Occupational Burnout

*An Organizational Challenge & Managerial Responsibility*

A qualitative study on leadership and managerial factors’ impact on burnout.

Case study conducted on four compulsory schools in Sweden.

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“While driving my car on my way home from work, I suddenly didn't know where I was, or were I was going. Followed by extreme feelings of dizziness, excessive pressure on my chest and raised heart pounds. I was forced to stop and call for help. My daughter picked me up, and later called the ambulance due to the heart issues, -I’d just experienced a panic attack.”

-Special educator, 2019.
(Diagnosed with ED 3 years ago. Still on sick-leave with remaining physical dysfunctions).

“I did not see it coming, in retrospect I can understand it did; with the excessive workload, stress levels and demanding overtime hours, leading up to the onset...
- I just never thought it was going to happen to me.”

-Educational Administrator, 2019.
(Experienced burnout. On sick leave 1,5 years absent from work. Still sensitive to stress and loud noises).

“I remember I was sitting in the teachers common room, watching the clock on the wall. I was supposed to head to my lecture in five minutes, 45 minutes went past. I just couldn't manage myself to stand up and get there. My principal noticed me and sent me home, - I was home for 1 year.”

-Teacher, 2019.
(Diagnosed with ED, still on antidepressant medication).
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Abstract

Background
Occupational Burnout is one of the greatest challenges affecting the labour markets today. It is mainly caused by prolonged stress exposure due to the psychosocial work environment and is nowadays the fastest growing cause of long-term sick leave in Sweden. It therefore affects both the society, organisation and individual. It is thus of great managerial concern to manage and structure the organisations in a sustainable way that maximises the use of human resources, rather than burning them out.

Purpose
The aim of the thesis is to investigate the high level of sick-leave or burnout due to organisational and managerial factors in the Swedish educational sector, by focusing on the role leadership, organisational and psychosocial work environment plays in preventing/causing employees’ burnout. The authors attempt to contribute knowledge on why theory may not match reality in this case.

Methods
In this qualitative study principals, administrators, and teachers of four public compulsory schools in Jönköping and Öckerö are interviewed. Using semi-structured interviews, data is gathered, coded and analysed in relation to modern research literature on the topic of burnout as well as Swedish Work Environment Authority guidelines, to spot key elements of positive and negative factors which have affected the stress situations of the schools’ employees. Several factors from organizational and leadership perspective are examined to assist organizations to avoid or prevent burnout.

Results
Prevalence of high burnout rates in schools in the cases studied, was associated with recent large reorganization of employees and administration; weak and inefficient leadership which did not strive to build relationships and open communication with teachers; low integration between sectors and working groups; lack of support and monitoring of stressed employees; low ability of employees to contribute to their workplace environments; the shortage of budgets issued by municipality.

Conclusions
1. The reason sick leave related to stress and burnout is high in the case study, is that implementation of research and policy guidelines is lacking behind in schools which suffer from employee stress related issues. As well as the current management model of the public sector may not benefit to prevent employee burnout.

2. It is possible to avoid employee burnout through adjusting the management and organizational structure, as adaptations toward dealing with employees’ stress showing a positive sign on preventing the development of burnout.
Table of Content

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 7
   1.1 Background ......................................................................................................................................... 7
       1.1.1 Occupational Stress – A Contemporary Health Concern ......................................................... 7
       1.1.2 Swedish Regulations .................................................................................................................. 8
       1.1.3 Swedish Public Sector Management .......................................................................................... 8
   1.2 Problem ................................................................................................................................................ 9
   1.3 Purpose ............................................................................................................................................... 10
   1.4 Delimitation ...................................................................................................................................... 10

2. Literature Review .................................................................................................................................... 12
   2.1 The Concept of Burnout .................................................................................................................... 12
       2.1.1 How Research Literature Defines Burnout ................................................................................. 12
       2.1.2 Clinical Diagnosis in Sweden - Exhaustion Disorder ............................................................... 12
       2.1.3 Various Conceptual Models of Burnout .................................................................................... 13
           2.1.3.1 Maslach Burnout Inventory - MBI ...................................................................................... 13
           2.1.3.2 Various Conceptual Models - Based on Imbalances ............................................................ 13
       2.1.4 Causes of Burnout ...................................................................................................................... 14
   2.2 Work Environment Related to Burnout ............................................................................................. 14
       2.2.1 Person-Environment Fit Model .................................................................................................. 14
           2.2.1.1 Person-Organization Fit Model ........................................................................................... 14
           2.2.1.2 Person-Job Fit Model ............................................................................................................ 15
       2.2.2 Healthy Work Environment ....................................................................................................... 15
   2.3 Organizational Factors ...................................................................................................................... 16
   2.4 The Leadership's Impact on Burnout .................................................................................................. 17
       2.4.1 Leadership Behaviours .............................................................................................................. 17
       2.4.2 Ethical Leadership ..................................................................................................................... 18
       2.4.3 Leadership - Trust and Fairness ................................................................................................. 18
       2.4.4 Employee Empowerment .......................................................................................................... 18
       2.4.5 Interrelatedness of Leadership Constructs, .............................................................................. 18
       2.4.6 Early Prevention - Leadership Strategy ...................................................................................... 19
   2.5 Summary of the Reviewed Literature ................................................................................................ 19

3. Methodology & Method .......................................................................................................................... 20
   3.1 Methodology ....................................................................................................................................... 20
       3.1.1 Research Approach .................................................................................................................... 20
       3.1.2 Research Philosophy ................................................................................................................ 20
       3.1.3 Research Strategy ...................................................................................................................... 20
   3.2 Method ............................................................................................................................................... 21
       3.2.1 Data Collection .......................................................................................................................... 21
           3.2.1.1 Secondary Data .................................................................................................................... 21
           3.2.1.2 Primary Data ....................................................................................................................... 21
       3.2.2 Population and Sampling .......................................................................................................... 22
       3.2.3 Procedure of Interviews ........................................................................................................... 23
       3.2.4 The Background of Cases and Participants .............................................................................. 23
           3.2.4.1 School A ............................................................................................................................... 23
           3.2.4.2 School B ............................................................................................................................... 23
           3.2.4.3 School C ............................................................................................................................... 23
           3.2.4.4 School D ............................................................................................................................... 23
3.2.5 Data Quality .................................................................................................................. 24
3.2.5.1 Reliability .................................................................................................................. 24
3.2.5.2 Validity ....................................................................................................................... 25
3.2.5.3 Ethical Issues ............................................................................................................. 25
3.2.6 Data Analysis ................................................................................................................ 25

4. Empirical Findings ............................................................................................................. 26
4.1. Case School A .................................................................................................................. 26
4.2. Case School B .................................................................................................................. 27
4.3. Case School C .................................................................................................................. 28
4.4. Case School D .................................................................................................................. 30

5. Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 33
5.1 Cross-Case Analysis ......................................................................................................... 35
5.1.1 Physical Work Environmental Factors ......................................................................... 36
5.1.1.1 Insufficient Resources / Excessive Demands ......................................................... 36
5.1.2 Social Work Environmental Factors ............................................................................ 36
5.1.2.1 Communication & Integration ............................................................................... 36
5.1.2.2 Social Climate ......................................................................................................... 37
5.1.3 Organizational Structural and Managerial Factors ....................................................... 38
5.1.3.1 Leadership Impacts ................................................................................................ 38
5.1.3.1.1 Ethical Leadership .............................................................................................. 38
5.1.3.1.2 Recognition / Reward / Trust ............................................................................ 39
5.1.3.1.3 Empowerment ................................................................................................... 39
5.1.3.2 Control ..................................................................................................................... 40
5.1.3.3 Centralisation ........................................................................................................... 40
5.1.3.4 Formalization .......................................................................................................... 40
5.1.3.5 Public School Sector - Managerial Structural Impacts ............................................ 41
5.1.4 Preventive Measures .................................................................................................... 43

6. Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 44
RQ 1: .................................................................................................................................... 44
RQ 2: .................................................................................................................................... 45

7. Discussion .......................................................................................................................... 46
7.1 Implications of the Thesis ............................................................................................... 46
7.2 Limitations ....................................................................................................................... 46
7.3 Suggested Future Research ............................................................................................. 47
1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the reader to the topic of burnout in Sweden, as well as present background on the current situation and authority provisions meant to combat the issue. Followingly, problem, research purpose and questions are discussed. Lastly providing the delimitation of this study.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Occupational Stress – A Contemporary Health Concern
Stress-related mental illness is often caused by the psychosocial work environment and it is nowadays the fastest growing cause of long-term sick leave in Sweden. Further, the Swedish Work Environment Authority, has pointed out psychosocial work environment risks, as one of the greatest future challenges in working life (2018). The increasingly common diagnosis Exhaustion Disorder (internationally referred to as Burnout) is a condition triggered by prolonged stressors, often exposed to at work (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2019). This represents an important and highly relevant managerial issue in understanding employee retention and well-being in organisations nowadays.

Therefore, occupational burnout in Sweden is of both great societal and organisational structural concern, considering that the total yearly costs for sick-leave social insurance in Sweden amounts to 81 billion SEK for the government, and 18,5 billion for the employers (Pbm, 2018). Sick-leave due to stress related illness stands for approximately 40% of this cost, that is roughly 32,4 billion SEK (Pbm, 2018). For a comparison, we can consider that psychological illness related sick-leave was reported to cost the German economy translated to roughly 807 billion SEK in 2016 (Deutschewelle, 2018), 16% of that caused by stress related illness (Deutschewelle, 2016), which is roughly 129 billion SEK. Considering that Sweden has a population of about 10 million, and Germany’s population is over 80 million, it shows how costly these issues are for the Swedish economy. These significant financial costs and losses in productivity inhibit the growth of businesses, as well as contribute to large numbers of people out of work.

More specifically, the increase of 57000 cases of sickness due to psychological disorders in Sweden, or 59% between the years of 2010 and 2015. With 66% of those numbers being due to stress reactions and adjustment disorders, points to significant issues in psychosocial work environments (Försäkringskassan, 2016). Highlighting the managerial factors that must be faced to create and maintain an optimal and sustainable workplace.

Furthermore, despite research showing that burnout primarily is a matter of how the work is organized, it is often targeted as a personal matter (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2018). And despite research directing the importance of preventive measures in order to reduce the development
of burnout, the main focus within public organisations has been on rehabilitative activities (Liff & Wikström, 2018). Along with that there today are no “official” models and processes that target prevention and promotion at an “organisational level” (vgregion.se, 2019). Thus, a shift in perspective is needed in order to combat the current statistics of sick-leave among the labour market. Although the Swedish Government highlights the organisational perspective, through their recently added “Organisational and Social Work Environment Provision” (AFS 2015: 4), with the aim to prevent occupational illness and create a healthy sustainable work environment (Swedish Work Environment Authority (2015)).

1.1.2 Swedish Regulations

The “Swedish Work Environment Act” (1977:1160) additionally states that the employer have ultimate responsibility to ensure that no one gets sick due to their work-situation (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2019). Further stating that the employer must take all necessary measures to prevent ill-health and accidents, such as provide requirements and resources in balance. Thus, the employer is obliged to provide a “Systematic Work Environment Management” (The Swedish Work Environment Authority, 2001).

Which should include these four steps:
1. Examine the work environment
2. Assess risks
3. Fix the risks, write an action plan
4. Check that the actions have worked (Liff & Wikström, 2018).

Furthermore, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SSIA) are offering a “Workplace-Oriented Rehabilitation Grant” since 2018, in order to implement these measures and act preventable (Försäkringskassan, 2018). However, many employers miss to apply for this, and the SSIA confirms that the support is not utilised to its full potential (Employee at SSIA, phone interview, 2019-03-20). However, current situation is that nine out of ten Swedish schools have reported shortcomings when it comes to their preventive work environment management (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2017). Simultaneously, in Sweden the educational sector is overrepresented when it comes to stress-related sick-leave (Försäkringskassan, 2017). So is the public sector, compared to the private (Försäkringskassan, 2018).

Therefore, this study will focus on the public-school sector in Sweden. Further insights on the managerial aspect of the public-school system is thus of relevance.

1.1.3 Swedish Public Sector Management

The Swedish management model “New Public Management” (NPM), of the public sector has gained increased attention in media and among researchers recently. It was introduced to the public sector, in connection with the economic crisis in 1990th, as an attempt to cost-effective public activities. This by implementing a system that mimic management of the private sector. It aims to streamline and decentralize organizations by creating administrative routines based on centralized directives (Gillberg, 2018). Resulting in massive delegation, and that the
schools shifted to be run by the Municipalities. Meaning that the politicians make decisions and the Principal, in the school context, is responsible to execute those decisions. A so-called “Ordering-Supplier Model” is commonly mentioned (Gillberg, 2018). The NPM system involves performance-based management, tougher control and increased administration, operating with emphasis on cost control, enhanced efficiency and competition (Gillberg, 2018).

However, it has been debated and criticised if this management system and effects of competition benefits the purpose of the public sector and the Swedish welfare (Hartman, 2011). Due to a study by SNS, a politically independent non-profit association conducting reports on current social/societal research that is translated into concrete advice for leading decision makers in politics and business, there are “no significant evidence for this model to have implicated any aggregated benefits in forms of reduced public costs or greater quality or value for money, that was the original objective behind its implementation over 25 years ago” (Hartman, 2011). Although, the government are currently working on a project that aims to develop the forms of government governance, by balancing the need for control with confidence in the employees' business-related knowledge and experience, through their so-called “Trust Reform”. A project that will be presented in oct 2019 (tillitsdelegationen.se, 2019). With this in mind, it is clear that it is of great societal importance to study this area and contribute to research which could help managers gain knowledge on how to tackle the issues that cause stress related illnesses.

1.2 Problem

The previous researches have empathized on identifying the causes of workplace sick-leave or burnout which commonly categorized as the high demands of work (Fagerlind, Ståhl, Stål & Smith, 2018), low job control and low social support in workplace (Aguir, Baena & Hoyos, 2006; Costa, Hyeda & Maluf, 2016), and mismatching between individual capacity and working environment factors (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Phyältö, Pietarinen & Salmela-Aro, 2011). Furthermore, the past researches have focused towards the managerial aspect, where positive organizational climate and leadership responsibility have been pointed out to contribute on preventing employees’ burnout (Bilal & Ahmed, 2016; Lambert, Hogan, Barton, & Jiang, 2012).

Moreover, different approaches such as proactive, interventive and coping strategies suggested to work on preventing employees’ burnout from both organizational and individual perspectives have been studied (Maslach, Leiter & Jackson, 2011; Dunn, Iglewicz & Moutier, 2008). In addition, as aforementioned in the background, Swedish authorities provided specific regulations for organizations to create a healthy working environment to enhance employees’ well-being. However, despite sufficient researches and reports on avoiding staff’s burnout, statistics show that the level of sick-leave or employee burnout are increasing, so also in the Swedish school sector (Skolvarlden, 2019).
Therefore, the lack of convergence between the theoretical knowledge and practical implementations drive us to develop further insights from specifically organizational structure and leadership role on shaping healthy working environments, so as to avoid workplace sick-leave or burnout. Furthermore, the strong literature background of the topic provides a solid research foundation for this study, enabling us to combine concepts from existing research with new practical knowledge relevant for the business management workforce.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the high level of sick-leave or burnout due to managerial factors of organizations in the Swedish educational sector. By focusing on the role organisational and psychosocial work environment plays in preventing employees’ sick-leave or burnout, the authors attempt to contribute knowledge on why theory may not match reality in this case. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to provide plausible answers to the following questions:

**RQ 1:** “Why is burnout so high among employees in the Swedish public-school sector, despite existing research and work environmental regulations?”

**RQ 2:** “Is it possible to prevent burnout through adopting managerial measures and organisational structural adjustments?”

1.4 Delimitation
The scope of the study is limited to managerial and organizational factors, that may impact the development of employee burnout. The case selection of this study is restricted to target the educational sector of Swedish compulsory schools. Thus, empirical study is conducted on interviews based on four public schools within two different municipalities in Sweden.

1.5 Definitions
*Note: This glossary attempt to define terms and phrases as they are used in this thesis and should not be considered universally accepted definition.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ICD-10) International Classification of Diseases</th>
<th>The international diagnostics classification system, provided by the <em>World Health Organisation</em> (Socialstyrelsen.se, 2019).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(DSM-5) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</td>
<td>The American classification system of mental and behavioural disorders provided by <em>The American Psychiatric Association</em> (Psychiatry, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>note:</strong></td>
<td>The DSM-system include a transcription table which indicates the closest corresponding ICD diagnosis for each DSM diagnose. The two systems diverge in perception and classification of burnout (Socialstyrelsen.se, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Burnout</strong></td>
<td>An unclearly defined term since not a classified diagnosis. Internationally the most commonly used term when referring to occupational stress. It generally refers to a condition signified by 3 key dimensions; overwhelming exhaustion (wearing out, loss of energy, depletion, debilitation and fatigue), feelings of cynicism (detachment from the job, irritability, loss of idealism) and a sense of ineffectiveness (reduced personal accomplishment, productivity, capability, low moral and inability to cope) according to Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach &amp; Leiter, 2016).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exhaustion Disorder (ED)</strong></td>
<td>Swedish Clinical term for the general precepted condition of Burnout, with the ICD-10 code F43.8. The diagnostic criteria involves a minimum of 6 months exposure to one or more identified stressors, with physical and psychological symptoms experienced during at least 2 weeks time. (Icd.internetmedicin.se, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>note:</strong></td>
<td>Out of convenience Burnout will be used in this thesis, referring to the diagnostic criteria of Exhaustion Disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stress</strong></td>
<td><em>(Referring to negative stress in this thesis)</em> A physiological response/reaction to an imbalance between the pressure/demand one is exposed to, and the resources/knowledge one has to handle it. A subjective feeling that challenge one's ability to cope (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Environment Agent Swedish “Skyddsombud”</strong></td>
<td>Representative of employees in a workplace, tasked with monitoring and reporting on the workplace environment and employer’s actions towards a healthy work environment (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SSIA) Swedish “Försäkringskassan”</strong></td>
<td>Swedish Government agency that administrers social insurance (Regeringskansliet, 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compulsory School levels in Sweden Swedish “Förskoleklass, Lägstaadie, Mellanstadie &amp; Högstadie”</strong></td>
<td>Swedish compulsory schooling consists of four stages: Preschool year (age 6), Lower stage (grade 1-3, age 7-9), Middle stage (grade 4-6, age 10-12) and Upper stage (grade 7-9, age 13–15) (Skolverket, 2019).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Literature Review

This chapter examines existing research related to the burnout topic. Firstly, presenting the concept of burnout, then its relation to work environmental-, organizational and leadership factors. Finally, discussing the main findings of the existing research.

2.1 The Concept of Burnout
2.1.1 How Research Literature Defines Burnout

There are various terms conceptually related, used synonymously to describe work-related illness caused by prolonged stress exposure (Besère et al., 2013; Adamsson & Bernhardsson, 2018). Although “Burnout” is the most widely used and internationally recognized term (with exception to Sweden, that refers to “Exhaustion Disorder”). However, despite being an unspecified term, burnout is one of the most widely discussed mental health problems in today’s society. Yet, not officially recognized as a mental disorder in most countries (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017).

According to the latest revision of the International Classification of diseases (ICD-10), burnout syndrome does not classify as an individual diagnosis. It is instead listed as an additional diagnosis under chapter XXI that refers to “problems related to life-management difficulty” as a state of vital exhaustion. Also, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) of the 2013 update to the American Psychiatric Association does not either include burnout syndrome. In many cases it is seen as a state of emotional and physical exhaustion that to a great extent overlaps with depression (Lastovkova, Carder, Rasmussen et al., 2017). Although, burnout is described to be job-related and situation-specific, as opposed to depression which is more general and context free (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Basically, “burnout is the body's response to the failure of the coping strategies that individuals typically utilised to manage stressors at work” (Montero-Marín & García-Campayo, 2010; Österberg, Persson, Viborg et al., 2016).

Yet only established as a medical diagnosis in very few countries, such as the Netherlands and Sweden (Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This lack of an official diagnosis reduces chances for appropriate treatment, disability coverage and workplace adaptations. It may result in faulty diagnostics, which may have negative effect on treatment, recovery and ability to return to work (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

2.1.2 Clinical Diagnosis in Sweden - Exhaustion Disorder

Due to the increased number of mental health problems among the Swedish working population in the 1990th, the need for a diagnostic criterion emerged. Thus, Exhaustion
Disorder (ED) was accepted as a clinical diagnosis in Sweden in 2005, in order to enable appropriate treatment, and to separate it from the seemingly similar condition depression (Österberg et al., 2016).

The characterized symptoms of ED are prolonged fatigue, sleep disorder, cognitive problems and an increased sensitivity to further stress, which may lead to anxiety reactions, long term disability and depressive symptoms (Besèr et al., 2013). Many ED patients fulfil the diagnostic criteria for depression at some stage of their illness, but the depressive state is often temporary while the core symptoms of ED (exhaustion, cognitive problems, sleep disturbance) remain (Besèr et al., 2013). Beyond exhaustion, ED entails a reduced activity level, an increased need for recovery and diverse symptoms (e.g., pain, impaired memory, insomnia) that cause distress in social and/or work life (Österberg et al., 2016). This not only implicates negative effects on the individual employee, but also affects the organisation as whole through lowered productivity and work performance (Adamsson & Bernhardsson, 2018).

2.1.3 Various Conceptual Models of Burnout

2.1.3.1 Maslach Burnout Inventory - MBI
In 1976, Maslach developed the “MBI Model”, including the three dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy, and is the most commonly used measure of burnout and applies to most studies on the subject (Seidler, Thinschmidt, Deckert et al., 2014; Heinemann & Heinemann, 2017). The implication of this three-dimensional model is that it explicitly places the individual stress experience in a social context and involves people's concepts of self and others (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

2.1.3.2 Various Conceptual Models - Based on Imbalances
Various models have been developed to current state, dwelling on various factors and aspects of the condition. Given the different focus and definitions of burnout in the various models, the comparability of the results is rather limited (Seidler et al., 2014). The newest burnout models are based on theories about occupational stress, and the concept of imbalances leading to strain. The “Job Demands-Resources Model” (JD-R) is based on the perception that burnout occurs when individuals experience constant work demands without sufficient resources to address or reduce those demands (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Similarly, the two most influential occupational health theories on how psychosocial stress contributes to mental health problems, the “Demand-Control-Support Model” and the “Effort-Reward-Imbalance Model” (Hasselberg, Jonsdottir, Ellbin, & Skagert, 2014). Which explains a work condition with high demands and low control/decision freedom, to be the most strained and at the highest risk of developing stress related disorders. The same risks and imbalance occur when the reward does not match the effort (Lastovkova et al., 2017).
2.1.4 Causes of Burnout
At a general level, psychological disorders are characterized by multifactorial origins, of which genetic as well as environmental factors play significant roles. In this context, it is increasingly recognized that psychosocial working conditions are important determinants of mental health and development of burnout (Seidler et al., 2014). It is likely that a combination and interaction of work-related, environmental and personal factors may lead to intensified symptoms (Adamsson & Bernhardsson, 2018). As a result of a study conducted by Hasselberg et al., (2014), it seemed clear that stress-related exhaustion can be experienced exclusively due to stress exposure at work, but rarely appeared to be a consequence of only non-work-related stress.

2.2 Work Environment Related to Burnout
As previously mentioned, it was evident that work related factors play a significant role in the development of burnout. This can be explained further by Professors Aguir, Baena and Hoyos (2006), who have conducted research based on the demand-control model, where they suggested that excessively high work demand and low control or low social support in organizations increased the risk of leading to psychological illness and the development of burnout. The result was coherent with other researchers conducted by different methods, such that Costa, Hyeda and Maluf (2016) emphasized the role of social support in the organization influencing the level of burnout by adopting MBI theory, in aid of assessing burnout development.

2.2.1 Person-Environment Fit Model
Moreover, multidimensional researches have contributed to a more comprehensive image of burnout generated by the work environment. Researchers involve personal factors into external workplace where a person-environment fit theory has been examined. It was identified as the degree of match between individual factors and environment characteristics which could possibly be utilized to analyse individual job satisfaction and several possible negative outcomes such as low retention rate and high burnout rate (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007; Tong, Wang & Peng, 2015). Under this concept, more specific components have been identified as person-job, person-organization and person-group fit respectively to investigate whether individuals can fit in the work environment (Kristof, 1996; Maslach, Leiter, Wilmar & Schaufeli, 2001; Kristof, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005).

2.2.1.1 Person-Organization Fit Model
The one most related to burnout is the person-organization fit theory, which refer to the shared characteristics within individual and organizational factors, with the aim to reach to an optimal matchiness and minimal burnout level (Kristof, 1996; Tong et al., 2015). For instance, researchers Pithers and Soden (1999) investigated that the causal relation between person-organization misfit and teachers’ stress which showed a meaningful finding of a high incongruence between person and workplace resulting in both physical (e.g. headache) and psychological syndrome (e.g. anxiety). A similar research done by Phylätö, Pietarinen and Salmela (2011), examined the association between teachers and social interaction in work
environment based on person-organization fit model. The results show that teachers’ burnout was embodied in several interaction with the environment. Mostly connected to psychosocial factors such as a toxic atmosphere, conflicts within the group and leaders insufficient in sensing employees’ stress were somethings found out as serious triggers to cause burnout among teachers. Moreover, from the employee’s retention perspective, Westerman and Yamamura (2007) argued that an unhealthy workplace where it consists of the uncoordinated value, goal and preferences shared between employees and organization had a tendency to experience low employees’ retention and low job satisfaction carried by staff psychological barriers.

2.2.1.2 Person-Job Fit Model
Moreover, Maslach et al., (2001) tailored specific job demands into several characters with the aim to understand the fitness between personal capabilities and job requirements in the person-job fit model. It showed that the greater the incongruence between person and job, the greater burnout would be displayed among employees. Furthermore, Maslach and Leiter (2008) examined this topic in a multidimensional level, they found out that workplace mismatches as the central reason of causing workers’ burnout, and fairness hold by leaders plays a unique, essential and fundamental role in defining a work environment as a good or bad place for employees to stay. A similar result received in Rupert, Miller and Dorociak (2015) research which suggested that it is better-off for organization and employees to understand individual strengths and to adjust work demands to maximize the match with them and avoid personal frangibility. As well as studied by Hasselberg et al. (2014), it seemed to be of importance to address demands at work in a preventive way and with interventions aimed at reducing stress-related mental illness, as it was presented as the most commonly reported stressor. Therefore, the congruence between complex contexts of either organization practices or job demand and employee competence plays a profound role in creating a psychologically healthy work environment, in terms of fostering employee well-being and mitigating their risks of developing burnout (Grawitch, Gottschalk & Munz, 2006)

2.2.2 Healthy Work Environment
The advantages of a healthy work environment can be found out from mainly two critical aspects. Firstly, in regard to business financial benefits. A healthy workplace could save significant amount of costs carried by employee’s absence of work due to burnout. Especially, as aforementioned in the background, the high costs shown in statistics approved that a poor and stressful work environment has a higher tendency to lead to staff sick-leave. On the other hand, considering the social compatibility, a workplace where it can achieve employees’ retention and promote individual development is regarded to utilize human assets to maximum level in the society (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

It is important to understand the features a healthy work environment possesses. Grawith et al. (2006) suggested to clarify organization effectiveness and to achieve employee well-being by adopting a healthy workplace practice which included five components: work-life balance, employee growth and development, health and safety, recognition, and employee
involvement. What has been found out meaningful for preventing employee burnout from organization perspective was recognition referring to reward employees for their contributions as well as mentioned in Maslach work-life theory that sufficient reward can reduce the chance of staff suffering burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001). Moreover, Phyältö, Pietarinen, Soini and Salmela (2013) proposed the similar result that positive professional recognition can reduce employee burnout to some extent. Furthermore, skilful communication as a necessary function throughout the organization should integrate into this picture, which aims to connect different departments within organization and deliver job clarity to employees, thus to decrease stress (Lambert, Hogan & Jiang, 2010) and enhance mental and physical health in the workplace (Grawith et al., 2006).

2.3 Organizational Factors
Research on organizational factors in relation to burnout prevention has derived certain structural constructs in organizations which may be beneficial in lowering rates of stress-related illness. These constructs are integration, instrumental communication, centralization, formalization, and promotional opportunity (Bilal & Ahmed, 2016). Vallen (1993) conducted research which showed a strong negative correlation between organizational climate such as level of authoritarian leadership, openness in communication, supportive management and employee practices, and levels of burnout. Organizations with more participative and group-centered working climates displayed lower rates of burnout amongst employees (Vallen, 1993). It can be concluded that there is a general research consensus that an organization with a flat and open structure, where power is spread out, enabling employees to voice their opinions and participate in decision making is positive for the emotional well-being of the employees (Vallen, 1993; Bilal & Ahmed, 2016; Lambert, Paoline & Hogan, 2006). A centralized business structure hinders communication from the employees, the top-down approaches minimize employee ability to affect decision making and that leads to negative stress responses due to employees not feeling valuable and powerless (Bilal & Ahmed, 2016).

Multiple researchers have concluded the importance of development opportunities and career progress for the employees within an organization as an important structural element which lowers burnout risk (Bilal & Ahmed, 2016; Willard-Grace et al., 2014). It is hypothesized that an organization that is structured towards employee career development increases employee feelings of productivity, as well as reducing feelings of helplessness (Willard-Grace et al., 2014). Others such as Brown and Roloff (2015), state the promotional opportunities and beneficial career prospects are not necessary in themselves, and may be replaced by emotional support alone.

An organizational structure that enables close integration amongst employees has a positive effect on burnout rates (Bilal & Ahmed, 2016). Integration refers to the extent social relationships binds persons or groups to others such that they are exposed to the demands of the group (Bearman, 1991). This has the benefit of potentially creating an organizational support system for workers. There is not a consensus on how great of a role integration plays in burnout, with Bilal and Ahmed (2016), and Lambert et al. (2006) finding that it does not
play a key role. They hold the belief that an integrated organizational structure with strong
group cohesion does not necessarily mean co-workers support each other and requires a high
level of trust amongst employees. Most other researchers highlight the value of social support
as one of the key benefits of integration and an important factor for reducing burnout (Cordes 

Gillespie and Numerof (1991) stated that higher degree of formalization has a significant
positive effect on avoiding employee burnout. Further supported by Lambert, Hogan and
Jiang (2010) who researched job-satisfaction and job-commitment for correctional staff. This
view is not shared by Bilal and Ahmed (2016), who did not find a correlation between
burnout and organizational formalization. Formalization in this case refers to the extent to
which work roles are structured in an organization, and the activities of employees are
governed by rules and procedures. Opposite of this are loosely based work roles which often
shift procedures or are not formally and strictly decided.

Formalization is theorized to reduce role ambiguity, role conflict, and promote more efficient
communication processes in large bureaucratic organizations (Lambert et al., 2010), those all
being factors which improve employee well-being. Lambert et al. (2010) explain the
seemingly competing concepts of having decentralization as well as formalization under the
same organizational structure by stating “rules define boundaries so that decisions can be
made at a lower level without loss of control”. This refers to the formalization as a general
framework which employees work by, but which opens for the company to be less centralized
in terms of employee power. This does remain a subject requiring further studies as in
Lambert et al. (2010) research decentralized organization and formalization are negatively
correlated, meaning employees wanted both formalization and decentralization, while other
research has pointed towards those two factors being positively correlated (Pugh, Hickson,
Hinings & Turner, 1968).

Furthermore, the Swedish public sector is also affected by policy changes and restructures due
to political elections each 4th year. With implications specifically on the educational sector is
the budget cuts experienced in recent years, that may have impacted the current high burnout
rate in within the sector (Adamsson & Bernhardsson, 2018).

2.4 The Leadership’s Impact on Burnout
2.4.1 Leadership Behaviours
Lee and Ashforth (1996) confirmed in their research that supervisor and co-worker support
are associated with lower rates of burnout. They also point out how high workload, low team
and peer cohesion correlates positively with higher burnout rates (Lambert, Hogan, Barton,
and Jiang, 2012; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). These are all factors closely related to management
roles, thus they highlight a large part of the leadership and organizational responsibility
brought up in literature. The current research literature strongly supports the idea of
leadership and managerial roles being important in reducing rates of burnout (Lambert et al.,
2.4.2 Ethical Leadership
Because studies have shown that employees may have greater job satisfaction and less work-related stress when they work under a manager who acts as a principal source of ethical guidance (Mo & Shi, 2015; Vullinghs, De Hoogh, Den Hartog & Boon, 2018). Ethical leadership is another important theme regarding leadership methods’ relations to burnout. Brown, Treviño & Harrison, (2005) presents ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making”. The specific leadership characteristics mentioned in literature being honesty in communication, fair treatment of employees, and influencing through motivating and stimulating tasks (Brown et al., 2005; Elçi, Şener, Aksoy & Alpkan, 2012; Mo & Shi, 2015; Vullinghs et al., 2018).

2.4.3 Leadership - Trust and Fairness
Fairness and trust are regarded as critical components to healthy organizations (Lowe, 2006). With those who showed higher trust in their managers reporting having healthier work environments. Lowe (2006) found that dispersing work requirements on a larger staff, improving physical workplace comfort, and allowing for more autonomy to employees to be the best advice towards handling work dissatisfaction. Maslach and Leiter (2008), and Wong and Cummins (2009), further highlighted leadership behaviours as a key component of building trust and fostering beneficial work outcomes for employees. They argue the leader has a responsibility of creating a culture of safety, which enables trust to be built between employees and leaders, which further enables communication and critique, which then can lead to improvements.

2.4.4 Employee Empowerment
Another key component in leadership behaviour to enhance employee well-being and stress handling is leader empowerment and autonomy of employees (Musallal, Othman & Al Hassan, 2017). In the study by Musallal et al. (2017) it was found that leader empowerment factors such as fostering participation in decision making, providing autonomy and freedom, enhancing the meaningfulness of work, and expressing confidence in employees’ abilities all had direct and indirect positive effects on employee work satisfaction and burnout. Conger and Kanungo (1988) describe how employee empowerment can decrease burnout rates through increased self-efficacy of employees, giving them more confidence through encouragement, positive feedback, and other forms of social persuasion. Increased self-efficacy is commonly accepted as a factor which reduces rates of workplace burnouts (Nowakowska, Rasińska & Głowacka, 2016; Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai & Yang, 2014).

2.4.5 Interrelatedness of Leadership Constructs
Researchers often point towards interrelatedness of the leadership constructs previously mentioned, as ethical leadership positively affects the trust, perceptions of fairness between leaders and employees (Vullinghs et al., 2018; Mo & Shi, 2015; Brown et al., 2005), and self-
efficacy through exemplary behaviour or positive reinforcements (Brown et al., 2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zheng, Witt, Waite et al, 2015). Literature thus clearly points towards a large overlap between multiple leadership constructs, which either have direct or indirect effect on each other, or similar employee or organizational factors.

2.4.6 Early Prevention - Leadership Strategy
Additionally, Lastovkova et al., (2017) highlighted the significance of early detection and introduction of preventive measures in the primary stages to avoid burnout. Clinical experience indicates that fairly simple and brief intervention techniques suffice to reverse the development toward burnout if such are applied in the early stages (Österberg et al., 2016; Hasselberg et al., 2014).

2.5 Summary of the Reviewed Literature
In conclusion, the organizational climate is one of the key factors causing burnout. Open communication decentralized organizational structures, close integrated employees and management, formal and specific work positions and practices, along with work-effort recognition are the main key elements of a healthy workplace. Furthermore, it is closely related to the leadership factors which are interconnected to the overall structure of an organization, as compliment the person-environment fit, effort-reward and demand-control models.

Leaders and managers have significant influence on how an organization is structured and how employees are motivated, supported, and guided forward. Current literature on leadership constructs to combat burnout point towards trust and fairness of leaders, their ability to promote self-efficacy and positive support for employees, as well as their model behaviour which may inspire others being related elements which reinforce each other and further combat burnout.

Additionally, a table presenting the key findings of the reviewed literature is available in appendix 1. With the organisational, structural and managerial factors that have possible impact on the development of burnout, thus conducting the theoretical framework for this research.
3. Methodology & Method

This section will explain the Methodology presenting the research approach, philosophy and strategy; followed by the Method discussing the process of data collection, clarifying secondary data and primary data. Furthermore, explaining the selection of sample, procedure and background of the interviews. Finally, data quality and data analysis are discussed.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research Approach
According to Collis and Hussey (2014) research designed as an empirical-test, based on a developed theoretical theory which refers to imply general concepts to particular cases, follow a deductive approach. Applied in this thesis, since it is built on existing theories on the topic. As the main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the management of burnout related issues in our case study are consistent with existing literature and Swedish regulations.

3.1.2 Research Philosophy
Interpretivism emphasizes a view that the truth and cognition of the real world is constructed, by thinking subjectively and study experiences and perceptions held by people (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). In this thesis, it is used as the guide philosophy where the authors aim to gain an in-depth understanding of different views related to the role of factors in the work environment on preventing burnout. The process of searching for the answer requires specific social interaction with social actors with the aim of creating shared meanings, thus interviews which attempt to drive the understanding of certain human behaviour patterns are adopted in this case (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, interpretivism includes a smaller sample compared to positivism, since the goal of interpretive research is to get into details and to explain the meaning behind particular phenomenon rather than phenomenon itself (Saunders et al., 2009). In order to develop a deeper and richer understanding on mismatching between employees’ burnout and working environment, qualitative research enables to provide a better view, as it is used to provide certain insights into the research problem (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Therefore, a more open and dynamic outcome from various views is expected to result in this thesis through adopting qualitative method since it involves personal experience rather than statistical inferences (Chawla & Sodhi, 2011).

3.1.3 Research Strategy
Case study is a strategy for an empirical research of a particular phenomenon in real life context by using multiple sources of evidence to gain a rich knowledge of the contents (Saunders et al., 2009). In this thesis, multiple case study was adopted due to the investigated targets being four compulsory schools and each school represented different situations related to burnout issues. Thus, the authors analysed the differences and similarities between four cases.
3.2 Method
3.2.1 Data Collection

3.2.1.1 Secondary Data
The secondary data is presented by systematic literature research which aims to provide a conceptual overview of current field study, to recognize a gap in the existing research and to support the significant meaning of our research (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In order to find authoritative articles for the research, firstly, the collection was based on several databases; Google Scholar and JSTOR, with the aim of defining the basic concepts of the topic. However, by initial attempt translation from Swedish to English could lead to misunderstandings to some extent. Hence, the authors chose Jönköping University’s Online Library “Primo” as the primary database where it provides accessible, authoritative and selective sources. Then, the authors started with searching on different keywords in both separate and combined terms: “employee burnout”, “sick leave”, “healthy working environment”, “organizational climate”, “preventative strategies of burnout”. Article searching was done only for peer-reviewed articles, with the domain research areas being “Pathology”, “Psychotherapy”, and “Clinical Health Care”. In order to find related managerial answers from business administration perspective, keywords such as “Organizational structure”, “Role of leadership” and “Managerial strategy on preventing burnout” are applied to enrich the resource pool.

To narrow the scope of the search, abstract and future research suggestions were briefly read in the existing literature to provide the authors an improved and more detailed view of the direction for the selected research topic. In addition, other references with relevant concepts and mostly cited articles have been explored for searches in the next step. Ultimately, multiple key articles were adopted after studying them precisely selecting the most relevant and representative to this thesis. Furthermore, in order to analyse literature logically, the authors conducted thematic analysis so that it helped to structure the literature review (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

Other sources attributing to secondary data collection were collected from published documents held by Swedish institutions such as Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SSIA), Swedish Work Environment Authority etc. These documents provided a powerful background for the topic and it was standing for the realistic situation as mentioned in background. Similarly, some regulations mentioned by these institutions were also used as guidelines to conduct primary data.

3.2.1.2 Primary Data
The primary data was conducted through 10 interviews with 4 schools and 1 interview with the employee of SSIA. The purpose of having the interview with SSIA was to understand the real situation of financial supports given on organizations to prevent burnout. These interviews were held semi-structured in this study, as it refers to pre-designed, open-ended questions. Implicating questions formulated based on literature studied associated to the research topic. Additional questions might be required to add depending on interviewees’
answers (Saunders et al, 2009). It not only provides more in-depth insights from interviewees but also prevents them divert from the main focus of the questions due to the flexibility of such choice.

Open questions are designed to receive definable answers for certain phenomenon as well as to create a comfortable atmosphere for participants to talk freely (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Another type of questions known as probing was used in this study which can lead participants to a specific focus with the aim of exploring responses in a deeper meaning (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The full interview questions can be found in appendix 2. Furthermore, face-to-face, email and telephone interviews are combined in this study to collect comprehensive data. Face-to-face interviews as the traditional approach to take aims to attain more detailed information with longer interview time. Email and telephone interviews adopted in our case due to geographic difficulties, interviewees’ schedule and authors different contacts (Collis & Hussey, 2014). For the purpose of gathering useful and neutral information, one interviewer worked with audio recording and taking notes of contents while another was responsible to take the lead to ask questions, to avoid missing critical information. However, due to authors and interviews location differences, two interviewers conducted interviews in Jönköping and one member conducted interviews in Öckerö with subsequent help from other members.

3.2.2 Population and Sampling
The chosen population were four compulsory schools in Jönköping and Öckerö. The reason behind choosing compulsory schools is that according to SSIA statistics in 2017, the teacher profession in compulsory school has a high burnout rate relative to other professions (Försäkringskassan, 2017, table 3). Beyond the statistics there is literature supporting that professions that include close interaction with people, such as teaching are having higher burnout rates than other professions (Socialstyrelsen, 2003). As well as it was reported by Teachers’ Association that the workload of teacher is very high compared to most other occupational groups in the labour market (Lärarförbundet, 2017). Moreover, the reasons to choose the population in these two areas were firstly considering the convenience and accessibility of the sample in Jönköping, but also looking upon statistics provided by Kolada, stating that the public sector sick leave in Öckerö is the 12th highest among the municipalities in Sweden 2018 (Arbetet.se, 2019). For comparison Öckerö is listed at 269th place with a sick-leave rate of 8,4%, Jönköping on the 133th place with 6,5% and the municipality with the lowest sick-leave is down to 4% (Arbetet.se, 2019). Thus, the problematic sick leave issues in Öckerö area seemed to be valuable for this study.

Meanwhile, the principals and other school administrators as the main sample targets in this population were chosen due to their administrative powers which can influence the employee environments and insight on the schools’ handling of burnout related issues. However, teachers in schools were planned to be involved in order to test the authenticity of answers from the management.
The sampling method used is purposive sampling, as our participants, or sample, are based on the authors' judgement of their specific characteristics (Saunders et al., 2009). The characteristics being their administrative powers, influence, and insight. There is also an element of convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2009), as the administrators in compulsory schools nearby are the most convenient samples for us which can effectively provide answers to our research questions, as well as fulfil all our necessary criteria. The criteria set to work in the education field at the compulsory school level, as well as having significant administrative and organizational influence over the workplace environment.

3.2.3 Procedure of Interviews
The preparation before interviews were done by explaining background about the concept of burnout and sending some example questions to the interviewees by email, aiming to allow them preparing for in-depth answers. When it comes to the official interviews, it started with knowing the schools’ burnout situations then to understand the reasons behind them. Then the focus moved to the roles of organizational factors, leadership factors and working environment impacts in preventing employees stress and burnout. However, since the school’s situations were different, the order of questions were adjusted depending on the flow of the conversation. Moreover, additional questions were added as complementary points to explore extra insights in particular interviews, as well as some questions were deleted if answers were already covered.

3.2.4 The Background of Cases and Participants
3.2.4.1 School A
An Upper stage compulsory school with 440 students, located in the Jönköping. Interview was held with the principal.

3.2.4.2 School B
A Lower stage compulsory school, with enrolment of 820 students and located in Jönköping. Interviews were conducted with a teacher who had experienced burnout, a principal, and a working environment agent.

3.2.4.3 School C
It is located on Öckerö, that has undergone organisational and structural changes; going from being a lower stage compulsory school to include all stages with enrolment of 400 students. The reorganisation in the municipality meant splitting up and mixing two existing work-teams from two different schools (C and D) and divide them into two new organisations. Interviews were conducted by a teacher, a vice principal, a study counsellor and a working environment agent. The two last interviewees suffered from burnout in association to the reorganization.

3.2.4.4 School D
A full-stage compulsory school in Öckerö, which prior to the rebuilding/reorganization consisted of only upper stage compulsory school students, but now includes all levels. The
interviews were conducted by an administrator and a special educator who both experienced burnout in association to the reorganisation period.

3.2.5 Data Quality
Data quality was considered as it essentially decides whether the primary data collection is valuable, accurate and plausible to lead to potential research findings (Collis & Hussey, 2014). With an interpretivism research philosophy, which lacks a specific theory support, data quality should be aware to reduce the subjective views carried by both interviewers and interviewees. Thus, it can be analysed from different perspectives for example reliability, bias, validity and more (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

3.2.5.1 Reliability
Reliability indicates that whether the consistency in results succeeds when the research has high repeatable tendency (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Generally, interpretivism results low degree of reliability due to the data collection under this philosophy is subjective. Similarly, semi-structured interviews provide a large level of flexibility which cannot ensure the conformity of answers provided by participants (Collis & Hussey, 2014). According to Saunders et al., (2009), reliability can be assessed by posing three separate questions to test the research; whether the research would yield the same results in other occasions, whether other researchers would reach similar observations, and whether there is transparency in how the raw data is coded and conclusions are drawn (Saunders et al., 2009). The related issues may be that participants are not as enthusiastic, honest or thorough depending on time of day, which is a participant error. The issue may also be that there is a bias from the interviewees to portray the situations in a specific way in either their own or someone else’s interest. There may also be errors and biases from the interviewer side, as our interpretations may be different, or questions worded in a way which leads to misunderstanding or affects how answers are given.

To ensure reliability when it comes to potential participant error, the authors gave options in determining the dates and times of the interviews, allowing them to choose what suits them best and leads to the least amount of potential distraction. This is advised as more “neutral” times, such as those which do not place significant pressure on the interviewees, allow for least variability in interviewee mood or other emotional, or time constraints (Saunders et al., 2009). For participant bias reliability in the research, the authors aim for the highest possible administrative position available in the schools as it implies the lowest risk for the interviewees to say what higher-ups would expect or want them to (Saunders et al., 2009). Anonymity for all participants has been offered which provides a lower risk of participant bias.

When it comes to the personal or interviewers’ biases, the authors apply investigator triangulation, which ensures that our conclusions have higher reliability (Leung, 2015). This means that all data received is reviewed by all researchers to narrow down the conclusions.
and minimize the risk of personal bias or misunderstanding and increase the accuracy of how the data is interpreted.

### 3.2.5.2 Validity

Validity refers to the extent of the research findings accurately reflect meanings under certain phenomenon (Collis & Hussey, 2014). This research has a clear structure where the research paradigm matches the sampling procedures and methods used, as it is a key element for confirming validity (Leung, 2015). All aspects of the research are clearly structured in order for the research question to match, sampling, data analysis, and results, leading to a well-documented “audit trail of materials and processes” (Leung, 2015). Secondly, the validity of the research is strengthened by respondent verification (Leung, 2015). Thus, the research reviewed and verified post-completion supports its validity.

### 3.2.5.3 Ethical Issues

According to Saunders et al., (2009) there are two main philosophical standpoints within business and management research, deontology and teleology. The authors prescribe to a deontological view of research ethics, which means that the ends do not justify the means. Everyone involved in the research, including tutor and interview participants, are presented clear and truthful facts of how the research is conducted. Thus, ensuring that there are no falsifications or other fraudulent behaviour throughout the process of conducting the research, nor any undisclosed interests.

For the participants of the research there are specific ethical criteria that was followed, based on university guidelines as well as presented in researched literature. The interviewees are provided the opportunity for anonymity and privacy if they wish so. The use of data provided is clearly stated to them, and that verbal agreement is respected from the authors side. If at any point those involved in the interviews or research complain of any discomfort, their wishes are respected entirely. Finally, everyone included in the thesis has given direct informed consent to the researchers, which they are free to withdraw at any point.

### 3.2.6 Data Analysis

In our thesis, cross-case analysis was adopted with the aim to draw similar or different patterns among multiple cases (Saunders et al, 2009). The transcripts for data collected from four schools were created separately with the basis of the contents in existing literature. For example, in order to select and filter the most germane information, the contents related to organizational, leadership factors and working environment were involved in the data description. This step assisted authors to be familiar with the overall view of contexts and to understand specific situations for each case. Moreover, thematic analysis was used in this thesis when it came to cross-case analysis, aiming to find out similar themes or patterns in the data collection (Collis & Hussey, 2014). It was useful to complete the cross-case analysis by identifying similarities and variations between burnout situation of difference cases. Additionally, there was an analytical aid used to help the authors to recall the contextual information that is known as self-memos. The idea behind this technique is recording any
ideas, observations or inspirations as engaged in the whole process of data collection, especially in interviews (Saunders et al, 2009).

4. Empirical Findings

This section presents the empirical findings from the conducted interviews of the four cases.

4.1. Case School A

The principal of school A firstly described the potential causes of burnout as being closely related to societal and organizational factors. The societal factors described as general changes in living styles and demands in today’s society, such as social expectations, constant connectivity that increase the stress on the individuals. The organizational factors being the new and higher demands, in how ethical the workplaces are.

Teachers who were getting burned out were described as appearing “labile, unable to cope with stress or pressure, cannot cope with situations and have flight behaviour” (Principal, email interview, 2019-04-12). Which referred to a difficulty in adaption for many employees, especially to the organizational and regulatory changes in their workplace.

Clear communication and guidance within the school was pointed out as important, along with transparency. “It is important that everyone knows their working hours, structures, calendar worked and so on. Clarity is primary. Then having an open dialogue and being transparent as a leader, everything from issues regarding economy to different dilemmas” (Principal, 2019-04-12).

The organization strongly supports the idea of everyone being able to share their opinion and have it valued in the school. Having implemented a digital communications system enables communication among different sectors. “As well as I have the open-door policy for employees who would like to talk those issues with me anytime” (Principal, 2019-04-12). It also allows the principal to monitor the progress of their methods, such as the work environment and employee stress levels.

However, the principal pointed out that the workplace may be regarded as quite clearly regulated and governed by the National school law, other regulations, curricula and municipal guidelines. Employee freedom to use their own means of control would come only once the formal regulations were followed. “We work closely regardless of professional category. It is one of the building blocks of a successful work” (Principal, 2019-04-12). Thus, close cooperation between the different sectors is viewed as an important pillar in their organizational structure.
Moreover, the principal, refers to chapter 1 in the School Law, stated that principals have clear roles in influencing the work environment in different ways. Primarily by way of distributing and dividing work and guiding it forward with action plans. This would ensure that workers would not be overworked. “We work extremely preventively and often lead on to Corporate Health Service and psychologists. That my staff should feel good is a great priority” (Principal, 2019-04-12).

General conclusions of the findings from School A are that there had been relatively little instability reported along with a decreased burnout rate. The principal was happy with how things currently were running, despite a slight negative trajectory over the last five years. The principal believed herself to be up-to-date in methods of handling burnout through school regulations and literature, further there were government and municipal guidelines and municipality employees involved.

4.2. Case School B
Not only work-related factors but also the complexity of personal issues was emphasized by all interviewees to impact the development of burnout, such as employees’ personalities, psychological conditions and their personal requirements on themselves. This may cause excessive stress load which further potentially lead to the development of burnout. “It is usually more complicated than just work, and often related to family situations or psychological difficulties. Or sometimes the case is that the employee is “perfectionist” and too ambitious to finish the job” (Principal, personal communication, 2019-04-15).

A burnout experience described by the teacher showed that some more demanding students who need teacher extra time usually cause teacher an overload of work. Moreover, the mismatch between resources and job requirements in specific time period due to additional national requirements, was mentioned to cause difficulties for employees to accomplish their work. “After summer, teachers usually have more lessons but with the same income, which makes it hard to deal with work and it potentially stresses teachers. Also, the national tests, grading and completing curriculums need to be done in one month and that is often May” (Working Environment Agent, personal communication, 2019-04-10).

This organizational system has been updated newly as the aid of seeking for the pre-stage signs of employees’ burnout, as well as creating a platform for employees to speak up their issues and further helping principal to recognize even deal with employees’ negative situations. “We have a digital system which automatically reports if someone has been sick for a couple of days, so we can make a plan for rehabilitation based on that. Since it is also a part of law requirements for me to ensure the employees’ health, communication with the employees is important to figure out the best way of dealing with a problem in advance” (Principal, 2019-04-15).

It was also confirmed by the teacher that this approach had been scheduled regularly and worked effectively in the workplace. It helped both employees and principal to work on stress
issues together from initial state. The overall purpose of facilitating the approach was that organization strive to create a healthy work conditions for employees. “An open and healthy work environment should be promoted and achieved eventually so that employees enjoy coming to work. I believed that a good work climate will encourage employees to talk about their issues openly” (Principal, 2019-04-15). The psychosocial work environment is pointed out as the main focus area at the school, since the physical work environment currently was sufficient to support employees work. Openness of communication and employees’ freedom of talking about the stress issue at workplace were given as well.

Moreover, having a clear structure of scheduling discussions can bring somewhat clarity of communication and enhance corporations between different sectors in organizations. Also, the frequent communication and tied relationship with different sectors such as teacher’s union and municipality helped the organization to understand the real situation then to shape a decent workplace.

Further, the principal expressed the important role of leadership in prevention of employee burnout. “I can influence quite a lot. For example, through making structural changes to help people, adjustments in their tasks and workloads and perhaps doing these changes before they get sick. Additionally, we will rearrange new workers to the group where there are sick or stressful teachers, in order so other members in original group would not suffer overload due to the sick one” (Principal, 2019-04-15). Structural changes according to employees’ conditions such as personality, ability of coping stress and job task were done before the workloads are administered. At the same time, the flexibility of structure should be possessed in order to cope with urgent situations. It was also confirmed by the teacher that a series of applications made by the principal had improved the stress situation at the workplace and teachers overall trusted on the decision made by the principal.

Similarly, employee empowerment has been mentioned by the principal that was something leader can promote. “I also believe the employees should feel that they should have an impact in their workplace, being able to have freedom on what to do, when to do, how to do within reasonable limits” (Principal, 2019-04-15).

During the last five years, the burnout rates have decreased within the organisation and there is no significant organizational change identified other than the economical cuts that have always existed within the educational sector. From the teacher’s perspective, possible improvement can be done by removing excessive workload when the employee needs to deal with students requiring extra support. Despite that, all interviewees were satisfied with current situation.

4.3. Case School C
Before the reorganisation it was seen as a well-functioning, respected, high status organisation to work for, based on the opinions of the interviewees. However, this does not seem to be the same case anymore.
Because of the reorganisation, an additional part was added to the building. During this construction period, the students and teachers firstly moved into temporary barracks. The date of completion was delayed, implicating that they had to move back into an unfinished facility in 2016. Which in retrospect was not the most appropriate strategic choice. In this “chaotic” environment, as described by the interviewees, a new organisational structure was going to be implemented and the diverse work-teams to be joint into one, which meant parts of the high school pedagogues (School D) were to be included into the same work-team as the younger years’ pedagogues from the original organisation (School C). Which caused conflicts among the work-teams, as this fusion was not supported of sufficient leadership guidance. The work environment agent also described an unofficial hierarchy existing between the groups, with the higher-level pedagogies thinking “them having higher status than the others” (Work environment agent, personal communication, 2019-04-15). Which made it more vulnerable when it was them that had to move into the younger pedagogues’ original school building.

“The principal at this time was acting more as a manager for the construction, than a manager of the school. I did not feel there was a manager leading us in this chaotic situation. We were really lacking a structure” (Teacher, personal communication, 2019-04-15). The lacking leadership was also identified in the principal turnover, having the employees to relate to 7 different leaders and leadership styles and structures during the time period of 1 year and 3 months. Which implicated increased stress load on the employees, having to take on things outside their responsibilities to manage the situation.

Furthermore, the physical work environment was not ideal either during or after the construction period, consisting of external factors such as noise or workers disturbing the lessons, which implicated extra stress on the employees. Also, the fact that the finalised school building was to small and did not include enough room for all students or staff also added additional tension on the employees trying to perform their work duties, with insufficient resources. For example, the special educator went from having an own office, to share the same size room with four others, which did not meet the needs for their work requirements. Also, some lectures were held in the lunch-hall and there was no structure set up for the use of this room, which also implicated conflicts among the teaching-team.

Moreover, political and economic decisions were pointed out by participants to impact their work conditions. “Because of political reason, all schools are very affected by political changes in the municipality every 4th year. They are affected of the budget decisions given each mandate period. The budget for schools directly influences the teachers’ recruitment and their contract types, more temporary assistant contracts are signed during budget deficits” (Working Environment Agent, 2019-04-15). Further, the information of budget cuts and organisational changes or municipality decision making that affected the organisations, was sometimes not fully transparent mentioned by the teacher, which made the employee stuck in a dilemma between finding out answers or accepting the situation. As they did not testify of a close relationship with the municipality politicians making decision affecting their organisation.
Opinions about not having much to say on their work situation or ability to influence this reorganization was expressed along with a disappointment in how the reorganisation turned out and the lacking response from the municipality in dealing with their reported problems. “We don't have much impact, it would have been better if some of the decision making was delegated to us, that are in responsibility of the daily operations of the organisation, instead of someone from the municipality who might not have appropriate knowledge of the existing situation or needs” (Teacher, 2019-04-15).

The excessive stress factors during the reorganisation period lead to record high burnout rates within the organisation. Yet, until today many of the reported issues has not been fixed and the employees still do not consider the work environment ideal or sustainable. The role of the work environment agent was doubted by the participant “I don’t really feel like there is currently any need for a work environment agent. Because I don’t really see the results from their work” (Study Counsellor, personal communication, 2019-04-15).

The excessive stress and lacking results lead to amotivation to care for what is best for the organisation and rather lead to an attitude of a more individual focus. “There is no idea to report if you are not the one who is being affected. Since it gives you extra job which takes from the time you don’t have” (Study Counsellor, 2019-04-15). The shared value of asking for help and dealing with burnout actively in the workplace was missing. At the same time, the actual plan or approach for preventing and coping with burnout was not shared in organization.

The employees also expressed a distrust in the Trade Union for teachers. However, the new principal currently in position is considered to be better, taking the side of the employees. “She kicks upwards more than downwards” (Working Environment Agent, 2019-04-15). Although expressed in an interview “They tend to fix the symptoms rather than fixing the origin cause of the problem” (Teacher, 2019-04-15). Which also corresponds to their way of dealing with burnout.

Also confirmed by the study counsellor was, some of the seven previous principals having a strict approach providing less freedom and control which had negative impact on her work satisfaction and increased her stress levels.

4.4. Case School D
The principal of school D, was aware of the unideal situation in School C, thus waited for six months until the construction of their school building was fully done, before moving in. They also included an external expert into their pre-work of merging the two work-teams into one, which is considered as one factor that increased the employee’s abilities to adapt to the new environment. Also, the fact that the facility was rebuilt from scratch, meaning less old organisational structures left within the building, allowed the two teams to integrate more equally and enabled them to enter the new organizations on the same premises. It resulted in
less conflicts and better communication and cooperation within new teaching-team, than experienced in school C.

Although, having spent in total one and a half year in the temporary barracks did cause strains on the organisation and the employees, since the barracks were both too small and did not offer sufficient space for the students or employees along with other poor physical work environmental factors. Thus, the planning and execution of this reorganisation could be questioned as if ensuring the employees welfare during these work conditions were taken in consideration. As for example the construction hall was placed outside the teacher’s offices, resulting in additional noise from the machineries that they could not conduct meetings during certain times of the day where lessons were held simultaneously. Causing headache for many of the employees and time management issues. Along with decisions taken by the project manager of the municipality that did not meet the needs of the actual employees operating the organisation, such as too small desks and insufficient workspace causing the employees having to share offices constructed for one individual.

Less people within this organisation was burned out during the reorganisation period compared to School C. Although strains on the management and special educational-team was identified, as one principal along with two administration workers and one special educator experienced burnout during the reorganisation period. One factor mentioned by the administrator was inflexible arrangement to replace these individuals when calling in sick, leading the remaining colleges to additionally manage their job as well. Meanwhile, the administrator stated that “the subject teachers can be much easier replaced with substitute teacher when they are absent from work” (Personal communication, 2019-04-17).

Although, the situation has not only been negative during and after the reorganization and construction period. One of the principals, perceived as a good leader by the interviewees, implemented a new work-system where the employees were structured into teams with the aim of enabling the whole organisation not to “fall” if one person was sick and absent from work. “We mirrored each other, working two by two. Allowing us to motivate and support each other. It gave us more freedom to plan our education and balance the situation which reduced excessive stress load on our profession” (Special educator, personal communication, 2019-04-17). This work system was very appreciated among the employees, unfortunately not in system today. “It was a sustainable situation. But - then the principles started to complain that they did not get enough administrative support” (Administrator, 2019-04-17). The principal had to take on a higher. Thus, a new school principal was assigned to work for the school and once again stress issues arise. Many of the systems applied by the second principal such as the “mirror-system” were replaced and the cooperation between teachers and sectors has thus deteriorated.

They also lacked a digital system where they could communicate, and share students register, which said by administrator would ease their work process and offer a more efficient solution. Further, the special educator describes the lack in communication between employer and employee saying “I’ve been on sick leave for 3 years, but my employer have failed to inform
me, that they have changed the procurement of occupational health service, so I’ve fallen between the chairs of the municipality and the Swedish social insurance system, and therefore haven’t got any payment from the insurance for many months now. Which has caused increased stress in an already strained situation, negatively impacting my recovery” (2019-04-17). Moreover, expressed by the special educator was that she did not get enough opportunities to speak her mind or properly share her feelings with her principal even before her sick leave. It caused a sense of support missing, getting confirmed by the administrator that “I don’t feel that the principal checked upon our conditions and stopped me from working too much” (2019-04-17).

Based on our interviewees there seem to be an open communicative climate among the colleges to discuss problems of stress and mental illness sharing the view of burnout being caused mainly due to organisational matters. Yet, an uncertainty is expressed weather this view also is perceived by the previous principles and decision makers in the municipality. As the administrator puts it “The politicians don’t seem to understand that burnout is an organisational problem or a fault in the structure and they decide to provide something that seem fine to them, but often lacking knowledge of the actual situation as the communication not always reach all the way to them” (2019-04-17).

During the reorganization process, the opinions and ideas of the employees were considered to be ignored by the municipality responsible for the project. According to the administer, since employees see little results from their engagement trying to better their work situation, the motivation to report issues in the work environment declines. Also communicated by the special educator “This leads to less issues being reported and the communication not researching to the interested parties within the municipality and school board, which is crucial in order for the situation to change” (2019-04-17). Thus, the school has on paper a system for their systematic work environment management, but the implementations are lacking. “The teachers have one work environment agent, that does the work that they are supposed to, but nothing happens after so it’s not really working in practice, even though it exists on paper” (Administrator, 2019-04-17).

Despite that, there appears to be a decent work climate, although some reported issues have not been fixed in one and a half year. Neither are any preventive measures taken to deal with stress among the employees. Further expressed by the interviewees is the political four-year mandate periods having high implications on their work situation as the school is publicly run.
5. Analysis

In this chapter, the main empirical findings of all cases are presented in table 2, that will later be discussed and analysed in regard to the theoretical framework and Swedish policy guidelines in following the cross-case-analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
<th>School D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory school level</td>
<td>Upper stage.</td>
<td>Lower stage.</td>
<td>After change: including all stages.</td>
<td>Same as in school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic work environment management</td>
<td>Yes - with good results.</td>
<td>Same as school A.</td>
<td>(On the paper) Yes-but poor results in practice.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Transparent.</td>
<td>Open &amp; Trust.</td>
<td>Weak-7 principles in 1 year.</td>
<td>Ok now but gone/going through managerial changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>Flat.</td>
<td>Flat.</td>
<td>Unclear (residues from reorganisation period)</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees ability to impact the work situation?</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>High.</td>
<td>Low-needs not always met by decision-makers.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration within the organization</td>
<td>Strong.</td>
<td>Strong.</td>
<td>Poor during Reorganisation, integrating two work-teams into one.</td>
<td>Good. Used external expert to integrate two work-teams into one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between: manager - employee</td>
<td>Open - employees are free to talk with manager, the manager does check on them as well.</td>
<td>Same as school A.</td>
<td>Open now-but employees need to communicate their needs, the manager does not check on them to find out.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared communication system</td>
<td>Digital system, enables communication between departments.</td>
<td>Same as school A.</td>
<td>No shared communication system.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive approach to reduce stress &amp; burnout?</td>
<td>Works preventively, with close connection to psychologists &amp; watching for early signs.</td>
<td>Preventive work to detect early signals of stress among the employees.</td>
<td>No preventive approach (known by the employees).</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support from SSIA</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees view of their work situation</td>
<td>Sustainable: -Considered healthy-regular surveys.</td>
<td>Sustainable: -Overall satisfied. -Still wish less workload.</td>
<td>Not sustainable: -Excessive stress &amp; workload. -Resources don't match demands. -Managers don't fix the cause of the problems only the symptoms. -Not enough teachers.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Work Environment</td>
<td>-Sufficient resources.</td>
<td>-Good facilities. -Sufficient resources.</td>
<td>-Too small facilities. -Poor condition for employees.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial climate among colleagues</td>
<td>-Open - Integrated work sectors. -Cooperative environment</td>
<td>Open -everyone talks freely about psychological issues.</td>
<td>Understanding-can talk about psychological issues, but everyone got to help themselves due to everyone being stressed.</td>
<td>Same as school C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggested improvements by the interviewees | Satisfied with the current situation and believe it to be sustainable. | Less workload when it comes to deal with demanding students | -Two-teacher/Mirroring-system. -More teachers. | Same as school C

| Summarising significant findings for a simplified overview, listed as Positive* or Negative* |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| *with negative and positive in this meaning referring to the implications on employee burnout risk. |

| Positive: | Positive: Same as school A. -Preventive stress approach. |
| Work environment. -Management. -Communication Employee/Principal/Municipality. -Digital communication system. | Negative: |
| Negative: -Based on only principal’s view |

| Positive: | Negative: |
| Construction period, physical work environment. -Structural organisational changes. -Integration problems/conflicts. -Adding a new facility to the old school building. -Weak leadership: 7 different principals. -Poor resources & high demands. -Too small school. -Not listened to their needs by Municipality. -No preventive approach. |

"Cause of problem not fixed, only the symptoms".

Their suggested changes to better their work situation:
- Two-teacher-system
- Better communication, needs fulfilled by Municipality
- Government run school.

5.1 Cross-Case Analysis
The overall view of the case studies identifies school A and B as well functioning organisations, including good physical and psychosocial work environments. With open communication between the employees, principal (manager) and the municipality (decision-maker). They also showed currently low rates of burnout and sick-leave among the employees. On the opposite side, School C and D differentiate from school A and B, with
several factors identified by the authors that is not in line with the guidelines provided by the theoretical framework or Swedish regulations. That primarily has to do with the reorganisation process four years ago which lasted for one and a half years. Considering that it requires only six months exposure to at least one identified stressor to develop burnout (Icd.internetmedicin, 2019), the authors conclude that the employee’s exposure to the poor conditions identified most likely impacted the increased number of burnout and sick leave within the organisations.

5.1.1 Physical Work Environmental Factors
5.1.1.1 Insufficient Resources / Excessive Demands
It is evident that the physical work environment in School C and D was not sustainable during the construction period. Dealing with factors such as constant noise, insufficient work space, and resources, implicate strains on the employees and restricts their abilities to perform the work requirements. It relates to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, that burnout occurs when individuals experience constant work demands without sufficient resources to address or reduce those needs (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This can also be connected to the expressed lack of teachers per number of students, causing excessive demands on the employees in school C and D. Thus, it also indicates that the situation of school C and D have failed on many aspects in regard to the person-environment fit theory, which states that the inconsistency between environmental conditions and needs required by employees also increase the risks of developing burnout (Tong et al, 2015). The employees who were experiencing stress and excessive workload that challenged one’s ability to cope in this study, also relates to the schools displaying the highest burnout rates (C and D). Hence, it further defends the authors conclusion of the physical work environments impacts on the development of burnout.

5.1.2 Social Work Environmental Factors
5.1.2.1 Communication & Integration
Implementing a shared digital communication system enables communication among the sectors within the organisation, thus also benefits integration as well as an open climate as seen in school A and B. Along with their close relationship and continuous communication with the municipality department (school A and B) it reduces the risks of inappropriate decision-making. Opposite result can be seen in the case of school C and D due to the municipality’s lacking knowledge of the existing situation and needs of the organisation. Communication thus helps in reducing possible negative impacts due to gap between where the decision-making takes place (municipality) and the actual organisation, as noticed in school A and B.

It puts further focus on the importance of a functioning communication system for the systematic work environment management, as if issues are not being reported, nor reaching the municipality, improvements will not be made. Expressed by the employees in school C and D is a lacking motivation of reporting issues in their environment that has negative impact on their work situation, since they did not see results from their efforts, thus it only
meant additional workload to their already strained situation, to administrate a report. Hence this is a dilemma which also indicates the importance of management or decision-makers to follow up, evaluate and act on the reported issues, due to the systematic work environment management, to motivate employees to keep reporting (Liff & Wikström, 2018). Communication therefore has implications on the employer and decision-makers ability to detect early signs of burnout among the employees, and thus enabling preventive measures to be assigned in order to avoid its fully development. As Vallen (1993) stated open communication to be one of the fundamental organizational factors that could lower employee stress and burnout risk. Taking school A and B for example, which has succeeded in providing immediate response through the communication system, when employees expressed complaints on their workstation. Thus, further supporting an open communicative climate within the organizations also through the “open-door-policy” implemented among the leaders. Which most likely have had implications on the relatively low issues with burnout within the organisations (A and B).

Further a shared digital communication system, may also benefit the change in perspective on burnout, as it enables the manager to collect data and easier see the overall information from an organisational perspective, rather than as an individual matter. In contrast, school C and D did not have an integrated communication system, to share student register among the educational-team. It shows a reduced integration among the different sectors of the workforce, thus also an inefficient work process that could lead to excessive work-loads and decreased communication.

Furthermore, the fact that school D involved an external team-building expert to help integrating the two work-teams into the new organisation, seems to have had positive effects, reflecting on their burnout rate being lower than school C that had weak managerial guidance during the integration period. Hence school C further showed record high burnout numbers. Implicating the importance of well-integrated teams and social factors impact on the development of burnout, which also was concluded in the research by Bilal & Ahmed (2016). As these are factors that could be managed and impacted by the leader, the authors consider establishment of such linked to a responsible leadership.

5.1.2.2 Social Climate
However, the absence of leadership for the integration of school C, resulted in a negative social climate with conflicts among the workforce. A toxic climate with conflicts and unsolved stress-related problems has negative impact on employee well-being and increase the risks of developing burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

The findings from all four cases indicated a shared perception of the burnout cause, mainly being due to dysfunctions in the work situation. Moreover, shared beliefs and values are beneficial for the social climate, which has impact on the performance and well-being of the employees. That is supported by Westerman and Yamamura (2007) who argued that low group cohesion in terms of unshared values goals and preferences among the employees and
organization tendencies to increase the risks of burnout due to low employee retention and psychological barriers.

5.1.3 Organizational Structural and Managerial Factors
As the factors of leadership and organisational structure often influence and complement each other, they will be discussed jointly. However, since these are factors that can be adjusted through structural and strategic changes, managed by the leader, the authors conclude these to be of relevance for conducting a responsible leadership and long-term-healthy organisations.

5.1.3.1 Leadership Impacts
The leadership plays an important role in implementing the organisational structures and managing a healthy work environment, which has been notified in this study. It has been evident in all four cases, both in school A and B with a present leadership in line with literature guidelines and work environmental regulations, showing low burnout rates. As well as in the opposite case of school C and D, with weak leadership guidance showing increased burnout rates, which is a relationship supported by existing research (Lambert et al., 2012; Savicki et al., 2003; Bilal & Ahmed, 2016).

The implications of an absent leadership in school C during the reorganisation period, also implicated additional demands on the teaching-team as they had to take on responsibilities beyond their professions to cover up for the managerial role, in order to handle the situation. In line with what was explained by Maslach and Leiter (2016) that excessive demands increase stress levels and increase the risks for burnout. Further, relating to the organizational flaws which caused a lack of support system, there was also a lack of leadership through reinforcement and two-way communication. The special educator in school D did not feel she got neither enough positive reinforcement from the principle, nor the ability to have clear two-way communication between them. The authors conclude that the absence of formality or guidance and support to have impacted on the poor employee health at that time within school C. It is also strongly supported by current research literature that the idea of leadership and managerial roles being important in reducing rates of burnout (Lambert et al., 2012; Savicki et al., 2003; Bilal & Ahmed, 2016).

5.1.3.1.1 Ethical Leadership
Furthermore, the principals in both school A and B viewed themselves as being transparent, open and supportive of employees, which are hallmarks of building an ethical leadership along with honest communication according to Mo and Shi’s (2015) study. Further, Brown et al., (2005) and Bilal & Ahmed (2016) added that paying attention and listening to the perspective of the employees as important factors, which were evident in school A where the principal regularly updated through employee surveys and both school A and B where they have a data system to monitor employees efficiently. It is supported by existing research to increase employees job satisfaction and reduce work-related stress when working under a manager who acts as a principal source of ethical guidance (Mo & Shi, 2015; Vullinghs et al., 2018).
5.1.3.1.2 Recognition / Reward / Trust

There are various leadership traits identified to have positive impact on the employees and reducing risks of developing burnout. Such as recognition, referring to reward given to employees for their contributions, which also is mentioned in Maslach work-life theory burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001). At the same time, mutual trust is another essential factor, as it is necessary from the leader’s side in order to empower employee involvement in decision-making and work recognition (Grawith et al., 2006). As for the other way around is crucial for the leader to gain the trust of the employees. As identified in school C, cynicism had evolved amongst employees due to the poorly managed changes in the workplace, which reduced the beliefs that improvements would come and a reduced trust in their employer. It relates to Brown and Roloff (2015) study that states that perceived feelings of low productivity, helplessness, and lack of trust in the leader increase the risks of employee burnout. Thus, fairness and trust are regarded as critical components to healthy organisations (Lowe, 2006).

5.1.3.1.3 Empowerment

Further, the employees in school A and B are empowered through different mechanisms in the way the school is organized, with elements of a flat hierarchical structure that allows for the employees’ opinions and values to have effect in the workplace. That is seen to be one key component in leadership behavior, to enhance employee well-being and stress-handling through leader empowerment and autonomy of employees (Mudallal et al., 2017). It was found that leader empowerment factors such as fostering participation in decision making, providing autonomy and freedom, enhancing the meaningfulness of work, and expressing confidence in employees’ abilities all had direct and indirect positive effects on employee work satisfaction and burnout (Mudallal et al., 2017).

Moreover, the principal of school A was aware of the important role of leadership held in prevention of employee burnout; as having high influence on the outcome. Therefore, awareness among the leader of their ability (and responsibility) to impact burnout development among the employees, seem for the authors essential in order to perform a responsible leadership, that’s necessary for the burnout rates to decline among the Swedish labour-force. Thus, the leadership philosophy by principal A, that: “employees should have impact in their workplace, being able to have freedom on what to do, when to do, how to do within reasonable limits”, is concluded to have had positive impact on the low burnout within that organisation. Further evident in the interview with the administrator (school C) who compared leadership styles among the different principles, present during the reorganisation and also expressed that feelings of being “too controlled” and not able to impact their work situation had significantly increased negative impact on employee’s stress levels and risks of developing burnout.

5.1.3.2 Control

As discussing employee’s ability to impact one's work situation, not only is the leadership affecting but also the structures within the organisation is influencing, being welcomed through a less centralized business structure according to Vallen’s (1993) study. Mudallal et al. (2017) further states the employees’ participation in decision-making and their autonomies
to have positive effects on declining perceived stressfulness among the employees, to prohibit its further development to burnout. Which is quite speaking for the situations within the case study, as school A and B are in line with the research believes, while the employees of school C and D experience a lacking ability to influence their situation, which can be mirrored in their burnout rates, a relation that also corresponds to literature statements.

It is further supported by one of the most influential occupational theories explained through the Demand-control-support model (Hasselberg et al., 2014). It expressed the imbalance of extra high demands along with low control to cause highest strains on the employee, as seen in school C and D where the interviewees referred to having minimum influence. It again caused demotivation among employees and withdrawal from work engagement, which are the signs of burnout according to the study of Maslach and Leiter (2008).

However, employee opinions and complaints in school A and B were held to a high regard according to interviewees, that was not the same for School’s C and D. Instead it was mentioned a significant disconnection between the leadership and the employees during the reorganisation/reconstruction period. Also, this may not only be viewed as an organizational or resource issue in this case but can also be connected to differences in leadership methods.

5.1.3.3 Centralisation
Nonetheless, there is no public school described to have a fully flat hierarchical structure, nor functions as a fully integrated and group-oriented workplace, due to the hierarchical relationship between the decision-maker (municipality) and the managers (principals) in Sweden. With that said, what can be assumed from viewing the cases of School’s A, B, C and D, is that generally the higher those factors are deemed to be followed, with the exception of formalization which in literature is described as inconclusive and should serve as a foundation, the more ability the employees have to impact their workforce. It is also often related to the level of openness of communication existing within the organisation and close integration of the organisation as previously discussed upon. It is implicated that the closer the working groups and individuals are to each other, the lower the rate of burnout related issues are expected, further supported by Bilal and Ahmed (2016).

School C and D expressed a greater gap between the organisation and municipality, than school A and B. That may have implicated less influence for the employees in the decisions made during the reorganisation, considering the dissatisfaction expressed by the interviewees regarding decisions and outcomes from that period. This managerial construct of the public-school system will be discussed further below after having analysed the factors changeable within the organisations first.

5.1.3.4 Formalization
Although decentralization and delegated power to enable employees to have impact on their work-situation, has shown to be beneficial to occur in presence of some formalization (Lambert et al., 2010). The formalization aspect can be related to the fact that school C (and D) had multiple principals over a short time period, who all had different methods of leading the workforce, that involved changes in standard practices, systems and responsibilities. This indicates less consistency in the implemented systems, which both are factors in regard to the
exciting research to have possible implication of additional stress on the employees (Lambert et al., 2010)

Furthermore, in comparison to school A and B where the presence of a certain level of formality and no significant changes in the workplace was identified and precepted by the interviewees as beneficial for the clarity in their job role. Similarly, they benefited from reduced stress as they felt there were guidelines and boundaries within the organisational structure to lean back on. It is a perception that corresponds to the existing studies on formalization (Lambert et al., 2010). Moreover, Lambert et al., (2010) presents how formalization may function along with a decentralized workplace, which appears to be the case in the schools which use the formal roles as foundations (A and B). However, the employees then may have the freedom to diverge from, once the basics are covered. It can be argued that this outlook could be both good and bad. Good in terms of having a foundation which increases efficiency and job role clarity, yet allows for some employee freedom, and bad in terms of lacking enough job role clarity, standard practices, and policies by which employees may act.

Based on the case study the authors conclude some level of formalization, as seen in school A and B, to be more beneficial on employee work situation and well-being in contradiction to the absence of a clear structure in school C and D (Lambert et al., 2010).

5.1.3.5 Public School Sector - Managerial Structural Impacts
Since the decisions made by municipality as the resource provider for the school-organisation, the role of the municipality in association to employee’s work-situation and burnout risks, was considered to be critical to the schools’ operations and employees’ health conditions. Employees in school A and B felt satisfied about the given resource. Comparing to school C and D, the situations were seen as contradictory and those employees with insufficient resources also showed a greater stress load, which is corresponding to the results showing in the Job Demand-Resource model (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Also, the budget deficits within the municipality (C and D), leading to resource mismatching with employees’ needs. On this budget the principals are supposed to manage and operate activities in schools, simultaneously fulfil the requirements and standards set by the government.

Meaning that if the principals do not have a close relationship with the municipality politicians who decide the budget, there might be a gap between demands and resources. Due to lack of knowledge perceived by the decision makers (municipality) about the actual needs within the organisation. The case study also showed that the schools that had close cooperation with the relevant municipal politicians had lower burnout rates than, those which experienced a distant and poor communication between the sectors. The authors therefore conclude that the contact between the organization and the municipality is crucial in order for effective solutions to be made.
However, it is a complicated issue due to the schools being run as public sectors, the principals, as the manager of the organisation, have been restricted to not have full control of all decisions made within the organisation he/she is to run. Hence, possibly causing issues in the aspect of leadership, as the principal is delegated the responsibility to operate on the decision and budget decided by the municipality. This control and detailed management of the operational activities also indicates some aspects of lacking trust in the teaching profession, which may lead to negative consequences for teachers’ involvement and motivation as it indicates loss of autonomy (Yu et al., 2014). Furthermore, it also debated to have caused additional administrative demands on the employees, which may lead to excessive stress load, as also supported by interviewees in school C and D. Thus, this structure itself may lead to increased demands on the organisation.

Finally, when analysing NPM, the current management model of the public sector, which implies to the schools studied, the main characteristics has been identified as: “increased control, reduced autonomy for the teaching profession and increased administrative work” is not in line with the theoretical framework recommendations for burnout prevention (Gillberg, 2018). Thus, based on our reviewed literature, one may conclude that this way of managing the public-school organisations may not work beneficial for the burnout prevention, nor the government's goal to reduce the sick leave numbers (Liff & Wikström, 2018).

Moreover, analysing on the current debate among researchers and media about the fit of the NPM as the management model of the public sector, it is emphasized by Ahlbäck Öberg, Widmalm, (2016) that there is no evidence that it has had any benefits in the forms of reduced public costs or greater quality or value for money, that was the original objective behind its implementation. One may therefore want to investigate this further, as the system itself also implicates costs, due to the additional control agencies, management, follow-up and audit systems. As well as the cost for the additional administration work put on the employer. Thus, one could consider how this money could be spent in the most efficient way to ensure a healthy Swedish labour market.

Further, since the theory of NPM implies a more result-driven management (Gillberg, 2018). The authors identify a possible conflict in measuring a welfare-service as the school is, in terms of economic profit, as that indicates rather productivity than actual quality of the school-service or the health of the organisation.

Additionally, the authors note the fact that burnout rates are highest in the public sector (Försäkringskassan, 2018). Along with that NPM of the public sector was implemented during the economic crisis in 1990th, meanwhile the increased numbers of burnout started to report. Which was the reason to the diagnostics criterias of ED was developed (Österberg et al., 2016; Gillberg, 2018). However, if there is a correlation, this study will not entail. Hence, statistics show that the numbers of stress-related sick-leave at least has not improved, rather increased since (Försäkringskassan, 2018).
5.1.4 Preventive Measures

Both school A and B worked preventively to ensure a healthy work environment, further the important role of leadership in prevention of employee burnout were expressed by both principals. Viewing their relatively low number of sick leave, one may assume its impact. However, both school C and D showed poor preventive approach. On the paper they had a systematic work environment, but the results from it was questioned among the employees. Further regarding their high rates of sick leave, the employer has failed on many aspects to ensure a healthy work environment. The perception by the employees at school C, that the decision makers “do not fix the cause of the problem, but only solve the symptoms” indicates that they don't fully succeed in following the Systematic Work Environment Management (2001).

One may also question the planning and execution of the reorganisation/construction period in school C and D, as the employees’ needs did not seem to be fully considered fulfilled based on the interviews. Although it was confirmed that the employee’s opinions were asked before the reorganisations but without showing results in the end, causing feelings of mistrust, disappointment and ignorance from the decision-makers. Inability to impact one's work situation and participate in decision making is claimed to have negative impact on the employee, thus increasing the risks of developing burnout (Mudallal et al, 2017). It may therefore be argued, on the perspective of risks of developing burnout, those organisational changes were lacking in the pre-planning, execution and post-monitoring. Since many steps went wrong during the rebuilding periods as many of the issues reported were not fixed even one and a half year later. It also indicates a lacking communication, that is claimed as one important factor to carry through many of the processes within an organisation in a sustainable manner (Lambert et al., 2010). Thus, it fails in following restrictions expected by the employer of the Swedish law (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2019).

Thus, this research confirms that lower adherence to the regulations is associated with more issues relating to stress, coping with work, and burnout for employees. School’s A and B, unlike school’s C and D, adhered to these guidelines in practice and described significantly fewer issues related to burnout. Additionally, none of our schools used the financial grant supplied by the SSIA to prevent sick leave, implicating that all measures available is not utilised.
6. Conclusion

This section will answer the research questions based on the results from the analysis.

**RQ 1: “Why is sick leave or burnout so high in Swedish schools, despite existing research, and work environmental regulations?”**

It can be concluded that the reason sick leave related to stress and burnout is high in the case study, is that implementation of research and policy guidelines is lacking behind in schools which suffer from employee stress related issues.

The burnout was caused mainly due to poorly managed reorganizations and changes in the working groups which further affected the integration, communication, and support systems. Along with further leadership factors such as lack of engagement, support, guidance and preventive approaches which further caused burnout related issues amongst employees. As well as the shortage of economic causing additional strains on the employees, which showed too few teachers dealing with too many students.

Moreover, the government's guidelines and regulations seem to cover the recommendations highlighted in the research literature. Although, rather weak descriptions on how practical implementation is going to take place, is identified by the authors. Which may be adding to the poor statistics of schools succeeding in implementing the systematic work environment management. The authors conclude this needs to be targeted to improve the situations in the school sector.

The authors further emphasize the importance of preventive measures in order to reduce the burnout rates among the Swedish labour market. Thus, concluding that a shift in perspective concerning the issue of burnout from person-rehabilitating to organisational-preventive is necessary. Also, it is noted that all supportive measures offered by the government in terms of “Workplace-Oriented Rehabilitation Grant”, is not utilised to its full potential, which leaves room for improvement.

Moreover, the authors found, based on the reviewed literature, that the current managerial structure of the public sector (NPM), may not benefit the prevention of burnout, or the government's goal to reduce the rate of sick leave among the Swedish labour market. Furthermore, since it indicates productivity rather than health of the organisation or employee well-being, the authors conclude that in order to create a sustainable labour market, the goal of reducing burnout and the sick leave figures perhaps also should be reviewed in the measurement method.
**RQ 2: “Is it possible to prevent burnout through adopting managerial measures and organisational structural adjustments?”**

Finally, the authors conclude, based on previous discussed factors that it is possible to avoid employee burnout through adjusting the management and organizational structure, as adaptations toward dealing with employees’ stress showing a positive sign on preventing the development of burnout.

Hence management models that take the organizational aspects of the work environment into account along with knowledge and responsible leadership are essential, in order to prevent stress and ensure employee health, thereby creating sustainable organisations and performing ethical leadership.

Which the authors argue to be necessary to create long-term good results, while preserving resources in the work environment, that makes it possible for individuals and organizations to maintain and create new values. In other words, sustainability includes both business and the healthcare perspectives. Therefore, creating long term healthy organisations is employer and managerial responsibility. This will result in maximising the use of human resources rather than burning them out.

Additionally, the authors would like to note that it is due to Work Environment Act, thus Swedish regulations, employers have responsibility to ensure that no one get sick at work. From the current statistics, this is not the case. Thus, in current state, managerial and organisational adjustments are necessary to reduce the statistics of burnout among the Swedish labour force.
7. Discussion

This section firstly discusses the implications of the thesis, then limitations of the study is identified. Lastly, presenting suggestions for future research.

7.1 Implications of the Thesis

This research has both theoretical implications for researchers in the subject, and practical implications for managers, administrators, workplace leaders. The implications are applicable to both the school industry as has been described through the cases, and potentially to other industries which have related issues.

Firstly, this thesis contributes to research knowledge on why workplaces may face burnout, or employee stress related issues, despite having policy and research knowledge available. It also describes which factors have a positive (lowering) effect on employee stress related illness. These conclusions, although focusing on specific cases in the Swedish school system, may contribute to overall research literature on the topic of workplace related burnout as multiple factors involved are valid and transferable to multiple industries and sectors.

Secondly, the knowledge of the issues with implementation of research and policy guidelines may directly interest policymakers, leaders, or other administrators and managers as they research how to reason when it comes to such events as reorganizing or rebuilding schools. An example would be to take extra considerations in mind, as the negative consequences of reorganizing schools could require to be handled with greater attention and political as well as managerial care.

Finally, this thesis contributes to practical knowledge which may be applied by administrators and policy makers when planning, organizing, and leading their employees. As recent and relevant cases are provided the conclusions may be transferred to other schools facing similar situations, or even organizations in different industries or sectors. In this case, the thesis provides academic insight into employee and managerial perspectives on handling several employee stress related issues.

7.2 Limitations

This thesis is conducted with four compulsory schools in two areas, the choice of school is limited as there is limited amount of compulsory school nearby. As well as the sample of interviewees being limited due to time constraints and professional duties which got in the way. However, more participants in other positions in different schools ultimately have involved in interviews which resulted in an unequal distribution among the four cases.
Since this is a qualitative study, subjective information according to participants are collected. Since the topic is sensitive to the schools, people may withhold information or present a biased view.

Another limitation has been found out during the study process, sick-leave due to mental illness and burnout might not be correct measurements for employees’ health. Since burnout is a prolonged process that people can feel overstressed for long time before they realise, they are about to become burned out. Similarly, the situation of sick-leave depends on politics and regulations that shift each 4th year, so that can influence the changes in the numbers from year to year, which one need to keep in mind when comparing statistics. Moreover, a limitation is the implication of this study. The scope of this study is school as public sectors, some implications might not work the same for private sectors due to the policy differences.

7.3 Suggested Future Research
Suggestion for future research given by the authors, is to research the costs of current stress-related sick-leave, compared to the costs of implementing a mirroring system, such as two-teacher system that would lower the demand on each individual pedagogue, in order to improve the work situation for the educational sector and reduce burnout numbers. Which one would be the financial effect of such implementation.

Secondly, since one of our key findings are that early prevention is essential in order to reduce the development of burnout. Future research could then be conducted on what preventive measures are most efficient for specific situations, to conclude industry recommendations.

Additionally, the authors also suggest researching to broaden the findings of this thesis would be to focus the study on the Municipality department involved in decision-making for the schools. With the aim to gain knowledge on their perception of the current situation, in order to find room for improvement.

Along, with suggestions of further research on the implications of new public management of the public sectors effect on Burnout among the educational sector (among others), as the authors realised this having large impact on the running of the public-school organisations. Furthermore, since our sample consisted of only four schools, the sample size does not give a representative view of the whole educational sector, nor include other sectors. To gain knowledge and solutions to improve the overall situation for the Swedish labour force, this would be one suggestion to extend the research in this field.

Finally, one way to identify the needs of improvement in order to reduce the burnout numbers within one specific sector, or the labour force as whole, are suggested by the authors to further study the current awareness on the topic, including cause/responsibility/managerial implications on employees’ burnout, among managers/employers of today's organisations.
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# Appendix

## Appendix 1. Theoretical Framework

### Table 1. Key Findings from the Literature Review - Conducting the Theoretical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. STRESS</th>
<th>5. BURNOUT (Exhaustion, Cynicism, Inefficiency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- When demands and resources are not balanced. - Prolonged exposure = Cause to Burnout</td>
<td>- 6 months exposure to identified stressor. - Situation specific.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of organisational, structural and managerial factors with impact on the development of employee burnout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS</th>
<th>6. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURAL FACTORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Social factors impacting the group)</td>
<td>6.1 Formalization = positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Integration (Social relationships)</td>
<td>6.2 Centralized business structure = negative (Hinders communication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Cohesion (Team-feeling/sense of belongingness)</td>
<td>6.3 Decentralization = positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shared values</td>
<td>- Flat structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shared goals</td>
<td>- Spread Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shared preferences</td>
<td>- Enabling employees to voice opinion / Take part in decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3. Communication

2.4. Social Climate impacts

- Support (Social support system)
- Emotional support
  - Understanding
  - Feeling valuable
- Recognition
- Empowerment
- Trust
- Respect
- Toxic atmosphere = negative
  - Conflicts/Harassments

6.4 Group-centred working climate = positive

6.5 Models: (Individual fit with external environment. The greater fit the better)

- Person-Environment-Fit
- Person-Organization-Fit
- Person-Job-Fit
### 3. WORK SITUATION
**Factors that impact the individual work experience**

#### 3.1 Role clarity (No role ambiguity, role conflict)

#### 3.2 Resources (Knowledge/Competence for the task)

#### 3.3 Career/Promotion opportunity

- Inconsistency/Unclarity/Uncertainty/Changes
  - (=additional stress)
- 3.5 Demand/Workload
- 3.6 Control (To not feel powerless/not listened to/not important)

> "Understand individual strengths & adjust work demands to maximize the fit will avoid burnout".

#### 3.7 Employee need to feel:
- Recognition/Reward (for effort made)
- Empowered
- Supported
- Ability to impact one's work situation
  - (Participating in decision-making)
- Meaningfulness

### 7. LEADERSHIP IMPACTS
Leadership is important - Passive leadership = negative

#### 7.1 Leadership traits positive
- Empathy (Understanding employees situation)
- Honesty
- Fair Treatment
- Motivate Employees
- Promote engagement (opposite to burnout)
  - Reward efforts
- Positive Feedback
- Trusted among employees

#### 7.2. Leadership style positive
- Fair
- Supportive
- Ethical (guidance)
- Empowering
- Ensuring stimulating job tasks

### 4. PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

### 8. PREVENTIVE APPROACH (Crucial)
Appendix 2. Interview Questions

The questions are designed differently according to different occupations, especially different from for managers (principal, the Working Environment Agent, administer etc.) and teachers. Also, the following-up questions under each question are examples on what we want to know and how we direct the interviewees

A. Questions for Managers:

1. Do you know the sick-leave or burnout situation in the organization?
   · Has the number been increased/ decreased?
   · What are the reasons behind it?
   · Does it differ from other schools in the municipality?

2. Do you think burnout is a person-related problem or something cased at work situation?
   · Why?
   · What factors do cause it?

3. What effects do you think the burnout or sick-leave can bring?
   · Financial costs? Employees’ long-term mental sickness?

4. Do you know what to look for pre-signs of burnout to be aware of?
   · What are those? How do you recognize them?

5. What approaches does organization use to reduce employees’ sick-leave or burnout?
   · Why is this approach?
   · Is it the most effective approach?

6. How do you prioritize the method between preventing employees’ burnout in advance and helping the burnout rehabilitation?
   · Is one prioritized over the another?
   · Why do you think this way is most efficient?
   · How well the implementation is in line with latest research?

7. How do you think of the general knowledge about burnout held by staff, management and municipality?
· Do they understand the original of causing burnout and solve it effectively?

8. Do you think organization get enough supports from municipality to deal with employees’ mental issues?
   · Enough resource? Money?

9. Do you know if the organisation has applied for or using the workplace-oriented rehabilitation financial support from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency which can be used preventively to reduce sick leave in the workplace?

**Specific Working environment related questions:**

1. What working environment does exit in organization?
   · Is it physically and mentally healthy? Open?
   · How do you promote such working environment?

2. How do you think the work environment played the role in employees’ burnout?

3. What is the long-term view/plan on the work environment and the work situation for the employees?

4. Is there currently a plan for a systematic work environment work at the organisation?
   · Is it working and how?
   · Is there anything that can be improved?

**Specific Leadership related questions:**

1. How do you as the leader effect on preventing burnout in workplace?
   · Can employees come to you to talk and how do you make it happened?
   · Can employees influence their work situation?
   (Material/Time/Flexibility) To what extent?

2. What do you think about any improvements on preventing burnout that you as principals can make?

**Specific Organizational factors related questions:**

1. Do you know any organization structural changes during the last 5 years?
   · Is there any reorganization or economical cuts?
· How do those changes affect to organization?

2. Do you believe there is enough coordination between different sectors on dealing with burnout issues?

· How about the communication with the municipality?

3. What kind of climate do you think have in organization?

· Is it open for employees to talk about stress?

**B. Questions for Teachers:**

1. Have you ever been through overstressed/ burnout?

· How did it happen?

· What factors did cause your burnout?

· How long did it take for you to return to work?

2. Do you get support from supervisors/colleagues when you are overstressed?

· What supports do they provide?

· How do those supports help you?

3. Do you feel comfortable to talk about mental health issues at workplace?

· Is there an open and welcoming climate for these discussion among your colleagues?

4. Do you know whether are approaches in organization to prevent burnout?

· What are they?

· How do they help you to deal with stress issues?

5. Do you have any suggestions that you wish organizations to improve to prevent burnout?

· What are they and why do you think it should be improved?