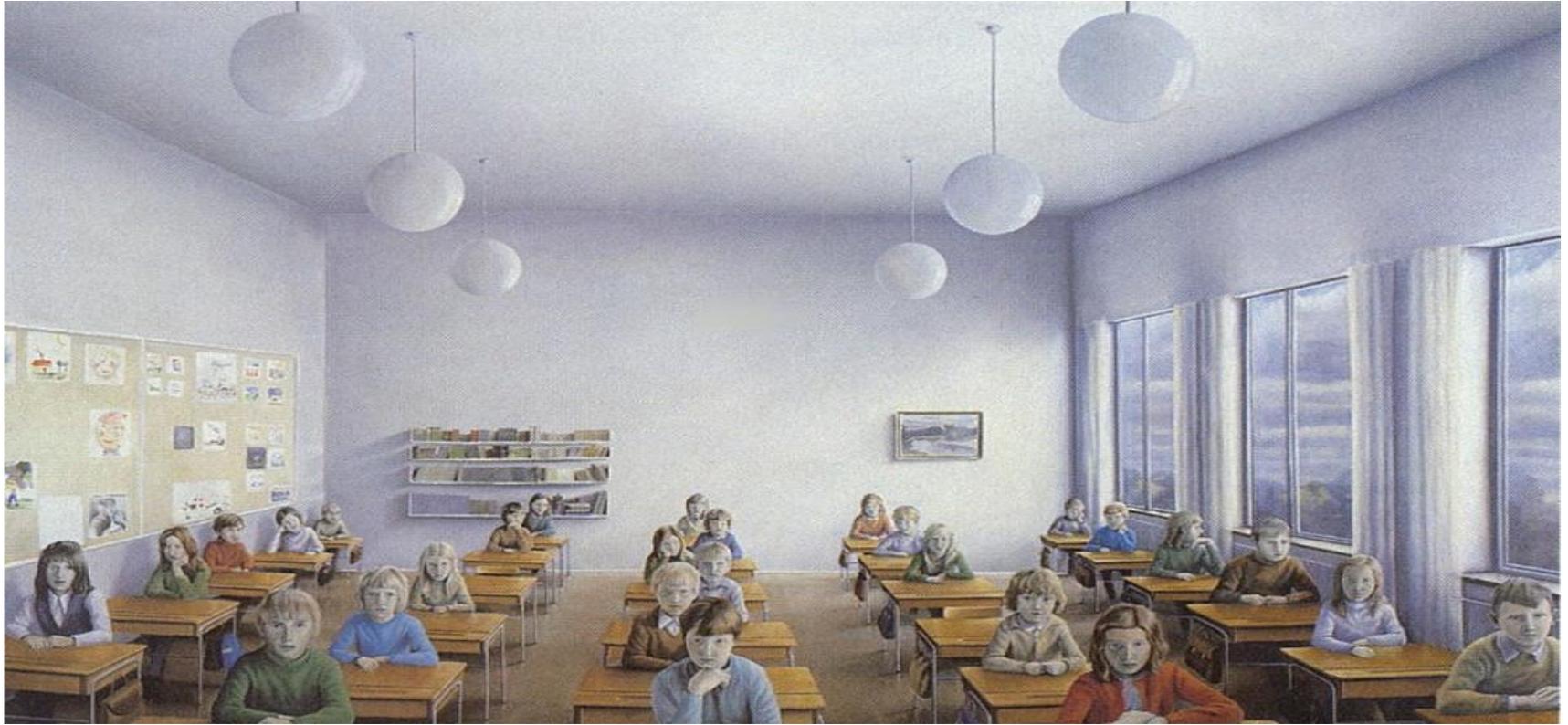
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Swedish artist Peter Tillberg: "Will you make value, my dear?"

Why do this project and research?

- Swedish principals (as others) will develop the pedagogical professionalism of their school organizations
 - Teacher development programs are traditionally built on lectures, courses, or information. None has proven effective in changing the actual behavior of staff.
- Theoretical implications:
 - Our minds as shaped in dialogue with others.
 - By systematic and repeated confrontation, the goals and ideas will eventually become an integrated part of the understanding of teachers, and will then have an impact on their actions in practice.
- Several systematic ways of collegial learning directed towards teachers:
 - Lesson studies.
 - Learning studies.
 - Collegial feedback.
- Few assessed methods concerning the principal's classroom observations.

The research design

- *How can effective systems for principal's observation and feedback on teachers' classroom practice be created, tested, and improved by group dialogue in ways that the participating principals will find meaningful?*
- Methods:
 - Note taking of work process and group discussions after sessions.
 - Interviews at midterm and at the end.
 - Written inquiry after project.
- Observation and assessment of work performance followed by feedback as a way of improving staff performance.
- Coaching and mentoring often improves when implemented as a group activity.
- Learning in group settings is dependent on an open and allowing atmosphere.

The project design

- Methods for pedagogical development by systematic observation and feedback.
- A municipality close to Stockholm.
- Six principals, preschool-secondary school.
- Ten sessions over a year, 2,5 hour each time.
- When assessing the complex pedagogical environment of the classroom, processes, products, spatial criteria, and their combinations must be considered.
- Using rubrics has proven effective and valid.

Process during the project sessions

1. Shared experiences from the observations and feedback sessions:
 - Sharing matrixes and observations.
 - Showing filmed sessions occasionally.
 - Dialogue with colleagues.
2. Discussion of read research text:
 - Researcher presenting extra material.
3. Matrix discussed and revised (at least three times):
 - Two matrixes:
 - Knowledge, skills, and abilities addressed in an observed school lesson.
 - Leisure-time centers, afterschool activities.

<p>KNOWLEDGE New knowledge, insights, discoveries</p>	<p>Subject content Subject knowledge</p>	
<p><i>Didactic teacher role</i> Plans and carries out every part of the process with focus on the learning of every student, points out goals and assessment, uses interplay and student active methods</p>	<p>Curriculum core values Democracy, social abilities, equality, and the central perspectives: historical, environmental, international, ethical</p>	
<p>SKILLS Training on the student's reached level</p>	<p>Knowledge related Theoretical skills: read, write, count, etc.</p>	
	<p>Competence related Practical skills: paint and draw, do laboratory work, carpentry, baking, note taking, etc.</p>	
	<p>Social Speak in a group, wait ones turn, be considerate, etc.</p>	
<p><i>Coaching teacher role</i> Have prepared the setting and activities so that every student can navigate on his/her own, meets the student's level and helps him/her onward</p>		
<p>ABILITIES Uses and communicates knowledge and skills in an effective and appropriate way to interpret, synthesize, make connections, and see alternatives</p>	<p>Analyzing Draw conclusions, interpret, value, analyze</p>	
	<p>Creative and entrepreneurial learning Create new ideas, questions, inventions, esthetic objects etc.</p>	
	<p>Communicative Mediate, develop, reason, argue etc.</p>	
	<p>Meta-cognitive Analyze how one thinks, learns, creates etc.</p>	
<p><i>Exploring and problem posing teacher role</i></p>		

KNOWLEDGE

New knowledge, insights, discoveries

The lesson presents curriculum stated subject knowledge, as well as one or several of the following areas: democracy, social abilities, equality, and historical -, environmental - , international - , and ethical perspective. The teacher has thoroughly planned the lesson progression and carries out each sequence with a focus on the learning of every student. The teacher points to goals and assessment. Interplay and student active methods are used.

The lesson presents few curriculum stated subject knowledge content OR to many areas without visible connections. It seems not planned/partly planned OR the teacher has problems letting go of the plan when something unexpected occurs. The focus is on the taught material or social harmony rather than the student's learning. The goal is unclear. Interplay and student active methods are not used OR are used in a way that doesn't guarantee safety and order.

		Formal learning dimension Result and working process is governed by the teacher	Informal learning dimension Working process is governed or supported by the teacher	Chaotic/creative dimension Neither result nor working process is governed by the teacher
Leisure-time pedagogy as identity development Support and enhance social and emotional competence	Play			
	Students' influence and participation			
	The social interplay of the group			
Leisure-time pedagogy supporting the school curriculum	Curriculum related abilities analyzing, entrepreneurial, communicative, meta-cognitive, concept oriented, information handling			
	Practical and esthetical exploring content			
	Thematic and subject integrated content			
Learn in and about leisure	Childrens' culture and play			
	Learning to find cultural and leisure-time activities			
	Good future habits: health, culture, interests			
Setting/space, and structure	The sequences are planned and apparent, and the shifts to new activities are effective			
	The setting/space is prepared to support formal and informal learning			
	Routines and structures support learning and order			

←---- Leisure-time pedagogy as identity development ---→

Formal learning dimension

Result and working process governed by the teacher:

- + The teacher presents games and tasks where the aim is clear. Activities are focused on supporting the students' identity development by self knowledge, influence and making choices and through the social interplay of the group. Goals, processes and methods are planned by the teacher and are performed in accordance with the plan. The results are as planned.

OR:

- The teacher controls the activity, without giving the students opportunity to influence the content. The goal is disciplining, fostering or moralizing rather than development or learning.

Informal learning dimension

The working process is governed or supported by the teacher:

- + The teacher has planned the setting or the activities in a way which will give the students opportunity to investigate, experiment, and cooperate, and thereby understand themselves and others better, influence the content and make their own choices. AND/OR: the teacher participates in student initiated activities and play, by supporting students and processes that need support to be productive.

OR:

- The teacher observes and makes the students' activities possible but does not challenge or support interplay.

Formal learning dimension

Result and working process governed by the teacher:

- + The teacher presents games and tasks where the aim is clear. Activities are focused on supporting the students' identity development by self knowledge, influence and making choices and through the social interplay of the group. Goals, processes and methods are planned by the teacher and are performed in accordance with the plan. The results are as planned.

OR:

- The teacher controls the activity, without giving the students opportunity to influence the content. The goal is disciplining, fostering or moralizing rather than development or learning.

Working order for the principal giving feedback

1. Prepare the meeting (principal and teacher):
 - The matrix is presented by principal.
 - The teacher presents the plan for the lesson that will be observed.
2. Observation (principal visiting teacher's class):
 - Observe the lesson, note the different actions and events in the “Lesson sequence” chart.
 - Make notes of your analysis in the matrix (use the arrow chart as help if needed).
3. Meeting after observation, giving feedback, preferably the same day (principal and teacher):
 - Ask the teacher if he/she considers the aim of the lesson to be reached.
 - Recapitulate in dialogue your observations, using the matrix and notes.
 - Ask the teacher if he/she has the same impression of the lesson and its outcome.
 - If you like – leave a copy of your notes.

Conclusions

- The project altered the way the participating principals perceived observation and feedback as tools for pedagogical development, from being skeptical to seeing them as vital development tools.
 - From asking for coaching on every-day subjects to discussing how learning is constituted.
- The cooperative, interpersonal, dialogue supported the intrapersonal integration of a deeper understanding of what are essential pedagogical qualities.
- A fruitful parallel process when the principals met their teachers in feedback.
 - Several projects introducing collegial feedback among staff.
- Forthcoming study, spring 2013.