

Preface

How school improvement comes about in local schools is a strong interest among the authors of this book. What the local drivers for improvement capacity are, and how we can understand them, are the questions we investigate in this book. Studying political school reform and how initiatives are applied in local schools, we have taken the standpoint that knowledge about local schools and how school leaders and teachers think about their improvement capacity is essential. In this book, we identify six types of school organisations shaped by different sense-making processes. We have come to understand the development of improvement capacity as being tightly coupled to what school leaders and teachers in local schools believe drive improvement, and to how this belief makes sense in their local school history and in their identities as teachers and school leaders.

The data come from an evaluation of a state-financed school improvement programme in Norway called ‘The Knowledge Promotion Reform—From Word to Deed’. The evaluation was carried out in 2006–2010 and was based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

This study is intended for researchers, graduate students, school leaders and teacher leaders. As we aim at both research and practice we have included theory and methodology, but also quite detailed descriptions of the schools illustrating each of the six types. We hope these will be recognisable for practitioners and thus inspire them to initiate improvements in their own schools.

We are very grateful to the schools in Norway and to the teachers, school leaders and students who willingly and carefully engaged in our interviews. We would also like to direct our thanks to the experts who have read the manuscript for this book and have suggested improvements. These have been very helpful in making our intentions and reasoning clearer.

Gothenburg, September 2014
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Local Drivers for Improvement Capacity

Six Types of School Organisations

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2015, VIII, 74 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-12723-1