

## **Municipal science consultants participation in scaffolding professional development in a TPD project**

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The Danish QUEST project - inspired by SINUS (Ostermeier, Prenzel and Duit, 2010) - is a large-scale (4 municipalities, 35 schools, 400 teachers), long-term (2012-2015) TPD project designed with reference to the effective criteria's presented by Guskey (2003) and organized following principles of teachers' situated learning in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006) and Network Learning Communities (Jackson & Temperly, 2007). A key actor in facilitating QUEST activities at the network level is the municipal science consultant. The research focuses particularly on the municipal science consultants' participation in developing and maintaining network activities and connections amongst the teachers. The research question is: What characterizes a municipal science consultants' successful participation in network formation?

Municipal consultants engagement in scaffolding was studied in four municipalities.

These four cases illustrates that municipal networks as a tool for TPD is a systemic process where many different actors, intentions and experts meet with the aim to improve pupils condition for learning. The consultants' reflections on how to overcome the crucial events that might hamper the network formation indicate that they depend on support from the municipal school administration and principals from the participating schools. The most stable case in successful network formation is Ho. In this case the municipality had a strong collaboration with a school principal and the director of the municipal school administration. This collaboration ensured that strategic decisions were anchored and communicated to all levels within the municipal school system. External support from QUEST to network activities was also a factor that supported stable network formation (Jackson & Temperley, 2007).

The consultants reflections indicate that their participation in successful network formation is characterized by four common factors: 1) personal stable contacts within the science teacher community in the municipality, 2) availability of municipal resources to support network activities, 3) participation in strategic planning of municipal network support, and 4) facilitation of the development of new teaching activities within schools or in collaboration between schools. These four distinctive features of municipal science consultants' participation in supporting network activities enable the participants to share and develop teaching activities in the network and in their own PLC's.