

# **Study/research circles and dialogue conferences as communicative spaces**

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# Three cases about setting up a communicative space

- A. Top-down reform meet collaborative network in a *dialogue conference*
- B. Inviting middle leaders to a *research circle* where the content is jointly decided upon
- C. Bottom-up strategy negotiated by principals participating in *study circles*

International  
Studies, Hattie, ...

Global  
Idea, Master  
Idea

Assessment  
for learning

PISA/TALIS results

Ministry of  
Education  
and research

Norw Directorate  
For Education  
and Learning

Program  
Assessment  
for learning

Each school

Local School  
Authorities

**DIALOGUE CONFERENCE AND LEARNING NETWORK:**

**Developing groups  
Teachers,  
prinsicpals**

Staff on  
school

Students,  
parents, others,

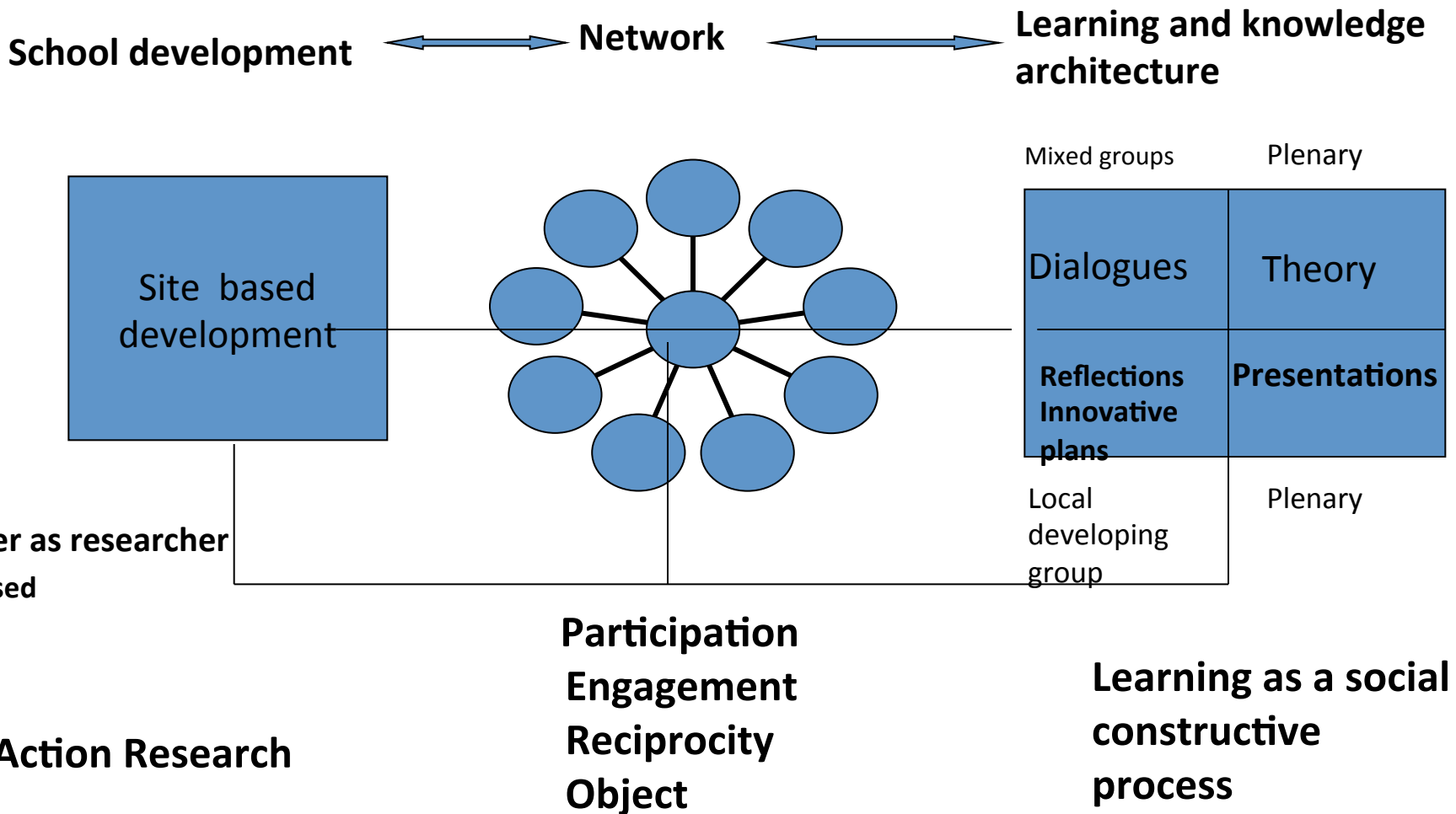
# Background

- 19 schools in a network, handling new national reform ideas, (e.g. assessment for learning)
- 2 1/2 year collaboration between university and a region, continuity to 2015 (5 years)
- Using dialogic conferences as the communicative space
- 4 «spaces» each year, 2 days conferences

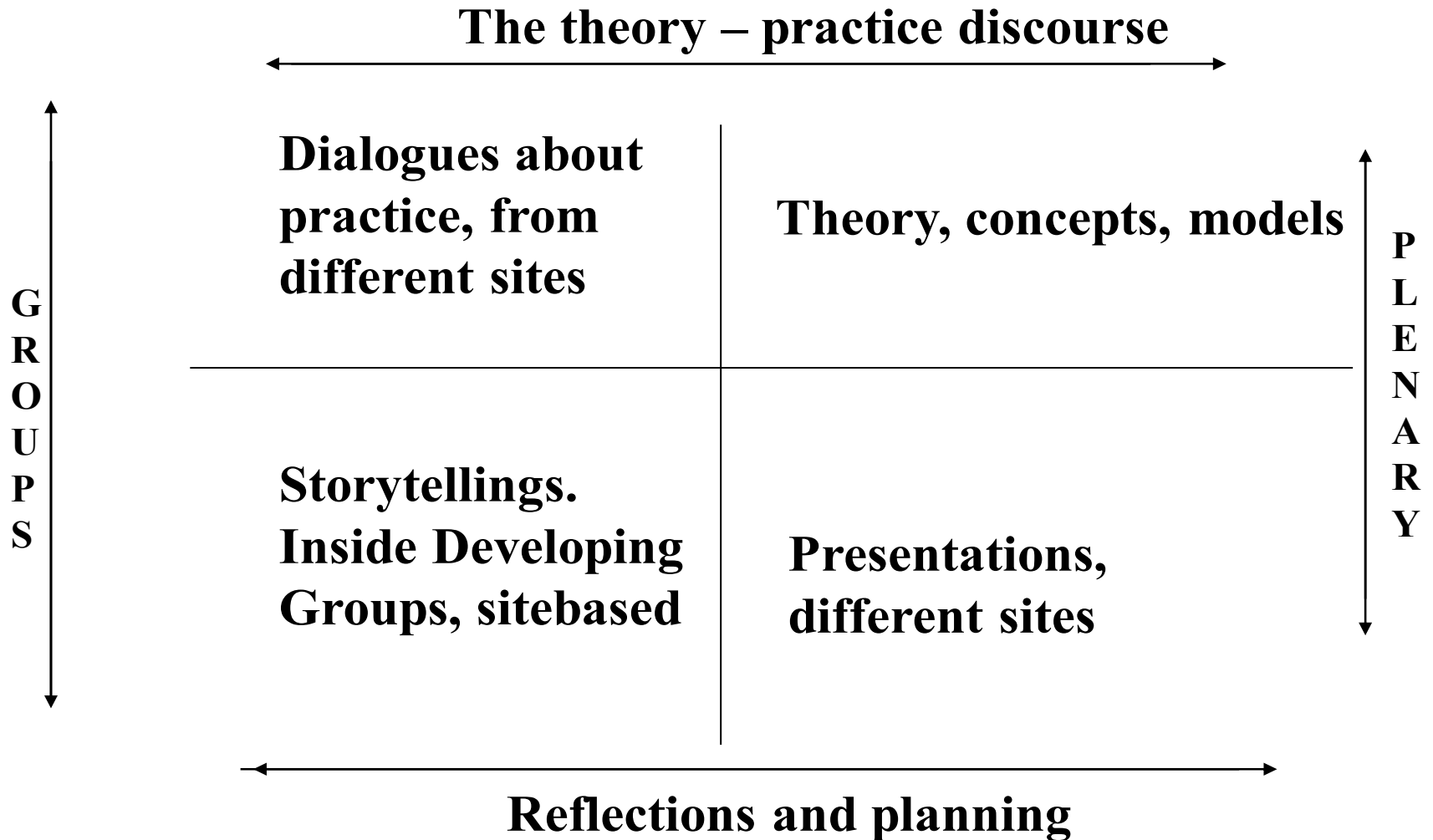
# Dialogue conferences

-Constructed with the aim to see how teachers and principals, through social relations in certain spaces can contribute to each others and the school`s development

# Model; site based learning, network and dialogue conferences. Step 3



# The learning structure in Dialogue conferences



# Dialogue conferences

- The mediating discourse (theory-practice)
- The communicative structures
- Reflection and planning as central dimensions
- «Travelling of ideas» and «translation studies»  
as as the innovation concepts



# The research circle

Creating a communicative space – time was allocated for all participants

12 preschool teachers, who all participated in a one-year long action research program

All teachers facilitate own groups of teachers (colleagues) within and across preschools

Coming together to focus on their own leading

# Setting –up a research circle as a communicative space

- Preparing by reflecting over what leadership means
- Individually constructing a mind-map out of the experiences of being a facilitator (middle-leader)
- Collectively constructing a joint mindmap out of the individual mindmaps
- Relevant themes for the four meetings emerged

# Themes in a research circle

- Learning for leading – understanding your role as a middle-leader
- Searching for patterns – analysing data from you as a middle-leader
- Professional learning communities
- To find a balance – how to create necessary conditions for learning, as a middle-leader

# Conducting a research circle

- Interchange between experienced and theoretical knowledge
- Dialogues in pairs and in whole group
- Reflections individually and collaboratively
- Learning for coming actions

# Study circles for principals to initiate action research within their professional communities

Small schools circle, medium size schools circle, big schools circle, Finnish speaking principals circle coming together 3 to 6 times during a year

## Four very different communicative spaces and action research processes

from a textbook example of CS and AR to a feedback group to a soft resistance group – in search of rational explanations!

## Small schools circle as the textbook example



*FOUR ROSES -PTK 7.11 2012*

## Individual-professional qualities

Four experienced principal-teachers with a focus on and interest in upbringing and fostering

Strong and sound professional identity; from fosterers to a rector

Safe and sound small pragmatic CS:s at school, still a need of a between-schools CS:s

Professional respect and mutuality – personalities and inclinations complementing each other

Tacit identification of individual resources – complementing (not challenging) communication patterns

## Collegial-professional qualities

Effective, goal-oriented use of the resource of coming together in study circle

Use of the researcher as a secretary, celebrating his simple and stupid outsiders questions

Latent needs easily identified and put on the table (informal collegial support)

Focus on evident and mutual interest in their schools (use of textbooks) and identification of expertise's

Tacit and experience-based understanding of collegiality (inclusion of school assistants)

Engaging colleagues and opening up for collegial needs expressions (couch potatoes)

Strong ethos of local responsibility and care!

Smallness triggering bigness!

Leadership relying on closeness, sense of belonging,  
long term perspective (sustainability)

**FIRST YEAR:** ORIENTATING-PLANNING-ACTING-  
OBSERVING-REFLECTING

Creating collegial places to meet and come together  
*Pedagogical focus*

**SECOND YEAR:** ORIENTATING-PLANNING ...

Reconquering teacher professional identity, informing  
politicians on the conditions of the small schools

*Political focus*