



INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP



MEKKI  
EDUCATION



**Skoleleder-**  
**forbundet**

# **“International Leadership Development Program”**

*For Norwegian System Leaders*

*Project Plan*



*Photo: Miklagard Hotel*

## 1. Introduction

The current project plan presents a new leadership development program for system leaders in Norwegian municipalities and regional counties. Traditionally, the term school superintendent has been used to describe the target group for this program. In the Nordic context, a school superintendent is basically defined by three characteristics. First, she or he is responsible for education within the entire municipality or county, and thus the unity of command of the school principals in hierarchical terms. Second, the superintendent is also subordinated to a political board. Finally, the superintendent is member of the CEO's senior leadership team. Norwegian superintendents are therefore uniquely positioned to mediate between the strategic and the operative levels of the local school system. The commonalities of this position, across a number of titles and contextual varieties, is its boundness to a local political system and the function as superior of principals at school owner level in the approximately 390 primary municipalities and 18 regions in Norway (Moos, Nihfors & Paulsen, 2017). However, we find the term superintendent as "old fashioned" in the current setting, and therefore introduce system leaders as a concept which capture the key aspects more comprehensively.

The underlying motivation for the current program lies in the long-term observation of a paradox in the provisions of leadership programs in the Norwegian system. Whereas the Norwegian State Directorate of Learning and Training (UDIR) for a decade has offered national education and training programs for school principals, kindergarden leaders and leaders of special education services, there has been significantly lower program investments for system leaders. Moreover, previous programs for school owners, i.e. municipalities and counties, have been conducted with local politicians as main target group. These programs and endeavors are valuable<sup>1</sup>, yet in the current program we intend to direct attention towards administrative system leaders. This cohort of school leaders perform complex leadership and management roles in their jobs, where they link together many broken chains in the national governance systems. International studies have also pointed to the fact that system leadership at the school district level may significantly influence professional development towards their school principals and school leaders (see Anderson & Louis, 2012; Leithwood, Anderson, & Louis, 2012; Paulsen, 2019; Paulsen & Hjertø, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> See the KS program "The Good School Owner" as an exemplary program, <https://www.ks.no/fagomrader/barn-og-unge/grunnskole-og-sfo/hvordan-lykkes-som-skoleeier/>

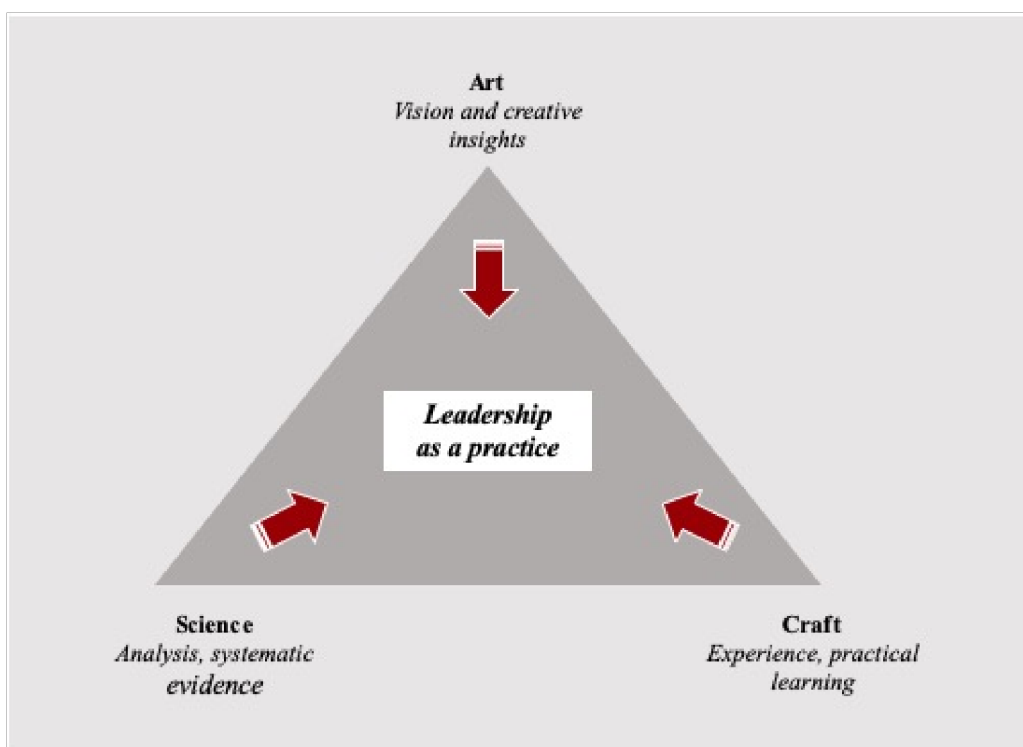
## 2. Program overview and principles

The fundamental idea underlying this leadership development program relates to ‘leadership as a practice’ in Henry Mintzberg’s terminology. Mintzberg’s line of argument builds on numerous of studies of how leaders actually deal with the situated complexities in their leadership role. Specifically, Mintzberg pointed to the fact that learning from personal experience is an important but far from sufficient source of leadership expertise:

*”Managers certainly applies science: managers have to use all the knowledge they can get. And they certainly use analysis, rooted in the scientific method (meaning here the scientific proof more than scientific discovery)” (Mintzberg, 2011, s. 10).*

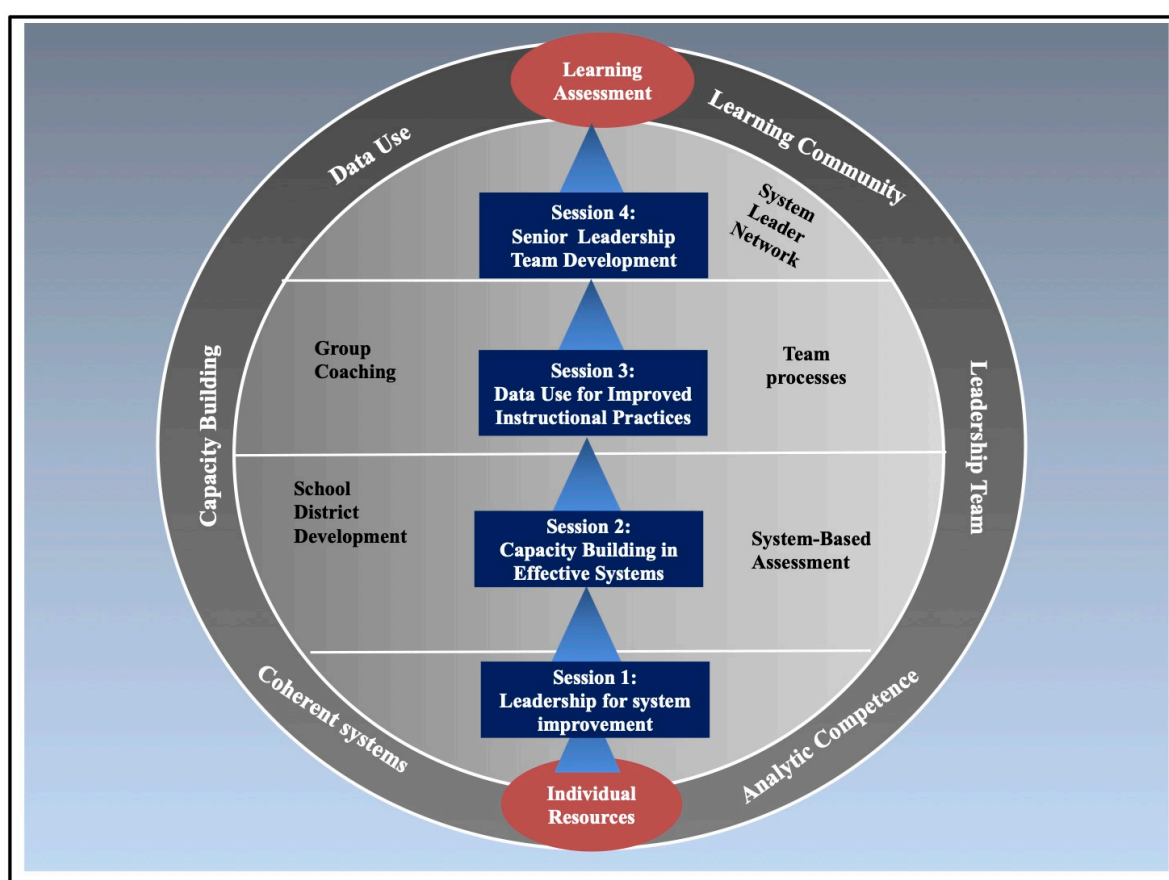
Finally, Mintzberg, in line with a range of other theorists of organization science, points to the artistic element in mastering a leader’s job. Taken together, in Mintzberg’s words: Leadership is “*above all a practice where art, science and craft meet*”. This fundamental perspective on leadership training and development, as illustrated in the model of figure 1 below, has inspired and shaped the practical approach of this program for system leaders. Furthermore, the program aims at creating and maintaining a professional community designed for sharing valuable experiences, analyzing key data, contesting research-based knowledge with realities and nurturing vision and creativity through exploratory learning in a genuine network of colleagues.

**Figure 1: Leadership as a practice (adapted from Mintzberg, 2011)**



In close collaboration with International School Leadership (ISL), an offshoot from *Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)*<sup>2</sup> in Toronto, we have tailored this development program for Norwegian system leaders based on the principles described above. 5 out of 6 modules are adapted from the ISL program, and an instructor from ISL will work closely with a Norwegian program team throughout the entire sessions. The program is structured round four sessions of three days with lectures, practical workshops and experiential learning. Figure 2 below illustrates the model with the main themes for each of the sessions.

**Figure 2: Program model for international system leader development**



We start each session the first day at lunchtime, so that the participants can arrive at the location with an early flight or early train. The Norwegian venue for this program is *Miklagard Hotel*, which is situated about 10 minutes' drive from Oslo Airport Gardermoen. The Norwegian team will lead the program on day one, and they will particularly focus on how the course topics may

<sup>2</sup> For information about OPC, see: <https://www.principals.ca/en/index.aspx>

be related to the Norwegian school context. The second and third day consist of lectures and workshops headed by the ISL instructors.

### 3. Dates and locations

Dates for sessions and information about locations are shown in *table 1* below. Miklagard Hotel is the venue for the three sessions in Norway; October 2020, February 2021 and September 2021. Session three is stretched to five days and will take place in Toronto, Ontario. The sessions will be located at Ontario Principal Council in downtown Toronto. Professor Andy Hargreaves will join the program one of these days. School visits are included in the Toronto session, as well as a sightseeing trip to Niagara Falls at the US border.

**Table 1: Dates for sessions, locations and major learning goals**

Session	Dates	Module	Location	Main themes and some major learning goals
1	9th-11th March 2021	M1	Miklagard Hotell <sup>3</sup>	<b>Leadership for system improvement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the system-level leadership required to support your schools</li> <li>Collectively apply new knowledge to develop a draft system-level leadership framework</li> </ul>
2	10 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	M4 & M5	Toronto	<b>Data use for improved instructional practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand effective practices at the school and system level</li> <li>Explore how to effectively plan, monitor and evaluate school improvement</li> <li>Understand valuable system-level practices</li> <li>Explore how to work with principals using a variety of data to inform decision-making</li> </ul>
3	14th-16th September 2021	M2 & M3	Miklagard Hotell	<b>Capacity building for effective systems</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand key characteristics of effective schools and the current supporting research</li> <li>Understand characteristics of effective systems and practices that support 21st century teaching and learning in schools</li> <li>Collectively adapt new knowledge to the participants' local systems</li> </ul>
4	16th-18th November 2021	M6	Miklagard Hotell	<b>Senior leadership team (SLT) development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the challenges and complexities inherent in SLT work</li> <li>Collectively develop a tailored program for leadership team development at system and school levels</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Miklagard Hotell is located approximately 10 minutes' drive from Oslo Airport Gardermoen. For information about the hotel, see: <https://miklagard.no/>

#### **4. Organizer, parties and key staff**

Mekki Education AS, headed by Omar Mekki, is the domestic organizer of the program in collaboration with Jan Merok Paulsen AS. Mr. Mekki is the project manager for the entire program, and Mekki Education AS is contract partner and the responsible administrative party.

**Professor Andy Hargreaves** has during the last three decades established himself as one of the most trendsetting international theory-developer and communicator of professional development and leadership across different educational systems. He has served at University of Toronto and Boston College of Education, and he is currently visiting professor at Stavanger University. His research encompasses a range of books and research articles on leading educational change, professional development and school culture. His latest book, “Collaborative Professionalism: When Teaching Together Means Learning for All”, is a vital source of this program and will be at the center of professor Hargreaves’ lecture during the third session in Toronto. Several of his books are available in Norwegian.



*Andy Hargreaves*

**Bruce Barrett** is ISL instructor and an Ontario educator with over thirty years of experience that has been equally divided as classroom teacher, school administrator (secondary and elementary), and superintendent. With a decade of work as a superintendent he has extensive experience working with Trustees, other elected officials, and the broader community to achieve the common goals that advance education on the local level. He has also worked extensively with Indigenous communities and system leaders in both Ontario and Canada's North. He was recently appointed as an Accreditation Officer for the Council of International Schools operating almost one thousand schools and post-secondary institutions across 115 countries worldwide.



*Bruce Barrett*

**Joni Heard** is ISL instructor and Ontario educator with over thirty years of experience at the classroom, school, faculty of education, system and provincial levels. In her role as system principal and Education Officer with the Ministry of Education, she was responsible for professional learning, mentoring programs and leadership development. Joni's experiences with International School Leadership (ISL) include facilitating online and onsite courses for current and aspiring educational school and system leaders and providing workshop presentations to international education study tours. Her most recent appointments have been in Peru, Brazil, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Scotland to deliver the International School and System Leadership Certificate programs.



*Joni Heard*

*Testimonial ISL/ ISSL:*

*“The ISL/ISSL program has made a huge impact on our school system and has created coherence and alignment for all our school and system leaders. We have become better using data and identifying keyfactors for school improvement and it has helped us laying the foundation for our framework. The learning and commitment have increased for everyone involved and by the power of collective learning we have built capacity within our teams. The program is a good mixture of theory and practice and the instructors were very professional and structured. Everyone agrees that the education was outstanding and that we couldn't have invested our money in a better way”.*

*Anders Malmquist School  
Director.  
Malmö Elementary Schools*

**Omar Mekki** holds a master-degree (MPh) in education from Bath University, UK, and a professional teacher education and training from Bergen. He has worked as teacher and school principal for many years. He is also known from 10 years as senior advisor in IMTEC with a special responsibility for a range of international programs for system leaders, school principals and middle leaders. For a period of 10 years he worked as head of learning activities in the national school principal training program at Oslo Metropolitan University. His current work at Mekki Education AS encompasses a range of areas of professional consultancy and design of training programs for Norwegian school owners.



*Omar Mekki*

**Professor Jan Merok Paulsen** has been a central person in the design of the program, and he will participate with his expertise throughout the sessions. He has published a range of international scientific articles on school governance and superintendent leadership in the Nordic context, school leadership and team leadership. His work experiences span over municipal school administration, teaching and business management. His current book, “Strategic school leadership” analyzes both system level leadership and school leadership from the principal’s office as well as from the middle line.



*Jan Merok Paulsen*



**Eli Gundersen** is currently working as independent consultant and advisor in leadership and school development commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training (UDIR), in order to provide municipalities with expertise in these areas. She holds a master-degree in pedagogy from the University of Oslo alongside professional teacher education and training. Eli Gundersen has worked a school superintendent in respectively Sandnes and Stavanger for a long period. She was also a committee member in “Ludvigsen-utvalget”, who delivered a White paper that is playing a central role in the current curriculum reform in Norway.



*Eli Gundersen*

## **5. Academic key-players teamed up with ISL**

A team of well-known and well-cited academic professionals has worked closely with ISL in developing the program for system leaders: Michael Fullan, Kenneth Leithwood, Andy Hargreaves, Avis Glaze and Lynn Sharratt. Their work are known from a range of research articles, books and keynote performances in Norway, as well as internationally.



*Photo: Adapted from ISL source*

## 6. Module descriptions

### Module 1: Leadership for System Improvement

- understand effective school-level leadership
- examine practices of an effective school leader in 21st century teaching and learning, using current international school leadership frameworks and research
- explore the roles in terms of processes, providing and aligning resources, developing leadership capacity and ensuring productive relationships by reflecting on the discussed literature and shared frameworks

### Module 2: Effective School Systems

- review frameworks for the analysis and support of schools
- consider the potential impact of PISA results and probe levers for change
- collectively apply new knowledge to develop a draft system effectiveness framework

### Module 3: Capacity Building Practices

- explore in-depth the concepts of emotional and cultural intelligence
- understand the importance of building relational trust, a collaborative culture and collective efficacy
- probe how to improve challenging conversations
- explore collaborative inquiry, mentoring programs, system development plans, school and principal supervision, school visits and strategies to increase system-level collaboration
- collectively apply this new knowledge to an analysis of current system-level practices

### Module 4: Data Use and Planning Practices

- understand what makes effective school-level practices
- discuss characteristics of collaborative school cultures
- understand the importance of collecting and analyzing a wide variety of student achievement data
- , examine data collection systems, components of and processes for creating system plans, implementation rubrics and the role of collaborative inquiry
- collectively apply this additional new knowledge to analysis of the current systemlevel practices.

### Module 5: Instructional Practices

- understand conditions for learning, universal design for learning, tiered interventions, differentiated instruction, assessment and high-yield strategies
- identify the role of professional learning, collaborative inquiry and the value of learning walks
- discuss system-level practices to ensure a strong instructional program
- explore how to monitor the quality of teaching through classroom and school walk throughs, including challenging conversations and probing the strong connection between school improvement plans, system plans and budget
- distinguish between professional development and learning
- collectively apply their new knowledge to analysis of the current system-level practices.

## **Module 6: Collaborative Development Plan for System Leaders**

- develop a tailored plan for developing your Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and addressing improvement practices for leadership teams at all levels throughout your system
- develop a collaborative inquiry and development plan for system leaders in your jurisdiction by addressing a series of unique questions actively apply the new knowledge acquired during the program to your plan

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